



Media release

28 July 2010

Brothers through to finals in IHC Telecom Art Awards

Two disabled brothers recently reunited after more than 20 years are both finalists in the 2010 IHC Telecom Art Awards.

Stephen Hitchings, 55, paints abstract works and has entered the competition for the past three years. But it's the first time for Grahame, 51, who has entered a pencil drawing.

After years apart, with Grahame living in Christchurch, both men now live together with housemates in a residential home on the Kaikoura esplanade and attend art classes twice a week at the IDEA Services day base.

"They live in a house next to the sea – so they get to look across that amazing Pacific Ocean," says community support worker Jackie Karl.

Stephen is interested in impressionism and works in mixed media. His entry is a colourful painting in reds and blues of a yacht on the water, titled *A Stormy Sea*. Grahame's drawing *Going for a Walk Somewhere* shows a figure on one side of the paper facing an empty space.

Jackie says before Grahame came to live with Stephen he had done little more than colouring in. "He had a talent that wasn't pursued". But she says the brothers are good friends and inspire each other's art. "They have their art classes together; they work side by side."

Thirty artists have been chosen as finalists in the IHC Telecom Art Awards after judging at three regional competitions over the past month – some of the pieces have been described by a judge as "explosively expressive".

Blake Enting, who is creative director for Saatchi Design Worldwide, says it has been fantastic to see such diversity of media: painting, sculpture, weaving. "The pieces selected vary between patiently crafted and explosively expressive."

Fellow judge Otis Frizzell, an ex-graffiti artist turned painter-printmaker-illustrator, is also judging the awards for the first time. "It's kinda cool to walk into a room of art and not know

any of the artists. With no back story or explanation for any of the art, I could look at everything from a purely aesthetic point of view,” he says.

Also on the judging panel are Head of WORLD fashion house Denise L’Estrange-Corbet, back for her second time judging, and Christchurch collector-artist Sue Upritchard.

“These Awards are all about celebrating ability, not disability,” says Telecom Sponsorship Manager Alex Milne.

“For the public, it is also a fantastic opportunity to purchase some truly unique, quality art.

“And don’t worry if you can’t make it to the exhibition itself, this year we’ve enabled online bidding on the Awards website,” says Alex.

The 30 regional finalists are:

South Island: Fraser McManus, Nelson; Dianne Hockridge, Kaikoura; Stephen Hitchings, Kaikoura; Grahame Hitchings, Kaikoura; Ross Hamilton, Christchurch; Steven Flutey, Christchurch; Ricky White, Dunedin; Michael Williams, Dunedin; Pam Duff, Dunedin; Christopher Wright, Oamaru.

Central North Island: Maurice Toohey, Hawera; Fergus Allan, Lower Hutt; Mary-Anne Donnelly, Lower Hutt; Vicky Dooley, Lower Hutt; Gail Rattenbury, Lower Hutt; Martin Kerschbaumer, Wellington; Ashok Bava, Wellington; Wendy Best, Wellington; Phillip Mannix, Wellington; Anthony McIlroy, Wellington.

Northern region: Bob Stephenson, Auckland; Rosalie Davey, Auckland; Katie McMillan, Auckland; Dianne Cadman, Hamilton; Cherie Mellsopp, Hamilton; Paul Sedgwick, Hamilton; Paul Griffith, Hamilton; Blair Houghton, Hamilton; Mason Pardoe, Hamilton; Chris Bradley, Waiuku.

The finalists’ work will be exhibited at the St James Theatre Gallery, Wellington, from 14-21 September. The winners will be presented with their prizes at a function in Wellington on 21 September at the St James. First prize is \$5000, second prize is \$2000 and two third-place winners each receive \$1000. There is also a Telecom People’s Choice award.

Regional exhibitions:

Wellington: until 27 August, Alpha Art Studio

Christchurch: until 7 August, CoCa Gallery

Hamilton: until 27 August, Sandz Gallery

Visit: www.ihcartawards.co.nz

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