2015
olive cotton award
for photographic portraiture

7 August – 27 September 2015
The Olive Cotton Award is generously funded by the family of Olive Cotton, one of Australia’s leading twentieth century photographers. The 2015 Award will be the ninth Award since it began in 2005.

The Award, which recognises excellence in photographic portraiture, is held biennially with a major prize of $20,000 and aims to show new portraits by professional and emerging artists. The Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre Inc. sponsor Directors’ Choice awards to the value of $4,000. All awards are acquisitive, making the Olive Cotton Award an important collecting stream for the Tweed Regional Gallery’s collection of Australian portraits.

The Award judge in 2015 is Stephen Dupont, a photographer and documentary filmmaker whose work has earned him some of photography’s most prestigious prizes. Over the past two decades, Dupont has produced a remarkable body of work including hauntingly beautiful photographs of fragile cultures and marginalised peoples.

Tweed Regional Gallery acknowledges and thanks Olive’s daughter, Sally McInerney, and Josef and Jeanne Lebovic of Josef Lebovic Gallery, for their ongoing support of the Gallery and this Award.

Olive Cotton (1911-2003) discovered the art of photography during childhood and was committed to the practice throughout her life. After gaining an Arts degree, she worked successfully as a photographer at Max Dupain’s Sydney studio until the end of World War II. She was married to Dupain from 1937–1939 and then in 1944 married Ross McInerney and moved to the bush near Koorawatha, NSW. For 20 years she had no access to darkroom facilities, but continued taking photographs.

In 1964 Cotton opened a small studio in Cowra and in 1985, after a 40 year absence, re-emerged with her first solo show at the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney. She then concentrated on rediscovering and printing her life’s work. A major exhibition of Cotton’s work was shown at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2000.
The Portrait Strikes Back

Since Talbot and Daguerre’s pioneering photography in the mid-1800s, the portrait has defined the essence of humanity through every photographic genre, from documentary photography, fashion and advertising, to the family snapshot and now, mobile device selfies. As a photographer myself, I cannot think of a more powerful medium in our time than the portrait photograph. From Curtis, Stieglitz and Brandt through to Arbus, Avedon and Sherman, the portrait photograph has redefined how we see others and ourselves. Without doubt, it is also the most challenging as well as most powerful form of photographic communication there is.

The effort to capture the soul, personality and mood of the human subject has produced some of the most intriguing and moving photographic images of our time. Of all the war photographs by British photographer Don McCullin, it is one simple yet powerful single frame, the portrait of the Shell-shocked US marine, Hue, Vietnam (1968), that defines his entire coverage of the Vietnam War. Dorothea Lange’s Migrant Mother (1936) captured the sadness and pain of America’s Great Depression more succinctly than any other image. Lewis Hine’s portraits of child labour changed American government policy on working laws. It is the head and shoulders portraits of famous people that shape our recollection of past heroism and fame — Princess Diana, Bob Marley and Che Guevara to name a few. Max Dupain’s Sunbather not only defined his career but also became an iconic image capturing the essence of Australian beach culture. Photographic portraiture encompasses an almost endless list of photographers, subjects and life moments.

Why is the photo portrait so powerful? Is it because we relate to the common humanity we share with the people depicted? Do we feel and see ourselves in those fleeting moments as we nurture our own memories of love, happiness and pain?

Taking a photographic portrait is no easy task and demands as much spontaneity as street photography, as much imagination as painting and as much passion as cooking. In the end a great photographic portrait must sing, must make you feel something and must surprise you. It needs to stimulate your senses and totally move you. Like the best literature it must be pleasing well beyond the first impression and stay with you long after. As the judge for the 2015 Olive Cotton Award I have brought all these ideas and concepts to my selection process.

So, how has portrait photography changed over time? In the beginning it was totally directed, set up and quite stilted in its process and revelation. It was the new painting, perfect in rendering likenesses and almost instant. The excitement of capturing loved ones and important people immortalised the human race like nothing else before it. Photographic portraiture has certainly defined our sense of memory, imagination and place in history. For most of us the family photographs are considered not just priceless but irreplaceable possessions. They are still the first thing many would grab in a house fire, albeit perhaps now on a hard drive rather than in an album. Prior to the digital revolution most of the world’s population could not afford the luxury of analogue photography. Now, billions of us have mobile phones with cameras and more photographs are taken daily, pictures that will hold a personal importance to the photographer but, as images in themselves, are likely to be forgettable. With the world’s over-saturation with imagery it is more important than ever to separate the gems from the rough.

