

put up your dukes



Our region's nationally acclaimed art award, the annual Stan and Maureen Duke Gold Coast Art Prize, goes on show next weekend and again provides a snapshot of contemporary art practices from around Australia

The Gold Coast's Stan and Maureen Duke Gold Coast Art Prize, one of the oldest art competitions of its kind in this country, has added a new component this year.

The 2011 event includes the inaugural \$5000 People's Choice Award, bringing it in line with other important national art awards.

Terri Lew, director of 19 Karen Contemporary Artspace at Mermaid Beach, has sponsored the new award and said she was motivated to donate the prizemoney 'to attract more emerging artists to participate in the exhibition' and to help boost art confidence.

This year 342 entries were received and, from this, 69 works will be shown to the public for one of our city's most popular exhibitions.

This year's judge is Davida Allen and she has chosen a diverse sampling of contemporary Australian art practice. This makes the exhibition a must-see art show for anyone who wants to know where Australian art is heading.

This important national prize has had a couple of name changes since it began in 1968. It was first called the Gold Coast Art Prize and was renamed the Conrad Jupiters Gold



Sarah Beetson's quilt *I Dream In Celluloid*. Main Image: Midge Johansen's *Brushstroke*

Coast Art Prize in the late 1990s. It gained its present name when the late Dr Stan Duke became the sponsor in 2007, naming it for himself and his wife, Dr Maureen Duke.

Whatever its name, the competition has always been a compelling and informative snapshot of Australian modern art practice of the moment and a leader in its field.

It is now one of the longest-running acquisitional art prizes in Australia.

This year's exhibition will be held at Gold Coast City Gallery from next

Saturday. It is a valuable prize, with an outright \$10,000 awarded for the winning work, plus another \$20,000 made available for acquisitions for our growing Gold Coast city collection.

So the judging is a serious responsibility. With more than 30 years experience in the art industry, Ms Allen said she still found judging art to be 'the most difficult and soul-demanding job - I am aware that every image has been created by someone driven to make imagery'.

Allen is a highly regarded award-winning artist, represented in the National Gallery, most Australian state galleries and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

She took on this year's judging role, feeling she had 'gained a bit of wisdom in this game of art and a fair bit of compassion for artists - plus a dash of practicality'.

Her challenge was to cull the collection down to 69 works, thus eliminating nearly 300 of the entries.

"My instinct obviously played its role," she says, "but politically I wanted to put together an interesting exhibition of work."

She says she achieved this by turning herself into 'the eyes of the beholder' while remaining

selective and sympathetic to artists and their entries.

"I found the task challenging because every single artwork entered was compelling and exciting - but the limit of walls in the building demanded I choose around 60 and not the whole lot," she says.

Her finalists' exhibition, while diverse in content, creates a cohesive collection. All display a very contemporary art mood, a strong focus on the relationship between man-made and natural structures, and so considerable direct and indirect comment on the future of the Australian environment.

The 2011 exhibition includes 13 Coast artists as well as a wide range of contemporary Australian art practitioners, from emerging artists through to mid-career and established artists, aged from their 20s to their 70s, around the nation.

These artists are showing works in painting, sculpture, works on paper, digital and textile art.

The Stan and Maureen Duke Gold Coast Art Prize is on display from December 10 to February 5 at Gold Coast City Gallery. Free admission. The winners will be announced at the official opening at 5pm on December 10.