



## *Basil Sellers Art Prize winner Tony Albert tackles racism in sport*

*Tim Stone and Carlo Zeccola*



Posted: Friday, 1 August 2014 at 10:39am

**At \$100,000 the Basil Sellers Art Prize is one of the Australia's richest art prizes. Sports-obsessed businessman, art collector and former Sydney Swans owner, Basil Sellers, helped establish the prize in 2008 at the Ian Potter Museum of Art with the aim of bridging the gap between sport and art.**

Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne, Ms Kelly Gellatly, says "Basil's vision, of course, for the Basil Sellers Art Prize is, actually, to encourage artists to directly engage with the subject of sport and to feel proud and comfortable doing so."

This year 16 artists working across a diverse range of mediums, from ceramics to video, slugged it out in front of the judges to compete for this career-changing art prize. "The broader arts community have always been uncomfortable with the notion of winners, but the flip side is that the Basil Sellers art prize gives one contemporary artist

100,000 dollars and that's a life changing sum," says Gellatly.

On July 28, Tony Albert was announced the winner for his piece *Once upon a time ... 2013-14*.

Gellatly says Albert's work "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," says Gellatly.

"To talk about racism in sport, and to see images of racism in sport are two very different things," says Alberts. "I do believe that not only is it a strong issue in sport it's something that can be changed through the opportunity to speak with audiences through different avenues, and art is certainly one of those."

- Tim Stone and Carlo Zeccola

***The Basil Sellers Art Prize is on until October 26, 2014 at the Ian Potter Museum of Art in Melbourne.***