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### **SHOWCASING TOMORROW'S STAR WRITERS**

A poignant story of a charged encounter between two men at a New York party by Year 12 Kāpiti College student Amaya Colombick has been judged the winning entry in the 2023 Mansfield Short Story Award, announced at an event held for finalists at the National Library on Wednesday 20 November. A shortlist of 11 finalists from local secondary schools was judged by award-winning writer Sue Orr. The annual competition is open to Year 12 and 13 students in the Wellington region.

Orr said she found the shortlisted stories remarkable for the variety of subject matter explored by the writers, making it difficult to judge. The winning story, 'Ouroboros', was selected for the \$500 cash prize on the strength of its craft, with Orr commenting, "The control of the story's pace and tension is startling – of a standard rare in short fiction written by much older writers, let alone teenaged ones."

Two stories were highly commended. 'Patupaiarehe', a moving story located in te ao Māori by Rebecca Connolly, Year 13 at St Mary's College, and 'Fishing', a chilling misogynist manifesto handled with narrative restraint by Sophie Leung-Wai, Year 13 at Hutt Valley High School. Runner up was Nadia Scott, Year 13 at Newlands College, whose story 'Jacob' captures an entire family history, with all its complications, in one moment and reveals a masterful control of language and imagery.

Orr commented that, "The shortlisted stories explore the many challenges facing young people today. But there is much joy and celebration of life – and humour – to be found in these works as well."

Speaking at the awards event, Orr said, "I love reading high school short stories because it affords me the privilege of being a witness to the first steps in the careers of tomorrow's star writers of Aotearoa New Zealand."

Three of this year's finalists were also finalists in last year's awards, which shows their consistently high standard of writing says Cherie Jacobson, Director of Katherine Mansfield House & Garden, the historic house museum that runs the competition.

"We are very grateful to the Gay Saker Bequest for making this Award possible," says Jacobson. "Gay was a big fan of Katherine Mansfield's writing and this year is particularly significant as it marks one hundred years since Mansfield's death. Showcasing young writers is the perfect way to honour Mansfield's creative legacy."

Jacobson also noted the support of the National Library in hosting the event and making manuscripts and photographs from its extensive Mansfield collection available for the students and their guests

to view. "Holding the event at the National Library is a wonderful fit and we are very appreciative of its ongoing support."

The stories of all 11 finalists have been published on the Katherine Mansfield House & Garden website, with the winner also being published on the Verb Wellington website.

ENDS – contact details follow.

Image: (left to right) Judge Sue Orr with 10 of the 11 finalists.

Photographer: Emily K. Brown. Further photographs supplied upon request.

Finalists' stories can be found at: [www.katherinemansfield.com/creative-corner/km-short-story-competition](http://www.katherinemansfield.com/creative-corner/km-short-story-competition). The winning story will also be published on the Verb Wellington website: [www.verbwellington.nz](http://www.verbwellington.nz).

The annual Mansfield Short Story Award has a \$500 cash prize and is made possible by the Gay Saker Bequest. Gay Saker was a Wellington teacher of English and reading for over 20 years and a great admirer of the writing of Katherine Mansfield.

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