

## Michael Simpson wins 2016 John Moores painting prize

**Wiltshire-based artist wins £25,000 for Leper Squint 19, a depiction of a structure outside a medieval church window**



📷 Installation view of Leper Squints 18, 20 and 27, by Michael Simpson. Photograph: All images courtesy Stuart Whipps (photographer) and Spike Island All works courtesy the artist and David Risley Gallery

Michael Simpson has been named winner of one of the UK's most prestigious art prizes, for an austere work that one judge admitted made her feel slightly uncomfortable.

Simpson's minimalist painting won the 2016 John Moores painting prize, a biennial event that has been staged at Liverpool's Walker [Art](#) Gallery since 1957.

The 76-year-old Wiltshire-based artist wins £25,000 and follows in the footsteps of [Rose Wylie who, aged 80, won the prize in 2014.](#)



📷 Leper Squint 19 (2015) by Michael Simpson Photograph: Clare E Bates

One of the judges, the Turner Prize-shortlisted artist Gillian Carnegie, said: “I felt slightly uncomfortable looking at the cold, austere painting of Michael Simpson. As a painter and as a viewer this is a feeling that greatly inspires me. The painting has an elegance that is timeless. For me it was the clear prize winner.”

Simpson, who [shared a room with David Hockney](#) when they studied at the Royal College of Art in the early 1960s, won for a painting called *Leper Squint 19*, depicting a ladder underneath a “leper squint” - a medieval church window that allowed people with leprosy, and other “undesirables”, a chance to watch sermons below.

Another of the judges, the artist Ansel Krut, called it a “wonderfully understated, conceptually elegant work” which recalled the church interiors painted by the 17th-century Dutch artist [Pieter Saenredam](#).

Krut said: “The painting uses an almost minimal vocabulary to open up a world of great sympathetic imagination. It touches on the nature of silence, on distance and on exclusion. But most importantly, it touches on the privileges of looking.”

It is the fifth time in 27 years that Simpson’s work has been selected for the prize exhibition, which is now part of the bigger [Liverpool Biennial](#) visual arts festival. Sandra Penketh, director of art galleries at National Museums Liverpool, said this was “a phenomenal achievement and is testament to the enduring appeal of his painting”.

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Simpson was chosen from a [shortlist that also included paintings by Talar Aghbashian, Gabriella Boyd, Benjamin Jamie, and Selma Parlour](#). The other judges this year were the artists Phoebe Unwin and Ding Yi, and the author and curator Richard Davey.

The John Moores prize was set up by Moores, the late Littlewoods tycoon, in 1957 and has been won over the years by an impressive list of painters; names that include Hockney, Patrick Heron, Euan Uglow and Peter Doig.