

# NPG's Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize

This is the first year that the European Law Firm, Taylor Wessing LLP, has sponsored the Prize, undoubtedly one of the most sought after and most influential photographic prizes available. The judges selected 60 portraits for the exhibition from 6,758 submissions entered by 2,705 photographers from around the world. This is the largest number of submissions ever entered so the winning entries have to be something special.

This year's first prize went to Lottie Davies for her portrait inspired by her friend Caroline's nightmare that she gave birth to quintuplets. Drawing on classical imagery of the Madonna and Child, Davies also took inspiration from the darkness and colours found in Caravaggio and Titian to portray the "calm and serenity of motherhood, as well as the feeling of imprisonment". Rather than asking Caroline to pose

herself, she used a model to allow "more freedom to interpret the story, unclouded by the representational aspects of portraiture."

Davies's winning photograph is part of an ongoing series *Memories and Nightmares*, a personal project for which Davies asked several friends to send her written accounts of either an early childhood memory or a nightmare.

Born in 1971, Davies has worked as a photographer for the past eight years. In a diverse career she has worked on assignments ranging from reportage features on the Kalahari Bushmen for the Telegraph Magazine to illustrating recipes for chef Gary Rhodes cookery books.

At the same time, it was announced that Vanessa Winship is the winner of the 2008 Godfrey Argent Award,

which this year acknowledges the best black and white portrait. Her portrait *Sweet Nothings* was taken in the East Anatolia region of Turkey where she lived for several years and is from a series inspired by a government campaign to educate rural girls. Winship visited a dozen schools to produce forty-five images of girls posing with their sisters or closest friends.

The free exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery runs until 15 February 2008 and is definitely worth a visit to see the best in contemporary portrait photography. The exhibition will go on tour to the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle from 4 April - 30 June 2009.

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