



One year on...

The Catlin Awards are recognised as the annual showcase for art graduates one year on from their degree exhibitions, and two photographers are among those being highlighted this time around

WORDS: Terry Hope PICTURES: Paul Knight/Tina Hage

Now in their fourth year, the Catlin Awards have swiftly reached a position where they are recognised by collectors and artists alike as one of the most exciting opportunities there is for those coming out of universities and colleges who are looking to make their name in the art world. Open to those who are one year on from their degree exhibitions, the prize is unique in the breadth of its scope and in providing the artists with the time and opportunity to develop their practice, encouraging them to demonstrate their progress by producing a new body of work.

Curator, gallerist and art writer, Justin Hammond's search for the most promising artists of tomorrow has taken him to graduate BA and MA shows the length and breadth of the country. For the first time this year the forty exceptional talents he uncovered through this wide ranging process

have been documented in a special limited edition book, *The Catlin Guide*, which was available exclusively at the London Art Fair in January.

"The *Catlin Guide* came about because I wanted to make the selection process for the Catlin Art Prize more transparent," says Justin Hammond. "As a gallerist and private dealer, it was also something that I would often be requested to do for collectors - to compile a shortlist of promising young artists. Ones to watch. I am proud of how the *Guide* highlights a representative proportion of artists working outside London, as it is common for these to slip under the radar."

Demonstrating the rising importance of photography as an art medium in its own right two photographers, Paul Knight and Tina Hage, were featured alongside artists from more traditional areas in the *Guide* this year, hugely enhancing their credibility. Although neither was among the eight artists ultimately invited to take part in the Catlin Art Prize itself, which is held in May and carries a £3000 prize, both Paul and Tina have given their burgeoning art photography careers a huge lift. They have also effectively introduced themselves to collectors of the calibre of David Roberts and Kay Saatchi, who have taken a huge interest in the cutting edge work on view in previous years and have been prepared to invest in the new talent which is being discovered.

Sourcing student work that can satisfy the demands of such serious dealers is no easy matter, and Justin relishes his annual challenge. "Ideally, I'm searching for something to first stop me in my tracks and then draw me in," he says. "I can't deny that a

ABOVE:
**Universal
 Pattern II,
 Triptych**
 © Tina Hage
 courtesy Art
 Catlin

discernible aesthetic is essential, because when you visit as many degree shows over a relatively short space of time as I do it's horribly easy to become blinkered and not give each individual piece the attention it deserves.

"Clearly, it's impossible for me to physically visit every fine art and photography degree show in the country, so I also rely on the knowledge of collectors, independent curators and course leaders and although it is vital that the artists they recommend are already producing work of an excellent standard, my criteria for these nominations revolves heavily around potential. I'm looking for artists with the ability to progress and to make a significant impact over the next decade, so an abundance of ideas and a determined attitude are paramount.

"When accessing possible candidates for *The Catlin Guide*, I always follow up recommendations by contacting the artist and discussing their work and future plans. In the case of Tina Hage, I'd already come across her work through the press (Goldsmiths invariably receives a fair amount of attention around the time of the degree exhibitions). After seeing her final show, I made an >

Catlin Art Prize

The Catlin Art Prize will take place at Village Underground, Shoreditch, London from May 14-23, 2010. For more information visit www.artcatlin.com

Catlin Guide

Although it was exclusively available at the London Art Fair in January and can't now be purchased, we have five copies to give away to readers of *Photo Pro*. Simply drop us an email to catlinguide@photopromagazine.com with your name and address and we'll organise for a copy to go out to the first five readers we hear from.

"I'm looking for artists with the ability to progress and to make a significant impact in the next decade"

appointment to visit her studio and felt satisfied that she was a strong candidate for inclusion in The Guide.

"With Paul Knight, it was a case of discovering his work on a trip to Glasgow and staying informed of his developments. A studio visit wasn't possible as Paul had flown back to Australia, but when he was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries it gave me a second opportunity to view his work in Manchester and, after further discussions with the artist, I decided that he was right for this project."

In Justin's opinion the fact that both Tina and Paul were studying MFA Fine Art, as opposed to strictly photography based courses, worked in their favour. "Working in a more diverse environment, engaging in art theory and absorbing a wider range of influences is bound to add an extra dimension to an artist's work," he says.

"We featured the photographs of former Goldsmiths Fine Art student Jasmin Cibic (<http://www.jasminacibic.org/index.html>) in the first Catlin Art Prize in 2007 and although they stand up as fantastic images in their own right, they are part of a much larger project, involving carefully choreographed performances all over Europe. In 2008, we showed 'Correspondence' by Central Saint Martins graduate Paul Greenleaf (<http://www.paulgreenleaf.co.uk/pages/projectinfo.php?commID=11>) which also incorporates a large installation element. The point is that photographers often have to go that extra yard to simply get noticed, especially in group shows where they have to fight for attention.

"I think it's incredibly hard for new photographers to make their mark and to achieve something distinct and original and I've found that public and critical attitudes can be less tolerant of experimental ideas in photography. As a gallerist, I often found it difficult to sell challenging work by unknown photographers because those cliched attitudes would prevail - especially against digital methods. I think a deep-set resistance against digitally enhanced work still remains in the psyche of the casual art viewer - the idea that it is somehow less valid, less authentic in the realms of fine art.

