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## **ST** Breaking News / Singapore

# Australian artist declared overall winner of inaugural Prudential Eye Awards





By Bryna Sim

Australian artist Ben Quilty was all smiles, after being declared the overall winner of the inaugural Prudential Eye Awards on Saturday night.

He was one of 20 artists from 28 countries shortlisted for the awards, meant to honour emerging contemporary artists across greater Asia and the Pacific.

The awards ceremony at Suntec City, which capped the Singapore Art Week of blockbuster art events, was

attended by notables such as dissident Russian music/art collective Pussy Riot and leading contemporary Chinese artist Liu Xiaodong. Pussy Riot was nominated in the digital/video category of the awards but did not win, while Mr Liu received an award for Outstanding Contribution to Asian Art.

The awards are founded by British-Italian art lovers David and Serenella Ciclitira, in partnership with insurance firm Prudential and London's prestigious Saatchi Gallery.

Quilty, 40, who also won in his category of painting, walked away with US\$50,000 (S\$63,600) and the opportunity to exhibit at the Saatchi Gallery later this year.

"The first thing I'm going to do is to text my family to let them know," he said.

The upcoming trip to London will be his first with his two children - Joe, seven, and Olivia, five. Mr Quilty's family members and friends are subjects in his works, which showcase the intense use of paint and colour, while examining the theme of masculinity in Australia. He is known to paint in the ink-blot Rorschach test technique, as seen from his currently exhibited work Smashed Rorschach, at Suntec City. An exhibition of all the nominees works runs until Feb 5.

Korean actor Ha Jung Woo, known for his roles in movies such as The Chaser and The Unforgiven, and Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Lawrence Wong, also attended the ceremony.

Over 500 nominees submitted their works to a judging panel of seven international art professionals, who had the difficult task of whittling the names down to 20 nominees.



Apart from Mr Quilty, four other artists were announced as winners in the categories of sculpture, installation, photography, and digital/video. These category winners received US\$20,000 (S\$25,000) each.

Mr Ciclitira, said that he and his wife intend for these Awards to be an annual affair.

While they have yet to decide where it will be in subsequent years, they want to hold it in Singapore again next year.

He said: "It's Singapore's 50th anniversary in 2015 - the country's Golden Jubilee. It'll be special to do it here."

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