What is truly exciting, is the change that has taken place in portrait photography due to more modern cameras, faster film and now digital capture and the magic of Photoshop and other similar computer applications. Photographic portraiture has become much less formalised and more experimental over time, less about science and more about creativity and imagination, in a similar way to the liberation seen in other art movements over the same period.

A portrait photograph no longer needs to be a sitter posed with eyes directed to the camera. In fact, I believe the best of portrait photography breaks all the rules and must challenge and surprise us. It must be imperfect and have a real emotional output that slaps the viewer on the face and feeds the mind with stimulation and performance. From the blurring caused by the subject’s movement to the captured gaze or non-gaze we find ourselves seeing in new and more unusual ways. In the end it becomes less about the subject and more about the exploration of light, form and creative capture by the photographer. Millions of buttons are being pushed hourly in the name of photography, but very few shine. All great portraiture is a collaboration between the sitter and photographer, whether staged or not. Somehow a connection is made and then the captured moment becomes visual poetry.

Stephen Dupont
July 2015
Scarborough NSW
2 Matthew ABBOTT
born 1984, lives and works in Sydney NSW
Daniel, Brewarrina NSW 2015
silver gelatin print

3 Belinda ALLEN
born 1956, lives and works in Bundeena NSW
Chris and Murray River 2015
giclée print on cotton rag paper

4 Louise ALLERTON
born 1965, lives and works in Albany WA
Nahum 2015 digital print from Polaroid SX70

5 Melissa ANDERSON
born 1974, lives and works in Cleveland QLD
Dad’s loss of vision 2014
giclée print

6 David APOSTOL
born 1980, lives and works in Melbourne VIC
II 2014
type C print

7 Dean BELETICH
born 1998, lives and works in Tintenbar NSW
Victor Rubin 2015
silver halide print

8 Simon BERNHARDT
born 1976, lives and works in Sydney NSW
Hawke on toast 2014
digital print on Hahnemühle paper

9 Brett BOARDMAN
born 1974, lives and works in Sydney NSW
Seafarer Peter Hegney, Newcastle 2014 2015
Lambda print

10 Michael BORZILLO
born 1983, lives and works in Melbourne VIC
Dressed to kill 2015
type C print

11 Chris BUDGEON
born 1955, lives and works in Melbourne VIC
At a loss 2015
type C print

12 Billie Ann BULL
born 1997, lives and works in Newcastle NSW
Dressed in denim 2015
digital print

13 Daniel CAMPBELL
born 1973, lives and works in Melbourne VIC
Reclining monk 2015
digital print

14 Nick CHARIZIA
born 1953, lives and works in Melbourne VIC
Twins 2014
digital print

15 Eva COLLINS
born 1946, lives and works in Victoria
Twins 2014
digital print

16 Nadine COOPER
born 1983, lives and works in Nowra NSW
At a loss 2015
Reclining monk 2015
digital print

17 Charles COVERDALE
born 1996, lives and works in Brisbane QLD
Chasing change 2015
giclée print

18 Katrina CROOK
lives and works in Sydney NSW
Thirteen 2015
pigment print

19 Ellen DAHL
born 1968, lives and works in Sydney NSW
HER #4 2014
pigment print on cotton rag paper
20 Sean DAVEY  
born 1979, lives and works in Canberra ACT  
Asha with a scratch on her face  
2015  
pigment print  
Courtesy of The Photography Room

21 Mark DAVIS  
born 1958, lives and works in Ballina NSW  
Miss Fribby  
2015  
irradiated digital image with post processing

22 Raimond DE WEERDT  
born 1963, lives and works in Lismore NSW  
Arie  
2014  
Lambda print

23 Tamara DEAN  
born 1976, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Kimberley at 9  
2015  
inkjet print on cotton rag  
Courtesy of Olsen Irwin Gallery, Sydney NSW

