

**OPENING REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE
HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF
TASMANIA AT THE 2013 TASMANIAN ART PRIZE, PERTH,
FRIDAY 12TH APRIL 2013**

It is a great pleasure for my wife and me to be here again at Eskleigh for the opening of the annual Tasmanian Art Prize. We were up here earlier in the year to open this fantastic new lounge and adjoining outdoor area for the residents' use, built with funds raised by the staff and volunteers. Established in 1947, Eskleigh has a long and proud history of supporting people with a disability so that they may enjoy a quality of life not otherwise possible. Eskleigh provides residential care, supported accommodation, attendant care, respite services and community events. Eskleigh supports and encourages clients to embrace life and become active members of their community, enriching not only the lives of people with a disability, but feeding back into a prosperous Tasmanian community. Of course, all of that costs money and the well-established Art prize – now in its 20th year is a big fund raising event for Eskleigh. To date, it has raised in excess of a quarter of a million dollars and to celebrate the 20th anniversary 13 of the 18 artists who have won the prize over its 20-year history have contributed a current work to this year's exhibition. (In case you think my maths are a little shaky there I can tell you that some of the artists have won the prize twice!!)

As well as raising funds and raising public awareness of the great work that Eskleigh does, the Tasmanian Art Award is also intended to show the artists' work to the public and to reward artists' efforts with cash prizes and awards for excellence. This year the Award has attracted over 200 entries; some by established and well-known artists and some by lesser known or emerging artists, so it is a win for Eskleigh,

it is a win for the artists and it can be a win for all of you by acquiring a work that you can take home and which will please you for many years to come.

I would just like to publically thank this year's judging panel: Mr William Mora, owner of William Mora Galleries in Richmond, Victoria; Mr Greg Leong formerly the Director of the Burnie Regional Gallery and Art Centre, now General Manager Theatre North and practising artist and visual arts teacher, Vivienne Hale. I don't know how they make their selections because there is such an interesting, but eclectic mix of work here in this year's exhibition. I would also like to publically thank those who have supported the Tasmanian Art Award as sponsors, especially major sponsor Bendigo Bank, Southern Cross Television, Perth Pharmacy, Goaty Hill Wines and the Examiner Newspaper.

Now I know that you are all expecting to receive a little guidance from me on the difficult issue of how to choose an appropriate work of art to buy, so I looked around a bit before I came up here and found some research that had been done by American artist, David Levine and art critic and sociology PhD student, Alix Rule into what they called "International Art English."¹ This is the special language that is used to describe art and appears frequently in galleries and in catalogues. You need to understand that you cannot hope to make a wise purchase unless you are well versed International Art Speak. My sources speak, clearly unfairly, of it being "full of pompous paradoxes, plagues of adverbs and endless sentences."² It is, of course, not easy for you to quickly learn International Art Speak for, as the authors say, it is a bit

¹ A report of Levine and Rule's essay appears in the Guardian Weekly 22nd February 2013 at page 40.

² Supra

like pornography – hard to describe, but you know it when you see it. But I am afraid to tell you that if you want to hold your own in a foyer conversation about an art exhibition, you will need International Art Speak. So to begin with try a few short stabs like this one: ‘I have always thought that reality functions as the artist’s field of action.’ If you work hard at it, you can try for longer bursts of International Art Speak and if successful you will certainly impress your friends as you stand in front of one of those big paintings in the downstairs’ rooms and, speaking with languid ease, you look over their heads and airily ask do they not agree that “the artist is bringing us face to face with our own preconceived hierarchy of cultural values and assumptions of artistic worth?” You will find that all your friends will compete to be the first to say that they couldn’t agree more with you.

But of course, I am aware no matter how hard you try some of you will never be able to get a handle on International Art Speak, no matter how hard you try. For some of you even short statements in International Art Speak such as: “this work creates an unquestioning polemic dividing self from others” will be beyond you. To those of you who are in such dire straits, my best advice to you is keep your mouth shut, look around until you see something you really like and before you have time to formulate a single adjective or adverb, run straight to Dale Luttrell and say “I like it. I’ll buy it. Here’s my credit card ” It’s really the only way to go at the Eskleigh Art Award, which I now have great pleasure in declaring open with my very best wishes for a great success.