

23 August 2018

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8AM FRIDAY 24 AUGUST

National Schools Poetry Award celebrates New Zealand's poets of the future

A year 13 student at Wellington's Queen Margaret College has won first place in the 2018 International Institute of Modern Letters' (IIML) National Schools Poetry Award, with her poem 'Vignettes'.

Ilena Shadbolt receives a prize of \$500 and the opportunity to attend a poetry masterclass with poets James Brown and Hera Lindsay Bird at the IIML, home of Victoria University of Wellington's prestigious creative writing programme. Ilena's school library also receives a \$500 book grant. Nine others were shortlisted in the awards and they will also attend the masterclass.

"I'm very excited to attend the masterclass with James Brown and Hera Lindsay Bird. I'm already a fan of Hera Lindsay Bird's poetry and I'm really flattered and empowered to have won the award," says Ilena.



Ilena Shadbolt

"I wrote 'Vignettes' after my friend and I walked down to the dairy from my house at 9pm to get ice-cream. It was a strangely liberating walk; it felt like we were floating between all these glowing fish tanks dotted on the hills, pointing out to each other the little instances playing out in people's living rooms and kitchens."

Judge Louise Wallace—editor of *Starling* journal for young New Zealand writers and author of three collections of poetry—says the young poets who entered the competition are engaging sharply with the world around them, writing about gender, culture and identity, feminism and #metoo, our changing environment and political systems and their implications.

"Ilena Shadbolt's subtly crafted 'Vignettes', is a beautiful observational poem, and as the title suggests, captures small glimpses of life. It is presented in the author's natural voice, nothing feels forced, and as much is conveyed in what the poem doesn't say, as in what it does. There is a nervous tension in this relationship, yet there is also a distance present between the speaker and the city—they are an outsider, looking in."

Ilena Shadbolt will read her winning poem alongside leading Wellington poets at Unity Books Wellington, 12-1pm on Friday 24 August, to celebrate Phantom Billstickers National Poetry Day. National Schools Poetry Award founder and Victoria University Emeritus Professor, Bill Manhire, will introduce the event.

The nine shortlisted poets are: Stella Stevens, Motueka High School; Catherine Davidson, St Hilda's Collegiate; Kushla Siemonek, Taumarunui High School; Patricia Alcartado, Hamilton Girls' High School, Anna Doak, Cerys Fletcher, Cashmere High School; Ruby Rae Macomber, Harriet Carter, Northcote College; Cybella Maffitt, St Cuthbert's College.

“This award has a fine history of uncovering some seriously talented young poets. The 2018 winner and the exciting new writers who are shortlisted receive a great boost from this recognition and are now perfectly placed to take their work to a new level,” IIML Director Professor Damien Wilkins says.

All shortlisted students receive an additional package of literary prizes provided by the New Zealand Book Council, Victoria University Press, *Sport, Landfall*, and the New Zealand Society of Authors, as well as \$100. Flights and accommodation costs are covered for students outside of Wellington to attend the masterclass at the IIML.

The 2018 National Schools Poetry Award is organised by the IIML with the support of Creative New Zealand and advertising agency Ogilvy (formerly Ogilvy & Mather), with promotional support from Wonderlab.

The winning poem, the judge's report and all the shortlisted poems will be available on the [National Schools Poetry Award website](#) from 8am on National Poetry Day, Friday 24 August.

For more information contact Alix Chapman on (04) 463 6908 or alix.chapman@vuw.ac.nz

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LIBERATE YOUR WORDS



2018 Winner
ILENA SHADBOLT
Queen Margaret College (Year 13)

vignettes

we move through streets
washed in sepia and oil
searching for vanilla ice cream.

i don't look at you
but we look at the water, trembling
quivering light pins.

we move between fish tanks
laughing at cubicle people,
skirting round the edges of ourselves.

a woman all bent
over piano keys,
deep-sea creature
cast in red.

casual words and legs
against countertops,
palming a rhythm
from wall to wall.

a man
spilling yolk,
spitting shell
into the receiver.

but you are still without dessert
so march on, as all must do
strobing through capsules of life
entombed in windows at night.

NATIONAL SCHOOLS POETRY AWARD 2018

The National Schools Poetry Award
is organised by the International Institute
of Modern Letters.

Read all ten 2018 finalists and learn
more about the Award at
www.schoolspoetryaward.co.nz

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