

Tony Albert Wins \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize for 2014

by Nicholas Forrest 25/07/14 1:49 AM EDT



“Once upon a time ...,” 2013-14

Sydney-based Indigenous artist **Tony Albert** has been announced the winner of the 4th biennial \$100,000 [Basil Sellers Art Prize](#) for his work “Once upon a time ...,” 2013-14. The prestigious prize, which is staged at the **University of Melbourne’s Ian Potter Museum of Art**, focuses on the theme of “art and sport,” encouraging artists to take on the theme of sporting culture and interpret it through their chosen practice.

Albert’s “Once upon a time” investigates the ongoing issue of racism in sport, drawing inspiration from two major incidents: the recent controversy surrounding the crowd abuse directed towards Sydney Swans AFL player **Adam Goodes** and the now iconic moment in 1993 when AFL great **Nicky Winmar** lifted his shirt and pointed at his skin after enduring racial abuse during a match against Collingwood.

The work consists of a painted target over which hang a suite of 23 small framed works spanning photography, painting, and collage as well as a series of small vignettes made of found objects

including toys, blocks, and figurines. Introducing the work is a typed letter by Albert to fellow Indigenous artist **Gordon Bennett** that acknowledges Bennett's influence on Albert's work and also recognizes the late artist's role as a champion of Indigenous rights.

According to Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, Ms **Kelly Gellatly**, the judges commended "Once upon a time" for its bravery and poetry as well as the fact that it tackles such a difficult and emotive issue in sport and Australian culture without being didactic or heavy-handed. "The work is neither a lesson nor a sermon, and provides no answers, but instead creates a contemplative space that encourages the audience to think about these issues in a way that engenders a sense of hope, and of the possibility of change," said Ms Gellatly. "It also highlights the way in which sport can be a positive forum in which to both air and tackle difficult subjects," she added.

The exhibition of the 16 finalists is at the Ian Potter Museum of Art until October 25, 2014.