

PAINTING OF THE YEAR 2020

1. 'Anna' from Berardino Runbini (Italy)

The winner of the title *Painting of the Year 2020* is Italian bravura at its best. It is a very intense portrait that at the same time radiates a certain resignation. The painting stands with one foot in the Italian tradition of painters such as Giovanni Boldini and Antonio Mancini and with the other foot completely in contemporary painting.

The gaze of the model staring into the emptiness and the doll that almost seems to be strangled make the whole thing a little frightening. And yet it is a representation overloaded with love of an obviously mentally vulnerable woman.

This dichotomy is also reflected in the technical approach and style of painting which is on the one hand very sensitive and realistically perfect, for example in the face of the model and the head of the doll, but on the other hand very daring and coarse with bright colors and firm strokes of the palette knife, especially in the areas around the contours of the model and in the background.

All in all, it is a stunner of a portrait, not only because of its sturdy dimensions (150 by 190 centimeters), but also because it is almost "over the top", yet remains balanced everywhere due to the extreme technical mastery of the artist.

2. 'Out of place' from Francien Krieg (The Netherlands)

The main motive in this painting is the emptiness and it touched the jury by the very daring choice of both the subject and the execution. On the one hand it concerns a very unusual scene (a peek into an unsightly, messy barn of basement) which on the other hand is depicted in a not obvious way, namely largely in the dark.

In addition, the chosen lighting is extra tricky. The light comes both from the side and from the background. This combination of backlight and floodlight is very tricky, but the technical execution is perfect. For example, the frame of the window in the background is also very nicely "eaten out" by the light, as it should be.

It is also striking that there are very nice still lifes hidden in the whole. For example, the bottles on the right in the foreground. But also the portrait of the little boy on the left in the foreground is very successful. Technically speaking this is not an obvious scene to paint at all but is almost perfectly executed, while in so many areas something could have gone wrong so easily. Francien I want to congratulate very much with the second place in *Painting of the Year 2020*.

3. 'Child with cat' from Rian Lemaire Smulders (The Netherlands)

This sensitive little painting (60 by 50 centimeters) differs a lot from the other often much more flamboyant paintings, but in its tenderness it is as intense or even much more intense than most of them. The central composition gives the painting a certain tranquility, even something iconic, but without becoming boring. For the symmetry is very subtly broken by the placement of the silhouette-trees. The whole has a certain eeriness, even spookiness both by the coloring, but also by the sad and slightly frightened look of the kid and the cat that seemingly has no eyes.

The portrait is very masterfully painted in both its technique and tonality which also contributes to the sensitivity of the painting. The subtly applied paint, the faded contours and subtle differences in color further contribute to the subtlety of the work. A very intriguing canvas that evokes a whole story in all its simplicity.

4. 'Social Distancing' from Sam Hewitt (UK)

A very graphic work with a surprising tonality and moody use of color. The painting has a lot of rhythm and has a nice tension between the three-dimensionally painted parts and the graphic two-dimensional stencil effects. The layering here and there betrays the underlying (and inverted) painting that not only cooperates functionally in the new painting, but also lifts it to a higher level, because it creates extra tension in the work. There is a great technical mastery of material and technique in this work that once again illustrates that it pays off when you first have a classically trained basis and then start "playing" and experimenting with your skills.

5. 'About a boy' from Dorien Plaat (The Netherlands)

A strange and mysterious portrait of a very fragile, androgynous figure. Altogether a very much different painting than the previous one. The painting is reminiscent of the work of the artist Jean Rustin for those who know him. What strikes one on closer inspection is the subtle difference in painting styles. On the face, the paint seems to be very thick, almost sculpted on and applied

directly from the tube, while in other parts of the painting it is much thinner. Not only the posture and hands contribute to the alienating effect of this painting, also the use of color contributes to it. The tonality of the background contrasts subtly and beautifully with the color of the body, but is nevertheless in harmony.

6. 'no title' from Marjon van Boeckel (The Netherlands)

A lovely and very soft portrait, both in performance and in style, without being too sweet. The painting has a shrouded and 'soft focus' look although it was painted very sharply still. This is also due to the beautiful alternation of soft and calm colors against some much harder accents such as the green straw and the pink pin. Also nice is that the pink of the pin repeats itself in the collar of the jacket. The calm and even background also contributes to the calm appearance of the portrait. Technically it is painted beautifully and restrained, which is illustrated perfectly in the little hands.

7. 'no title' from Loekie Eybergen

A small, strong and yet sensitive painting of a very seasoned and weathered head. This 'weatheredness' can also be seen in the technique, which is without embellishment and spectacle, but very classic. The painting is therefore reminiscent of a 17th century underpainting for an oil painting.

From a distance you think you can see all kinds of details while up close the painting turns out to be fairly roughly painted. It's very clever how powerful this portrait is within the plane of such a small square panel (only 28 by 31 centimeters). Also the red painted side, as a protruding frame, contributes positively to this.

8. 'Dreaming of the Arc' from Chris Stevens (UK)

A very intriguing scene. This extraordinary double portrait raises many questions. What do this horse and this man mean to each other? What is the symbolism behind it? We see two technically very well painted portraits that are connected by a shadow that is crucial for the balance of the canvas. The background is very subtle and the style and color are the perfect choice for this scene. It does not distract, but it is essential in its simplicity, just enough to suggest (a) space and thus providing a context for the two models. The horse is anatomically perfectly portrayed, the same goes for the man in the foreground. The combination of those two realistic portraits with the almost abstract and surreal setting make this work of art so special.

9. 'Inspector Clousseau' from Romy van Rijckevorsel (The Netherlands)

A very eclectic painting in which we find references to Gustav Klimt (the decorative background, the head and waistcoat of the central figure), but also Egon Schiele (the way the twisted hands are represented). It is also eclectic because of the different styles: drawing, graffiti, painting and graphic elements. All these elements have been combined very successfully into an organic whole in which also a very own handwriting lurks. That's very clever, because the combination of references and styles could have gone wrong very quickly. In this work, however, the artist has stopped at exactly the right moment. The painting is very post-modern in the sense of "everything is possible" and yet it is not restless at all. On the one hand the work is very decorative and on the other hand also hard and almost provocative and vulgar. Yet it is in balance, partly due to its strong composition.

10. 'An unintended façade' from Rosa Boomsma

Rosa is known to the organization of *Painting of the Year* since she won 'Schilderij van het jaar 2015' the Dutch predecessor of Painting of the Year. A technically very smooth portrait. Striking and stately because of the warm red in the background, which is very nicely repeated in the red flowers of the dress, but also by the central, symmetric composition. The simulation of the fabric of the dress and the folds is technically very well executed. The same goes for the light on the fabric. The shortening of the arms and legs is also perfectly rendered. The same goes for the plasticity of the skin and hair. Because of the mysterious look, which makes us guess at the thoughts of the model, the work retains the viewer's attention. The whole gets something iconic through the color contrasts and composition. A well-deserved tenth place.