



Freelands painting prize winner, Holly Smith, is pictured with some of her work.

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Fine Art graduate wins prestigious painting prize

Holly Smith, a Fine Art graduate of Northumbria University, was one of 12 final-year students to win the Freelands Painting Prize earlier this year.

Holly, who was nominated by her tutors, was selected from around 50 nominations from institutions around the UK to not only win the prize, but also to display art at an upcoming London exhibit.

The art, which was focused around devolution and how derelict buildings

impact the community, will be exhibited at White Chalk Gallery Space in Camden alongside the other winners from 5 October to 16 November this year.

Speaking of the achievement, Holly said: “I am just so, so happy that I was picked, I really didn’t expect it.

“After graduating from Northumbria University, I am keen to get into the creative industry so I’m really hoping that this will help to open a few doors.

“I’m going to head to London for the launch night to network too, so hopefully this prize will lead to some amazing opportunities.”

Launched in 2020, the [Freelands Painting Prize](#) celebrates outstanding painting work from undergraduates around the UK. Each year, all higher education institutions around the country that offer a BA Fine Art course or similar painting qualification can nominate a final-year student to win the prize.

Dr Kate Sloan, Programme Lead for Fine Art at Northumbria University, said: “It is incredible to have had one of our students win at this year’s Freelands Painting Prize.

“Holly’s work demonstrates the high standards, talent and originality of our fine art students. To collect this award is a remarkable achievement for Holly and we are all so pleased that Holly’s work will be exhibited at such a prestigious exhibition.”

Dr Solomon Lennox, Head of Department for the [BA Hons Fine Art](#) programme at Northumbria University, added: “Holly has gone above and beyond to develop a sophisticated painting practice around our built environment and social change.

“Through her time at Northumbria university, Holly has used fragmentary details to explore the social significance of derelict buildings in the North East. She really brings the everyday to life.”

Selected from around 50 nominations from across the UK, the winning paintings featured in the exhibition reflects the diverse interests of

contemporary art students. Each piece is different – some exploring abstract styles with others focusing on serious societal issues.

[This year's competition](#) was judged by four artists, [Harminster Judge](#), [Emily LaBarge](#), [Jenni Lomax](#) and [Sid Motion](#), who brought their experience and success in the industry to judge the nominees.

Sid Motion said: "Being a part of the judging panel is an exciting chance to witness what is happening at the forefront of painters emerging from UK art schools today. The calibre is very high and evidence of the rich, diverse and energetic work being made across the UK."

Discover more about Fine Art study options online by visiting www.northumbria.ac.uk/arts

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