"Having said that, in my opinion there is no doubt that photography, as a genre, is now accepted as a major art form and has been for some time. The contemporary art boom of the previous decade triggered a wider awareness of the collectable nature of photography and a better understanding of editioned prints. More artists working in the medium of photography rose to prominence and many posted outstanding results at auction."



Tina Hage

Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tina Hage grew up in Dusseldorf, Germany. After studying in Cologne at the Academy of Media Arts she moved to London where she's lived for the last five years, and she's just finished her Masters in Fine Arts at Goldsmiths College, London.

"I showed five pieces of work in my degree show," she says. "Two of them were triptychs from the Universal Pattern series and the other three single images are from my Loop series. I wanted my degree show to reflect my art practice, and to communicate what I am most interested in. The works explore the relationship between the crowd and the individual and how they are represented in the mass media. I deploy contemporary photojournalistic imagery from the media, which I reflect upon by using myself repetitively to re-enact the found scenes."

Although much of her work revolves around the use of photography, it's used very much as a means of communicating specific ideas to the viewer rather than for its own sake. "I call myself an artist rather than a photographer," says Tina. "I use camera, lights, studio, myself etc. as tools, in order to express my ideas. The way I work is not really coherent with the way a photographer usually works. The Masters degree was very helpful in terms of the way that it allowed me to develop my art practice, but I think I made the decision to continue to work as an artist before I did my first degree at the Academy of Media arts."

Was the student route a good one to take to break into this area? "I think it was very

ABOVE:
Universal
Pattern III,
Triptych
© Tina Hage
courtesy Art
Catlin

good. I feel surer now in what I am doing and clearer as to why I make my work. It gave me confidence. The other thing is that you meet a lot of like-minded people while you are studying, so you can exchange your thoughts and ideas. To be in a network of people who are developing an art career is quite important."

Tina sees her inclusion in the Catlin Guide as a useful measure of where she currently is with her work, but is less positive about whether she will use the exposure to make a push into the commercial arena. "I am not sure if the commercial world is the final scenario where every artist is looking to end up," she says. "Yes, I would like to sell my work, but overall I want to express my thoughts and ideas. So the transition from being a student to reality is not easy."

"I was glad that I had good responses for my final degree show however, and it felt like a good start. I believe that the Catlin Guide will help me to build up my profile as an artist and it's led to my work being noticed by other people, including Photo Pro!"

At the moment Tina is putting together a portfolio for Plat(t)form 10 at the Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland, and after this she is looking to develop her practice. "During my degree I started a few series as I tried out different ways of producing my work," she says. "I now feel that it is time to revisit and to continue these series. I am using the feedback I got and am continuing to build up my repertoire of work."

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In association with



Paul Knight

Originally from Australia, Paul Knight completed a Bachelor of Fine Art in Photography (Hons) in 2001 at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, and from 2002-2004 he was awarded a studio in the studio residency program at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. In 2007 he was awarded the Anne & Gordon Samstag Visual Art Travelling Scholarship, which brought him to the Master of Fine Art program at the Glasgow School of Art, where he graduated in 2009. No stranger to awards, in that same year he was included in New Contemporaries travelling exhibitions in the UK and awarded the William & Winifred Bowness Photography Prize at the Monash Gallery of Art, which is Australia's richest Photography award.

"My degree show was about human relationships, sexual language and intimate bonds," he says. "It incorporated sculpture and was intended to put photography under pressure to perform to an expectation. Photography is a very important tool to me as an artist, and it's the medium I use most of all. I'm not sure how my show came to the attention of Justin, but working full time as an artist is most definitely the goal, and so it's been useful exposure for me."

"I worked a lot commercially in Australia before I left. I had in particular one major corporate client, but also worked closely with graphic design studios. Working this

way, almost in collaboration with designers, is what I enjoy most in commercial work, but these relationships can take a long time to foster. At the moment I'm doing a lot of work for the NHS up here in Scotland, and I'll see where things go from here."

Has the student route been a good one to take, given Paul's determination to break into this area? "I love studying and the not-so-real-world life that it creates allows you to become self-obsessed over your practice," he says. "I intentionally put off doing a Masters straight after my undergrad so that I could make the most of the experience as it came and have a period of independent growth. Both colleges I have studied at have not been focused on technique but rather their attention has been on theory and art history and context. This suited me, although I did work at a pro lab processing E-6 whilst in my undergrad and this was my technical education, talking to all the commercial guys and seeing hundreds of different shoots a week passing over the light boxes."

How difficult does Paul feel that it will be to make the transition from student to the commercial world, and will his nomination in the Catlin Awards help? "Everything helps, and sometimes you don't fully understand how much until some time has passed. I've worked commercially already, but ultimately I hope not to have to take on so much of this kind of work and to be able to select jobs/work more on the basis of interest rather



TOP LEFT:
14 Months #3,
© Paul Knight
courtesy Art
Catlin

TOP RIGHT:
1 year, 8 months
#01, © Paul
Knight courtesy
Art Catlin

than for financial reasons, I guess that is what everyone probably wants though..."

With a growing reputation for the quality and originality of his art work Paul is currently working on an installation with his Australian gallery, Neon Parc, for their booth in the Open Space section at Art Cologne in April 2010. He has also been awarded the London studio hosted by the Australia Council for the Arts for the summer of 2010, and is now working towards an intensive session of studio time to enable him to host a standalone exhibition there at the end of his residency.

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www.paulknight.com.au
www.mga.org.au/press/media_2009_bowness_winner.pdf
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