

Rico Craig wins 2017 Anne Elder Poetry Award

Rico Craig has won the prestigious 2017 Anne Elder Poetry Award with a work 'Bone Ink' adjudged by Libby Hart and Eileen Chong as exciting and deeply moving.

The judges said Rico's work was a highly original and unflinching voice that traversed the poet's stomping grounds of Western Sydney and Malaysia, as well as evoking other locations.

"The poems within Bone Ink are cinematically vivid explorations of intimacy, brotherhood, violence and fate. Craig crafts all of this with an assured and wild vibrancy. His adept handling of modern working class life is not only brave, but essential reading. What is at the crux of this collection is not disadvantage and struggle, but rather the love and honour of true connection."

Bone Ink is available from ricocraig.com

Highly commended

Eileen and Libby highly commended Bella Li's 'Argosy'.

They said the work was a cerebral, yet playful collection broadly presented in two movements. Li interrogates art, history, geography, film, philosophy, and language through the muscular form of the prose poem, juxtaposed with original photography and collage. Argosy is at once immediate and surreal, and self-reflexively leads us to question our received knowledge of the world, while engaging with and commenting on aesthetic traditions practised by experimental artists such as Joseph Cornell. As an artefact, the book is a singularly beautiful object that pushes the boundaries of what narrative, poetic meaning, and indeed, a collection of poetry might be.

Available from Vagabond Press.

Commended

'The Agonist' by Shastra Deo and 'These Wild Houses' by Omar Sakr received commendation awards.

The judges said The Agonist by Shastra Deo was an incisive debut collection of verve and originality. Always engaged with struggle, these poems are intimate and clear-eyed explorations of physical and emotional endurance. Deo is interested in inner and outer worlds in what is essentially poetry of blood and pain, damage and loss. The result is a work of gruesome beauty that references a wide range of subjects, including anatomy, war, scouts, boxing, augury, tarot cards, fishing and entomology. Deo also provides a healthy dialogue with a range of poetic forms, including World War I poetry. The Agonist is often grisly and disturbing, but it is also a highly accomplished first collection.

Available from University of Queensland Press.

"Omar Sakr's 'These Wild Houses' showcases an impressive new voice in Australian poetry, writing from the perspective of a 'queer Muslim Arab Australian from Western Sydney, from a broke and broken family'. The collection showcases the many 'houses' of the poet, who acts as host and mediator to the generous rooms contained within. There is both power and passion in Sakr's writing, which shifts with great control and purpose between the internal and external worlds of self and other. These Wild Houses presents us with an urgent and necessary vision of contemporary urban masculine identities, communicated in poems that are fully achieved in both language and form." The judges said.

Available from Cordite Books.

The Anne Elder Award

This important award seeks to honour Anne Josephine Chloe Elder (1918–1976) and her legacy as a poet.

The Anne Elder Poetry Award is one of only a small number of book prizes in the English-speaking world that specifically awards a first collection of poetry. In addition, this year's award recognises the 40th anniversary of this significant prize for emerging poets.

Congratulations to Rico Craig, Bella Li, Shastra Deo and Omar Sakr.

We also thank the poets and publishers who submitted books to the FAW Anne Elder Poetry Award 2017.

The talent of Australia's emerging poets burns brightly.

