

Wellingtonian picked for Waiheke Island art competition

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Young's step-form piece is made from bronze and sits on a wooden base.

An Island Bay sculptor has her fingers crossed in the hope a new bronze piece wins gold in a national art competition.

Melissa Young is one of 32 finalists for New Zealand's only Small Sculpture Prize, a long-running competition held annually at Waiheke Community Art Gallery.

The parameters for what could be entered into the competition were quite wide, allowing Young a free reign to create something new.

GEORGE GARDNER

Waiheke Community Art Gallery is home to New Zealand's only Small Sculpture Prize, held annually since 2009.

"The other work that I produce to sell with galleries may have more of a commercial sense to them whereas this is something that people are either going to love or hate."

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The national award is for an original freestanding or wall sculpture up to 800mm in any dimension - specifications Young said that were typical of her work.

DIANA WORTHY/FAIRFAXNZ

Waiheke Community Art Gallery Director Linda Chalmers said the competition was becoming "the benchmark for sculptural exploration" offering sculptors a chance to up their skills.

"I work in a small scale versus huge. My piece would fit into your handbag.

"It's a step-form made from bronze, on a wooden base. It works with negative and positive space and it's also a cantilever form."

The Small Sculpture Prize was initiated in 2009 and gallery director Linda Chalmers said it was becoming "the benchmark for sculptural exploration" offering artists the opportunity for critical review before expanding on their concepts.

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'Up' by Wellington sculptor Melissa Young has strong structural and architectural feel to it.

"Some finalists have gone on to be selected and create larger works, but this award provides an opportunity for sculptors to present quality work on a smaller scale, she said.

The selector and judge this year is Auckland Art Gallery principal curator Zara Stanhope who will decide who takes home the \$3000 prize money.

While Young said the money would be "a nice bonus", her main motivation to enter was the opportunity to showcase her work outside Wellington.

"There are not many competitions open to sculptors and it's a good way of getting your work out there and challenging yourself."

All the finalists' pieces will be on sale at the gallery for the duration of the exhibition with the winner announced on April 14.

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