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ADELAIDE FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT MCFARLANE AS 2017 JIM BETTISON & HELEN JAMES AWARD RECIPIENT

The Adelaide Film Festival today announced leading Australian social documentary and arts photographer, Robert McFarlane as the recipient of the 2017 Jim Bettison and Helen James Award. The prestigious award, now in its third year, recognises individual Australians who have contributed exemplary and inspiring lifelong work of high achievement in their area of expertise, with benefit to the wider Australian community.

Adelaide based McFarlane has been capturing defining moments of Australian life for more than half a century. From his early work in the 1960s capturing the now iconic images of a young Indigenous activist Charlie Perkins at university and the Beatles arriving in Australia, McFarlane went on to photograph many historical Australian moments both big and small over the subsequent decades. Prime Ministers, film directors, Go-Go dancers, artists, surgeons, activists and workers, all have found themselves in front of McFarlane's lens as he uniquely chronicled the changing face of Australia.

Robert's work is best described as unsentimental and accurate and of course poetic.

This award both acknowledges his extensive and acclaimed body of work, and grants \$50,000 which will go towards collating a valuable and comprehensive archive of his photographs to ensure Australians can benefit from his work well into the future. McFarlane will be assisted in this, and particularly in the preparation of a monograph of his most important images, by fellow photographer and writer, Gary Cockburn, who nominated McFarlane for the Award.

As the 2017 recipient, Robert McFarlane joins pre-eminent figure in Australian dance **Meryl Tankard**, Adventurer and environmental scientist **Tim Jarvis** and creator of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas **Greg Mackie OAM**, in the alumni of amazing Australians whose work has benefited from the \$50,000 Award.

QUOTES

"Congratulations to a great South Australian, Robert McFarlane on receiving this prestigious award. It's fantastic that Robert's evocative body of work and multitude of achievements have been recognised, and I look forward to seeing more of his work in the future," said Premier and Minister for the Arts Jay Weatherill.

Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, Director-General, National Library of Australia said "Robert McFarlane is one of Australia's most eminent documentary photographers, and a noted critic and writer on photography. The National Library of Australia is honoured to hold a large collection of his powerful portraits of notable personalities and candid images of social life and conditions. Robert McFarlane has made an enduring contribution to Australian photography over his long career and is richly deserving of this significant award from the Jim Bettison & Helen James Foundation".

"Helen and Jim envisioned an Award that would be given annually to an individual whose lifetime work is of significant value and benefit to the community; and who could use the opportunity offered by the award to record, archive or extend that work; or to complete a project related to that work." said Doreen Mellor, spokesperson for the Jim Bettison and Helen James Foundation.

Recipient Robert McFarlane said "During my five-decade working life as a photojournalist, it's been a privilege to witness the evolving social, artistic and political fabric of Australia. The cultural landscape of Australia has long included Meryl Tankard, and having been fortunate enough to photograph her in performance, I was delighted to learn that she was a recipient of the Bettison James Award last year. Knowing that Tim Jarvis and Greg Mackie have been just as important in their fields, I'm honoured to have been invited into such illustrious company, and for my photography to be recognised as being worthy of such an important award as this.

The Award is far more than just an honour, of course – it affords recipients the opportunity to continue and build on their life’s work, and that speaks to the vision, foresight and generosity of Jim Bettison and Helen James.”

Adelaide Film Festival CEO and Artistic Director Amanda Duthie said “Adelaide Film Festival has been incredibly proud to partner with the Foundation to present an Award in honour of the vision and passion of Jim Bettison and Helen James. This award aligns with Adelaide Film Festival’s aims to garner innovative partnerships and collaborate to create opportunities for Australian key thinkers and practitioners, through the Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund enabling bold new Australian screen stories, and through the Festival present events that provide a deeper and more rigorous understanding of the way we live now and how we could live in the future,” she said.

BACKGROUND

The Jim Bettison and Helen James Foundation was established to realise the vision of Dr Jim Bettison and Ms Helen James, who were committed to supporting a wide range of activity in the community through philanthropy and professional engagement. Jim co-founded Codan, a successful and award-winning Adelaide company, established the Developed Image Photographic Gallery and served as Deputy Chancellor at the University of Adelaide. Helen was an exhibiting studio artist. She served on various key arts committees and was a founding member of the National Library of Australia’s Foundation Board.

Robert McFarlane – Artist Biography

Robert McFarlane was born in Glenelg, South Australia in 1942. Having decided to become a documentary photographer he moved to Sydney and began freelancing for Walkabout, People, Flair and Vogue magazines. With encouragement from established photojournalists David Moore and Robert Walker, McFarlane started exploring the two genres of photography that would dominate his career for the next five decades – social issues and performance, particularly cinema and theatre.

Apart from the years 1969-73, when McFarlane freelanced in London for The Telegraph Magazine, Nova and The Sunday Times Magazine, his photographic archive covers four of the most convulsive decades in recent Australian history. An articulate, dissident Indigenous voice would emerge through radicals such as Charlie Perkins (McFarlane’s 1963 photo-essay in Walkabout magazine covered Perkins’s life as the first Aboriginal student to study at and graduate from Sydney University); in 1975 the reforming Whitlam government was dismissed.

Whether documenting the early professional performances of acclaimed Australian Oscar winning actors Geoffrey Rush and Cate Blanchett, or an anonymous young Aboriginal girl making a wish in a Queensland country graveyard, McFarlane applies equal rigour to observing the human condition.

In addition to almost constant publication in newspapers and magazines, McFarlane has contributed to a wide range of books, was the stills photographer for more than 30 films, and has worked for a number of leading Australian theatre companies. McFarlane’s work alongside leading Indigenous photographers such as Ricky Maynard and Michael Riley for the landmark project, and book, *After 200 Years* remains one of his proudest achievements. Film and theatre credits include *They’re A Weird Mob*, *Puberty Blues*, *The Last Days Of Chez Nous*, *The Year My Voice Broke*, *Muriel’s Wedding*, *Cats*, *Diary Of A Madman*, *The Phantom Of The Opera*, and *Miss Saigon*.

McFarlane’s photographs are held in the National Gallery of Australia, The National Portrait Gallery, The National Film & Sound Archive, The Art Gallery Of South Australia, The Art Gallery Of New South Wales, and numerous private collections. In 2009 Sarah Johnson of the Manly Art Gallery & Museum curated a retrospective of McFarlane’s work, *Received Moments*, and in 2017 he was the subject of Mira Soulio’s documentary *The Still Point*, which was broadcast as part of the ABC’s Creatives series.

McFarlane has also written extensively on photography as a critic for The Australian and more recently, The Sydney Morning Herald, and has contributed critical essays for more than 20 books and catalogues. It is hoped that this writing about photography will also be compiled in a book.



McFarlane has also worked as a photographic judge, both in Australia and internationally. In 2002 he was one of an international panel judging the HPA Awards in Beijing; in 2011 he judged the Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize; he also has a long association with the Head On Portrait Prize, for which he has judged the Critic's Choice Award on several occasions. Never one to ignore local photography, McFarlane has spoken at and acted as an advisor for Shimmer Festival, which is run by the City Of Onkaparinga, South Australia. Robert McFarlane is represented by the Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney.

INTERVIEWS available with: Robert McFarlane, Doreen Mellor and Amanda Duthie, Director/CEO Adelaide Film Festival

Images: Robert McFarlane and an iconic photo from Robert's collection of Charlie Perkins

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