

Media Release

17 August 2019

Tasmanian artist— the People's Choice

Well-respected landscape artist, Nigel Hewitt, has scooped this year's \$10,000 University of Tasmania and Mercury's People's Choice Award with a work constructed out of the charred remnants of destructive bushfires around Tasmania.

The People's Choice Award, sponsored by the Mercury newspaper and the University of Tasmania, saw Hewitt's work as the clear winner. The work also picked up the Packing Room Prize, chosen by gallery staff last month.

The winning work, *Understory*, forms part of the Finalists' Exhibition at Hadley's Orient Hotel and has been created using wood ash and polymer on nine ply panels.

The works of the Tasmanian-born senior visual artist, who splits his time between Hobart and Perth (WA), most commonly deal with contemporary environmental and political issues, as well as the personal and ambiguous notions of identity and existence.

His winning work depicting a rain forest in the Lake St. Clair National Park, is no exception.

"I chose this subject because of the way it addresses the fragility of survival," Mr Hewitt said.

"The surface of the work speaks about the landscape's innate vulnerability and its uneasy future."

Mr Hewitt said despite the existing systems in place for protecting the natural environment, these remote and ancient landscapes were not protected from changes in our climate.

"At a distance we can admire the environment's beauty, but it is not until we are close that we can truly appreciate its vulnerability," he said.

Curator, Dr Amy Jackett, said Hewitt's work was the standout favourite this year, admired by an overwhelming number of voters, including students from visiting school groups.

Nigel Hewitt—who was born in Ulverstone in 1952—has been awarded several residencies and received many local and national art awards throughout his illustrious career, including the Glover Prize in 2015.

ENDS