

Local portrait artist makes the cut in national competition

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Edmund Haakonson's portrait of Sgt. Marc Beaudin has been short-listed for the Kingston Prize for Contemporary Canadian Portraiture.

Edmund Haakonson is short-listed for the Kingston Prize for Contemporary Canadian Portraiture for Sergeant Beaudin -- much to his surprise, but not for the reason you might think.

"I initially painted that portrait because I wanted to have a work I could keep in the studio to show potential clients what I can do," says Haakonson, a well-known figurative painter and president of the Harcourt House Gallery.

Haakonson is among 30 artists short-listed for the contest, which boasts a \$3,000 prize and has attracted more than 148 entries from eight Canadian provinces and one U.S. state. His subject, Marc Beaudin, is a local musician and member of the Royal Canadian Artillery Band.

"I do a fair amount of commission portrait work, but the paintings are out of my hands as soon as I finish them. This way, I figured I'd be able to keep this painting for a couple of years."

Despite his desire to hang on to this particular canvas, Haakonson is going to have to wait until late in October. (The painting is now in Kingston, Ont., awaiting a public showing of contest finalists and the Oct. 6 judging by Canuck art world luminaries, including Richard Rhodes, editor of Canadian Art magazine, and Kitty Scott, curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery of Canada.)

As for the painting's subject matter: "I was attracted to the pomp and circumstance of the military uniform, but also the contrast between Marc as a local musician I kept on bumping into in the art circle and his life as a soldier. I was really fascinated with that contrast."