

**OPENING OF THE HUTCHINS ART PRIZE EXHIBITION**  
**BY**  
**THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**HOBART – MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2013**

Good evening everybody and a big welcome from me and my wife to the 13th Hutchins Art Prize. I think that this is the third time that I have been privileged to open this great event now conducted on a biennial basis - I mention that this art prize is now held biennially because this is my 6th year in office as Governor and I wouldn't want you to think that the organisers would have had the temerity to ask anyone other than me to do this job!!

This competition is a key initiative in the Hutchins School's Cultural programme. I think that over the last decade Tasmania has been increasingly recognised as a place where the arts are encouraged, can flourish and thrive. People now come here from both overseas and interstate to enjoy the performing and visual arts. The charge has been led by the Museum of Old and New Art and the revamp of TMAG; by music festivals like the Festival of Voices and Hobart Baroque; and by diverse other festivals that put on performances all over the State such as 10 Days on the Island. In addition, exhibitions like this one also help to increase an interest in the arts and make the island an interesting and cultural place to visit. Interestingly, the Tasmanian Tourism Industry Business Sentiment Survey just released<sup>1</sup> describes current business confidence for tourism operators in Tasmania as 83 out of 100, as opposed to only 28 out of 100 in March 2011. There is no doubt in my

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tict.com.au/tict-industry-reports/survey-september-2013-sentiment> accessed 7th October 2013

mind that the resurgence of the performing and visual arts is responsible for at least part of that increase in confidence in the tourism sector.

In 2009 the Australian Art Review stated that, “Since its beginnings in 1997, the Hutchins Art Prize has grown to become one of the most prominent prizes for works on paper in Australia with a current cash pool of \$18,000.” A primary aim of the Hutchins acquisitive art prize is to build up an impressive collection of paintings, drawings and prints which the School displays in public and private spaces for the benefit of all associated with Hutchins. As the Headmaster, Mr Warwick Dean once wrote “Boys at Hutchins pass through the corridors and classrooms in the presence of art on a daily basis and I am pleased to confirm that exposure to art is a key component of the cultural experience the School offers to its community.”<sup>2</sup>

I think that, in addition to that benefit, there is no doubt that this art prize has played an important role in helping to promote Tasmania as a place where the arts are appreciated and encouraged as well as making a substantial contribution to the visual arts in Tasmania generally.

The key to this competition is that the condition precedent to entry into the competition is that the art must be on paper. It doesn't matter if it is a water colour, or a portrait or a landscape; an abstract or even a collage, so long as the art is on paper. I have to confess that I have long known that this is the fundamental rule of this competition but until

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hutchins.tas.edu.au/assets/HutchinsArtPrizeEntryForm2011.pdf>, accessed 29 August 2011 accessed 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013

recently I never really understood why that was so. Well, as you know, this acquisitive competition for works on paper is open to artists from Australasia and the Pacific Rim, both emerging and well established and as I have said, as well as promoting the arts in Tasmania, the Hutchins School is building a collection of the best pieces from artists in Australasia and the Pacific. Now, if the art prize was an open, unfettered competition, the Hutchins School could not expect to acquire the best works because it would be unable to find the money to match the artists' expectations in an open competition where large canvases by prominent artists might be expected to sell for \$40,000 or \$50,000. The fact is the prize money has to be sufficiently high to acknowledge the market value of the art, or the high calibre artists whom this competition wants to attract would not enter it.

The answer to the difficulty is to condition all the work to being works on paper. As you can see from this exhibition, works on paper can come in wondrous manifestations. Have a look at the wonderful "Chair Sculpture" by Trudy Moore - but unfortunately it is not for sale. There is also the paper elephant and the paper man, created by Sally Fitts and enigmatically entitled "Ask not for Whom the Bell Tolls." Not to mention the unbelievably detailed work called "Dribble" by Jacob Leary which reminded me of "Where's Wally". All of the works exhibited must have called for endless hours of inspiration and attention to meticulous detail, but works on paper make more modest demands on collectors' wallets, so the prize money can be scaled down accordingly but still be big enough to attract submissions from leading artists. As you know, the winner of the art prize will receive \$15,000 and works on paper selling for \$15,000 are at the high end of the market.

Well, you be the judge as you look around this evening. As instant experts, I should tell you that the competition rules for the judges were to select the work that best:

- extends the creative possibilities of the medium;
- exhibits conceptual strength; and
- demonstrates excellence.

Now, in a minute I am going to announce the name of the winner, so you will be able to apply the criteria yourself and measure your skill against the skills of the judges, but before you set off to do that and engage the judges in furious debate, I should warn you that they are, indeed, very skilled and experienced judges:<sup>3</sup>

- **Raymond Arnold** - Artist, Director of LARQ Gallery and Studio, Queenstown, Tasmania; (LARQ stands for Landscape Art Research Gallery. It is a not for profit studio and gallery.)
- **Elizabeth Gower** - Artist, Lecturer, Victorian College of Arts, University of Melbourne;
- **Maria Zagala** - Associate Curator Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Art Gallery of South Australia; and
- **Geoff Dyer** - Internationally acclaimed Tasmanian painter and former winner of the Archibald.

Presiding over that distinguished panel is the Hutchins School Art Curator, John Ancher. My thanks go to the judges for, as you look

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hutchins.tas.edu.au/hutchins-art-prize/> Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013

around and bear in mind the judging criteria, I am sure you will agree with me that their task was a formidable one.

Before I like to thank the sponsors of this art prize whose names are listed in the programme, for without their support there would be no Hutchins art prize. Last, but most importantly, I would like to thank all of you good folk who have come along this evening with your pockets heavy with spare cash and your hearts and minds wide open to the suggestion that yes, you do need some new artwork in your home or office to make it a more interesting place in which to live or work. Well tonight's the night to go for it.