



## The Melbourne Newsroom

University Activities Art, Culture and Society

### Tony Albert wins 2014 Basil Sellers Art Prize

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The prestigious \$100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize 2014 has been awarded to Indigenous artist Tony Albert for the work titled *Once upon a time ... 2013-14*.

The work consists of a painted target over which are hung 23 small framed works comprising watercolours on paper, photographs and collage, and small vignettes made of found objects – toys, blocks and figurines. The work is introduced by a typed letter by Albert to fellow Indigenous artist Gordon Bennett that pays tribute to Bennett's

important contribution and influence on Albert's work, and acknowledges the elder artist's sustained championing of Indigenous rights.

Director of the [Ian Potter Museum of Art](#) at the University of Melbourne, Ms Kelly Gellatly, commended all finalists for the depth of their engagement with the theme of sport and the quality of their art.

"The judges were impressed by the breadth of artists' themes, which encompass the emotions and spectacle of sport, as well as challenging historical and moral issues. The ambitious new works by the finalists present a rich engagement with the idea and experience of sport.

"The overall impact of the work as an exhibition is particularly impressive, reflective of the different ways in which the Australian spirit can be articulated; whether in the desire for equality, the behaviour of the fan, or the role of sport in everyday life.

"The winning work, *Once upon a time* deals with the ongoing issue of racism in sport, and by implication, Australian society more broadly, and has at its heart the recent controversy surrounding the crowd abuse directed towards AFL player Adam Goodes (Goodes plays for the Sydney Swans, is a dual Brownlow medallist, and is the 2014 Australian of the Year). Within the suite of intimately scaled works comprising the overall installation is a delicate watercolour of the now iconic moment in 1993 when former Kilda footballer Nicky Winmar lifted his guernsey and pointed proudly at this black skin after enduring racial abuse during a match against Collingwood. The separation of these two incidents by over 20 years, along with the collective imagery of Albert's playful, yet deceptively powerful work, highlights the fact that as a society, we have a long way to go in both confronting and dealing with these issues.

"Judges commended *Once upon a time* for its bravery and poetry, and for 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. It also highlights the way in which sport can be a positive forum in which to both air and tackle difficult subjects. Issues such as racism will no doubt continue to arise and to confront, but the very public nature of sport ensures that it provides a platform on which to air, discuss and debate these issues rather than pretend that they don't exist."

The Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Kelly Gellatly, says

"The responses of the 16 finalists in the Basil Sellers Art Prize keep pushing the boundaries of how sport and art relate. "

The Basil Sellers Art Prize provides a range of awards for artists. In addition to the \$100,000 prize, the finalists are in the running for the 2014 National Sports Museum Basil Sellers Creative Arts Fellowship (valued at \$50,000) to be announced during the Exhibition, and the \$5,000 Yarra Trams People's Choice Award, voted on by visitors to the Exhibition at the conclusion of the exhibition.

The other 2014 finalists are: Narelle Autio, Zoe Croggon, Gabrielle de Vietri, Ivan Durrant, Shaun Gladwell, Richard Lewer, William Mackinnon, Rob McHaffie, Noel McKenna, Rob McLeish, Fiona McMonagle, Raquel Ormella, Khaled Sabsabi, Jenny Watson, and Gerry Wedd.

This year's judging panel included Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Kelly Gellatly, Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art; Robert Cook, curator of modern and contemporary photography and design at the Art Gallery of Western Australia; Michael Hawker AM, distinguished businessman and a veteran of 25 Australian rugby test matches and now Chairman of Australian Rugby Union; Dr Chris McAuliffe, consultant for the Basil Sellers Group; and Basil Sellers AM.

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