

Passion for Lake George lands artist big prize

By Helen Musa

A Canberra artist with a passion for the spiritual qualities of Lake George has won the \$5000 Phoenix Prize for spiritual art.

Pete Smith, of Kingston, was named last week as the winner from a field of 173 entries for his unusual installation *Emergence 1: the Transfiguration*.

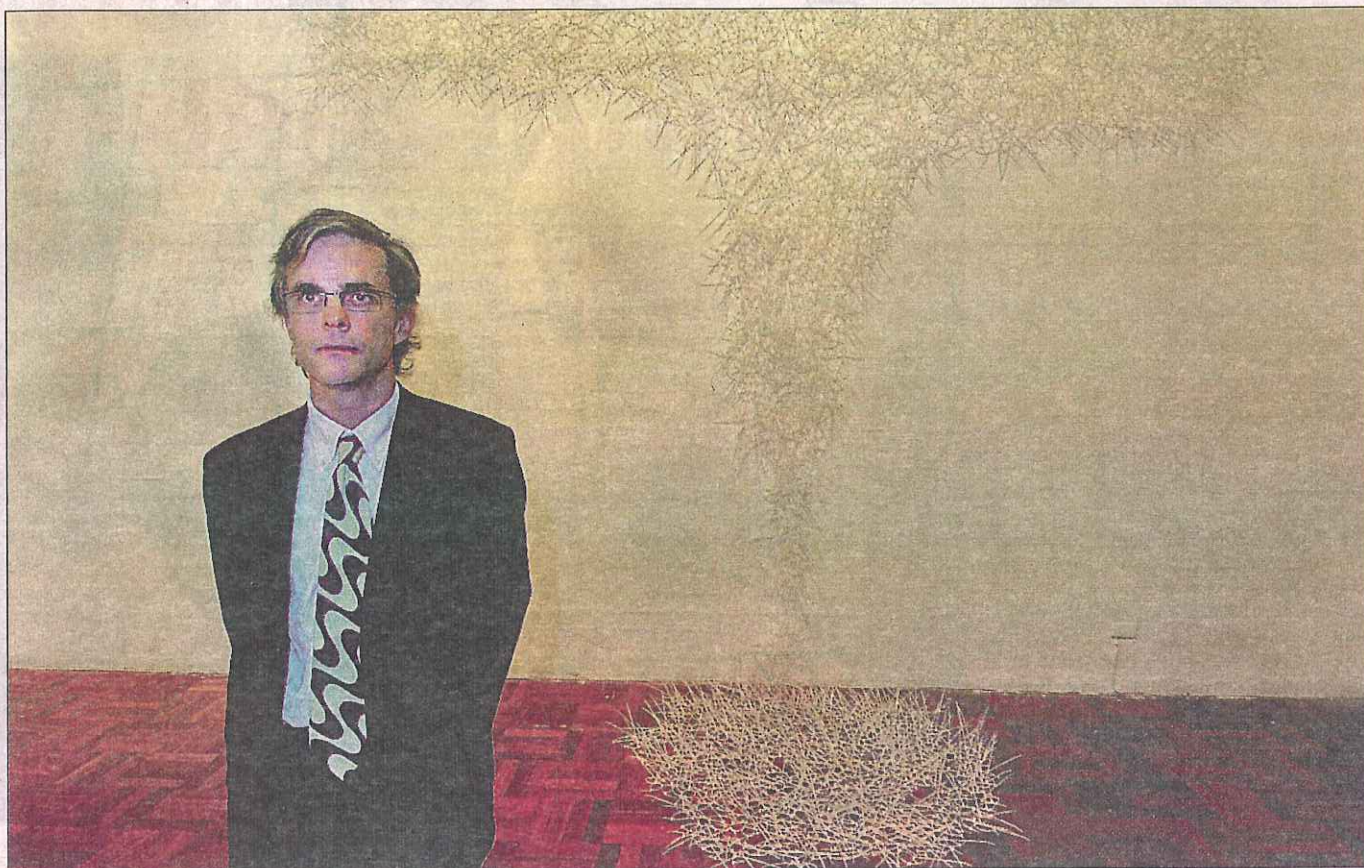
Transfiguration was described as "wonderfully transfigured. . . in raiment white and glistening. . . delivered from the disquietude of this world" and is made from 5000 cable ties knitted together.

Smith said the work reflected his own spiritual journey, "a journey of continuously changing form and increasing complexity".

The judges, director of Canberra Contemporary Art Space David Broker, head of the ANU School of Art Gordon Bull and ANU art history lecturer Elizabeth Findlay, decided to commend all of the 38 short-listed entries, but singled out Smith's work for its transformation of modest, humble materials and its ambiguous use of symbols such as a crown of thorns, a reference to the Crucifixion.

The Phoenix, first awarded in 2005 to ACT artist Blaide Lallemand, arose from the winding up of the Christian Media Association ACT Inc, whose committee believed free-to-air television was becoming difficult to source and fund.

It decided to use its remaining funds to establish a cultural prize for artists, to be funded for about four years, during which the ANU would seek additional donations to create a perpetual prize. The intention of individual artists was to be left to them, with no holds barred. The name Phoenix



SIX MONTHS OF WORK: Kingston artist Pete Smith in front of his artwork, *Emergence 1: the Transfiguration*. Picture: RICHARD BRIGGS

was intended to suggested that the prize had arisen "from the ashes of the donating organisation".

The initial competition contained works depicting motifs from Christianity, tarot, homosexuality, and the spirituality

of Australian Aborigines. The Phoenix Prize exhibition is at the ANU School of Art Gallery until April 24.

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ready to break the
glass," the unnamed
source said.

Opposition work-
place spokeswoman
Julia Gillard
predicted the Gov-
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by WorkChoices,
despite public con-
cern at the impact of
the reforms.

The unpopularity
of the laws was cited
as a reason for the
Liberal-National
Opposition's poor
showing in last
month's NSW elec-
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Steve Fielding intro-
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ANDY,
TEAM MEMBER

"We're open