24 Karen DONNELLY  
born 1955, lives and works in Albury NSW  
Shut up  
2015  
digital print

25 Peter ERICKSON  
born 1945, lives and works in Freshwater NSW  
Kimono sleep  
2015  
inkjet print on Ilford paper

26 Carla FELTHAM  
born 1981, lives and works in Lennox Head NSW  
Sublimation  
2015  
pigment inkjet print

27 Lisa FENWICK  
born 1989, lives and works in Brisbane QLD  
Self-portrait underwater, hometown, Northern Territory  
2014  
pigment print on Hahnemühle paper

28 Michael FLATT  
born 1955, lives and works in Strathbogie VIC  
Napangardi and family  
2014  
digital inkjet print

29 Kyle FOLEY  
born 1973, lives and works in Port Stephens NSW  
Alice  
2014  
pigment print on cotton rag paper

30 Rebecca GEDDES  
born 1974, lives and works in Newcastle NSW  
Solitude  
2015  
archival print on cotton rag

31 Tara GILBEE  
born 1970, lives and works in Castlemaine VIC  
Lumière noire I  
2015  
pigment inkjet print

32 Dean GOLJA  
born 1960, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
45 degrees  
2014  
digital print

33 Georgia Lilian GRAFFIN  
born 1993, lives and works in Murwillumbah NSW  
The unblemished record of my brother Joel  
2015  
digital print

34 Natalie GROND  
born 1977, lives and works in Lennox Head NSW  
The killing of Miller's Point (Pat and Brandy)  
2015  
digital print

35 Imogen HALL  
born 1983, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Barbara Blackman listens to the photograph  
2013  
type C print

36 Scott HANNAFORD and Rohan THOMSON  
born 1975 and 1988, live and work in Canberra ACT  
Gabriel  
2014  
digital print from scanned negative

37 Sahlan HAYES  
born 1967, lives and works in Kangaloon/ Sydney NSW  
The killing of Milners Point (Pat and Brandy)  
2015  
digital print
38 Robyn HILLS  
born 1963, lives and works in Caloundra QLD  
Judy Napangardi Watson, artist  
2015 digital print on rag paper

39 Lisa HOGIBEN  
lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Abraham - 'lost boy' found  2015 digital print

40 Kelly HUSSEY-SMITH  
born 1982, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Michelle-Rose Turnbull  2015 inkjet print

41 Lyndal IRONS  
born 1980, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Man unknown, Venice, 2015 2015 digital print

42 Darren JAMES  
born 1965, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Leaving the house, 2015 digital pigment print on rag paper

43 Ingvar KENNE  
born 1985, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Makharan and Dopheal, Prostitutes, Phnom Krom, Cambodia  2014 type C print

44 Camilla JOHANSSON-MERRICK  
born 1985, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Tiny dancer, 2015

45 Shea KIRK  
born 1988, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Twist  2015 digital print

46 Zofia NOWICKA  
born 1985, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Visitant  2015 archival pigment inkjet print

47 Liz LOOKER  
born 1974, lives and works in Mosman Park WA  
Eclipse  2015 digital print

48 Jon LOVE  
born 1949, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Contemplation  2015 digital print

49 Jessica MATINO  
born 1979, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Burlesque girls  2013 type C print

50 Rosse McINTYRE  
born 1991, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Break  2013 digital print

51 Sandra MURPHY  
born 1968, lives and works in Coolangatta QLD  
Portrait of a body  2014 digital print on 100% rag paper

52 Deborah NOVAK  
born 1957, lives and works in Yamba NSW  
Portrait of a body  2014 pigment print on Hahnemühle paper

53 Jac PRICE  
born 1974, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
The girl on the bus  2015 digital print

54 Zorica PURLLLIA  
born 1964, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Yllabul  2015 archival pigment inkjet print

Courtesy of Sara Roney Gallery
Joanne SAAD  
born 1969, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Wafa and Uncle Steve  
2015  
digital print

Janet TAVENER  
born 1960, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Gin and Hen - Life with Para Wili Syndrome  
2015  
digital print

Samuel SCOUFOS  
born 1979, lives and works in Brisbane QLD  
Portrait of a Greek man and son  
2015  
giclée print

