

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Molly Morpeth art award winners named

**Kathy Forsyth**  
Arts reporter

INTRIGUE, pleasure and even annoyance and shock.

These are some of the reactions the winners' works in the Molly Morpeth Canaday three-dimension art award will probably invoke, says the judge Ruth Watson.

The winners were announced on Saturday night, and emerging Wellington artist Sorawit Songsataya was named recipient of the 2020 Molly Morpeth Canaday Trust Major Award of \$10,000.

Watson said she was impressed with the miniature worlds Songsataya created with his work, *Morning Dew*.

The collection of cast resin orbs are filled with dried plant materials and contemplate the meteorological forces shaping our lives externally, as also existing within us.

Watson was moved by *Morning Dew's* whispers of ecological warning, as it explored themes of nature while hinting at social and human problems to be solved.

The orbs are displayed in a rectangular glass case, although this is contrary to how the artist imagined them being shown.

"The artist originally wanted them distributed around the floor of the gallery, but that would be a bit of an occupational health and safety issue ... But I do like the idea of these little miniature worlds rolling around and orbiting."

"Although they are resin, which is a little bit toxic, they are like little water droplets with suspended life in them. It is very Sorawit."

Nine other outstanding works were also recognised with awards.

*Like Topex*, a small ceramic work by Dunedin-based Madeleine Child received the Akel Family Runner-Up Award of \$4000.

Watson said the kooky work emerged from a spouting potato the artist had in her studio.

"What also impressed me is that she is obviously deeply immersed in the background of her own craft."

The Craigs Investment Partners Youth Award of \$2500 went to Auckland artist Oliver Cain for his ceramic, *Fruit Bowl II*, a urinal filled with ceramic bananas, which Watson said was both in your face and hilarious.



**MERIT: Pink Coralscape IV** by Chauncey Flay is another merit award winner with his work constructed with coral mixed with builders' fill. D9585-177



**TINY WORLDS:** *Morning Dew* won the overall prize of \$10,000. Sorawit Songsataya, inset, has created miniature worlds filled with objects from nature. Photos Troy Baker/John Mann D9577-20/D9585-119

"We are all used to bananas as a stand-in for a particular body part ... and we know in the past some of the gay beats were kind of underground loos, so there is a thing about anonymous sexual encounters."

"He is going head on with some confronting stuff but in a witty and amusing way."

"There are also some heavy art references, [marcel] Duchamp's urinal [titled Fountain], a very famous 20th century piece."

Hannah Valentin's work *Anytime* was one of two Arts Whakatane and Robinson Law Highly Commended awardees of \$1000.

The solid bronze piece grapples with difficult concepts and Watson said its seriousness of intent impressed itself on her as judge over time.

"There are comments about the athletic body or the gym body, our desire to improve ourselves yet we are all in this unstable arrangement, and it is asking some questions of the value of some of our activities."

On the other end of the spectrum is *Tolly Tuita*, from Wellington's Three Graces - Ufuasini Akale'a Ta'alea "is fun and evocative", said Watson.

Watson said they were joyous figures who appeared to be lying in wait and ready to spring forth from the wall for a performance.

"For something that is actually still it has got a lot of animation in it or that potential for movement..."

*Useful Object* - remnants from a break-up by Stuart Forsyth, *Cross-Culturalism* by Lisa Passmore and *Pink Coralscape IV* by Chauncey Flay each received merit award prizes of \$500 each.

Watson admitted *Useful Object* "irritated its way into contentment".

The quirky installation is a plywood box holding rolls of toilet paper and the artist notes that it is constructed of "macrocarpa, acrylic paint, resin, adhesive, detritus from the garage floor and screws".

Watson said there was a back-story to this work.

"He made an artwork that went in Sculpture on the Gulf but when he got it back it was a bad time in his life, so he smashed that work and then out of the remnants made this thing they used to put toilet paper on in their house."

Watson said the artist had been living

with this object that was once a piece of art but was now a functional useful item, a toilet roll holder, and then started returning to thinking maybe it was art or symbolised the time of the break-up.

Obope artist Linda Clews was awarded the Local Artist Merit Award for her delicate reflection on the fragile bonds stretching between lovers, friends and family that can ultimately form the strongest of supports.

Her piece, *Bridge Between Two Walls*, is constructed of cable ties and bird netting, and Watson was impressed by its delicacy.

Watson said she liked the seriousness and ambition of Passmore's kete, titled *Cross-Culturalism*.

She said although there had been more impressive kete, the artist had combined two different styles of weaving that apparently never went together.

"They are two different types and

have two different functions, so she has found a way of putting them together ... they represent two quite different forms of storage, so putting them together she is putting together two worlds or ideas and it is possibly also her two worlds clashing."

*Pink Coralscape IV* by Chauncey Flay is another merit award winner with his work constructed with coral mixed with builders' fill.

"It is another of this kind of weird reconstituting nature, a bit like the Sorawit piece people are messing up and engaging the natural and unnatural," said Watson.

An exhibition of the finalists can be viewed at Te Koputu, Whakatane library and exhibition centre until April 12.

Visitors are encouraged to vote for the work they think should receive the People's Choice Merit Award.



**TOILET HUMOUR:** The Youth Award has gone to Oliver Cain for his ceramic, *Fruit Bowl II*, an amusing piece that comments on random homosexual encounters. D9577-27/D9585-156



JUDGE: Ruth Watson announces this year's Molly Morpeth Canaday 3D Award winners. D9585-031



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UP CLOSE: Chanelle James takes a closer look at the artwork on show at the Molly Morpeth Canaday exhibition. D9585-010



MERIT WINNER: Lisa Passmore collects her prize for her work, *Cross-Culturalism*, from Pam Mossman. D9585-062