

Feathers fly as Royal Easter Show's chook art masters vie for prize



Lucy Culliton, judge of the chicken painting category at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, says she takes her role of chook art expert 'very seriously'. Picture: James Croucher

MICHAELA BOLAND THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM April 7, 2017

Popular still life and rural artist Lucy Culliton has taken a break from her day job to this week step up as an art judge at Sydney's Royal Easter Show.

Renowned landscape painter Tim Storrier has judged the landscape entries, while Culliton, who is best known for her animals and agricultural show pictures, was invited for the third year in a row to judge the still life category and the chooks.

"I take it very seriously, it's fun but I'm looking for quality and individuality in the painting, for something I'd take home and hang on my wall," she said.

"I'd hang all these on my wall," she said of the pictures she awarded prizes to in the still life category.

That's high praise for artworks almost exclusively submitted by competent amateurs to the selling exhibition where prices begin at \$100 and don't climb much higher than \$4000.

Across the categories of art and crafts there were 5000 entries. The only ones which tend not to be hung are those which are either too heavy or profane or do not comply with the competition in some other way.

On opening night \$55,000 in art sales were recorded but the chook art has been slow to sell, possibly on account of the fact the picture and craftworks are on display in the chook pavilion rather than with the rest of the art.

Culliton awarded the \$2000 first prize in the chook category to James Brennan's painting of a man and a hen.

"I don't know who the sitter is but I love his jumper and the composition and because the painting shows his hands," she said.

Culliton has 30 to 40 chooks on her farm outside Cooma in NSW and said raising birds is very hands on.

Royal Agricultural Society councillor Evan Hughes has helped organise the competition since he joined the society's arts and crafts committee after being introduced to show life by his father, retired art dealer Ray Hughes. Hughes said the Easter Show art exhibition attracts more entrants than the Archibald Prize and is seen by far more people during the 14 days of the show.