Craig TUFFIN  
born 1969, lives and works in Northern NSW  
Portrait of a Gold Coast surfer  
2015  
mercurial daguerreotype in handmade leather case

Laki SIDERIS  
born 1966, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Witchdoctor  
2013  
Lambda print

Karl SCHWERDTFEGER  
born 1961, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Lewisham laundry worker  
2015  
inkjet print on photo rag

Elise SEARSON  
born 1982, lives and works in Brisbane QLD  
Armors  
2015  
digital print

Linda WACHTEL  
born 1958, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Estella  
2014  
pigment print

Stuart SPENCE  
born 1960, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Dave Faulkner - the Guru takes tea  
2014  
digital print on Kodak Endura paper

Tia SCOTT  
born 1991, lives and works in Albury NSW  
Self portrait with Facebook likes  
2015  
archival inkjet print on metallic paper, face mounted to acrylic

Laura SEEDS  
born 1991, lives and works in Brisbane QLD  
Ellen  
2014  
hand manipulated inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper

Ellen  
2014  
hand manipulated inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper

Cyrus TANG  
born 1965, lives and works in Victoria  
Matthew  
2014  
chromogenic print

Perri WAIN  
born 1961, lives and works in Uki NSW  
Dr Jimi and Maya Krasna, at home  
2015  
digital print

Tobias TITZ  
born 1973, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Christopher Bates  
2014  
type C print from Polaroid 665

Frances VALENTINE  
born 1944, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Aiko  
2014  
pigment print

Tobias TITZ  
born 1973, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Christopher Bates  
2014  
type C print from Polaroid 665

Hilary WALKER  
born 1979, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
Estelle  
2014  
pigment print

All images courtesy of the artist and relevant galleries.

* Denotes image detail
Louise WALPOLE  
born 1976, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Molly 2013  
giclée print on Ilford Gold Fibre Silk

Louise WHELAN  
born 1967, lives and works in Avalon NSW  
Backstage before the ‘Hijab runway’ Creativity Unleashed Expo, Parramatta Town Hall 2015  
pigment print on cotton rag paper

Fiona WOLF-SYMEONIDES  
born 1976, lives and works in Sydney NSW  
Michael 2013  
digital print

John WATSON  
born 1961, lives and works in Melbourne VIC  
The Records Officer strives for a moment of beauty #2 2015  
pigment print

Peter WHYTE  
born 1956, lives and works in Hobart TAS  
Sculptor Curtis Howe 2015  
pigment print

Richard WINDEYER  
born 1965, lives and works in Bangalore NSW  
Yoshi 2014  
pigment print

William YANG  
born 1943, lives and works in Wollongong NSW  
Auntie Dulcie - Arakwal Elder 2014  
digital print

David YOUNG  
born 1957, lives and works in Byron Bay NSW  
Candid portrait of a woman on a street corner 2014  
digital print

Savitri 2007  
Judge: Richard Moore

Damien Skipper (detail)  
Judge: Naomi Cass

Candid portrait of a woman on a street corner 2013  
Judge: Helen Ennis
Public Programs - Saturday 8 August

2.00pm  Piksa Niugini – Stephen Dupont
An illustrated talk featuring Stephen Dupont’s portraits from Papua New Guinea made over the past decade.
Dupont undertakes environmental portraiture by mixing real documentary and controlled photography. He is interested in showing not only his subjects but the mechanisms of the process, thus calling to attention the role of the photographer in Papuan history.

5.00pm  Official opening with music by Trio Continentale
5.30pm  Announcement of Awards and Winner

Stephen Dupont is a photographer and documentary filmmaker whose work has earned him photography’s most prestigious prizes, including a Robert Capa Gold Medal citation from the Overseas Press Club of America; a Bayeux War Correspondent’s Prize; and first places in the World Press Photo, Pictures of the Year International, the Australian Walkleys and Leica/CCP Documentary Award. In 2007 he was the recipient of the W. Eugene Smith Grant for Humanistic Photography for his ongoing project on Afghanistan. In 2010 he received the Gardner Fellowship at Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology. Dupont has twice been an official war artist for the Australian War Memorial with commissions in the Solomon Islands (2013) and Afghanistan (2012). He is a Canon Master and frequently lectures and delivers masterclasses and workshops in Australia and around the world.