



Smithsonian
*Donald W. Reynolds Center for
American Art and Portraiture*
National Portrait Gallery

ABOUT THE OUTWIN BOOCHEVER PORTRAIT COMPETITION 2006

The Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006 is named for the late Virginia Outwin Boochever, who served as a volunteer at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery for 19 years.

During Mrs. Boochever's years of involvement with the Gallery, and until the present day, the Gallery has regularly acquired work by living artists, but has not commissioned portraits of living Americans other than former Presidents. In addition, until recently, the fostering of innovative contemporary portraiture was not among the Gallery's priorities.

In the art world, however, many of today's emerging artists are using portraiture or self-portraiture to explore complex issues of identity. At the same time, these artists are also testing the boundaries of the genre of figurative art. Others are finding success through a renewed attention to classical training in representational art. Artists who regularly create portraits on commission are also experiencing a higher level of interest in their work.

Mrs. Boochever shared the Gallery's increasing interest in the important role that contemporary portraiture could play in the life of the Gallery, as well as in heralding the Gallery's engagement with figurative art and portraiture in today's world. Inspired by well-established portrait competitions at the National Portrait Gallery in London and Australia's Art Gallery of New South Wales, she made a major gift to the Gallery, and the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006 was born. With this generous endowment, Mrs. Boochever provided the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery with the resources to establish a portrait competition of its own, designed to encourage contemporary portraiture, especially among emerging artists.

The inaugural Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition began in the summer of 2005, when figurative and portrait artists living and working in the United States were invited to enter the competition. More than 4,000 entries were received from across the country, and the resulting 51 painted and sculpted finalist portraits will comprise the lead exhibition for the Gallery's July 2006 reopening.

The grand prize of \$25,000 will include a commission to create a portrait of a prominent living American for the Gallery's permanent collection. Other cash prizes will be awarded for selected works. The winner's commission will launch another new direction for the Gallery—to acquire through commission innovative likenesses of remarkable living Americans by today's artists.

Future competitions, to be held triennially, will explore other forms of portraiture, including watercolor, drawing, photography, film, video, and electronic and digital media.

###

Media: for more information, please contact Cindy Karra at (202) 974-5009 or karrac@ruderfinn.com; or Bethany Morookian Bentley at (202) 275-1768.