

VISUAL ARTS SCOTLAND - royal scottish academy 21st mar – 17th apr

At Visual Arts Scotland we aim to bring together the best work in all of the arts in Scotland, and by artists with Scottish connections. The Annual Open Exhibition provides a multi-disciplinary platform where painters, photographers and sculptors exhibit alongside ceramicists, jewellers and furniture makers, and where upcoming new talents rub shoulders with established figures in the Scottish arts scene.

Notable at this year's exhibition is the presence of ceramics, especially in light of the current decline of the discipline to be witnessed in Scottish Art Schools. At the forefront of the ceramic contingent is invited artist Edith Garcia, who challenges the boundaries of the medium with her installation, *Happy Ugly Scars*, an exploration of the human condition. Edith weaves effortlessly between different disciplines and media to unite two and three-dimensional elements in an installation that emerges from framed drawings and wall paintings, to invade the gallery space with ceramic forms.

The strength of the applied arts is apparent from this year's distribution of awards, with prizes going to ceramicists Craig Mitchell for his quirky illustrative *Lazy Lad*, and Rebecca Wilson for the surreal cherry-headed *Eat Me; Keep Me* figures. The high standard of jewellery was also acknowledged in the prize-giving, with awards made to Sarah Kettle for her exploration of a new medium, precious metal clay, and to Amy Chan for her innovative use of recycled film canisters. Applied artist, sculptor, and self-professed "all round scrubber" Julia Douglas scooped the prestigious Russell Trust Prize for the imposing *Highly Sprung*, her exploration of domesticity by way of the humble clothes peg.

There are many highlights to this year's show, with significant pieces to be seen in painting, printmaking and photography. Invited artist Peter Whites large encaustic canvasses are deceptive in their simplicity. His monumental paintings of single vessels command a strong physical presence, yet are allusive, mysterious, numinous. Prize-winner Anna Ruiz explores the tendencies inherent in us all to abandon ourselves to impulse and lust in *By Nature, Children of Wrath*, which resonates against Lex McFaddyens painting *Like Icarus Ascending*, an angelic yet urban figure typical of his background in fashion.

We hope you will appreciate and celebrate with us the full spectrum of artistic gifts to be seen at Visual Arts Scotland 2008.

Clockwise from top left: Anna Ruiz, Donna Barry, Julia Douglas, Lex McFadyen, Jenny Smith, Edith Garcia (during installation)

