

The Advertiser



Artist Tony Albert in front of his Fleurieu Art Prize winning work at the Samstag Museum. Picture: Mike Burton

Arts

Tony Albert wins South Australia's \$65,000 Fleurieu Art Prize with The Hand You're Dealt

Arts Writer Louise Nunn, Arts writer, The Advertiser
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INDIGENOUS artist Tony Albert has continued his winning run at the nation's richest art prizes, scooping South Australia's Fleurieu Art Prize with a work featuring hundreds of tiny sculptures made from playing cards.

Queensland-born, Sydney-based Albert, 35, was in Adelaide to receive his \$65,000 cash prize — the world's richest for landscape art — at Samstag Museum.

His work, *The Hand You're Dealt*, is the first installation to win after organisers changed the competition to include all art forms, rather than restricting it to painting.

In 2014 Albert won the prestigious \$50,000 Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, and the \$100,000 Basil Sellars Art Prize.

"This might have to be it or I'll be the least popular artist in Australia," he said.

Albert said he was excited to win the Fleurieu with his large, wall-mounted work.

He makes his works from kitsch souvenirs and objects decorated with native Aboriginal imagery but *The Hand You're Dealt* is the first to feature vintage playing cards and drink coasters.



Tony Albert used playing cards and drink coasters to create his Fleurieu Art Prize winning work.
Picture: Mike Burton

Albert cut and moulded almost 300 into alphabet letters, rabbits, skulls, hand grenades, dollar signs, baskets, space invaders and other objects, assembling them as historical analysis in a traditional landscape format. "I wanted to challenge the idea of what landscape is but I also use the sculptures as little intersections of historical truth within the landscape," he said.

“It’s really important at the moment that we reassess and re-evaluate the history in Australia not only of the landscape but the country itself.”

Nigel Hurst, from London’s Saatchi Gallery, and Suhanya Raffel, from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, judged works by 58 finalists selected from 750 national and international entries.

Hurst said Albert prevailed in a strong field, a “testament to the growing reach and importance of the prize”.

He said the piece was playful, visually arresting and pushed the boundaries of landscape art.

“It’s the sort of work that makes you stop and look, and take something away from, because it makes you think,” he said.

An exhibition of finalists’ works will be at Samstag Museum until July 29.

The Fleurieu Art Prize was established in 1998 by Fleurieu Peninsula artists and businesses with support from local wineries. It has been awarded eight times.