

On the **beat**

Up-and-coming artists present
their take on life as we know it

A lifetime spent tinkering with homemade instruments has finally paid off for Brisbane artist Ross Manning, whose intriguing installation *Dissonant Rhythm for Drums* has won The Churchie National Emerging Art Prize for 2011, netting him \$15,000.

An exhibition featuring this year's finalists is dominated by Ross's work, situated as it is in the centre of the space. As Griffith University Art Gallery director Simon Wright points out, this work, featuring several drums, "plays itself", a fact that is delighting viewers.

"It's a kind of crossover where sculpture, installation, noise and performance all meld seamlessly, without the requirement for the artist to be physically present," Simon says. "I like to think of it as a sly nod to the punk days of do-it-yourself music."

A rope attached between two motors spins in the air creating a waveform that taps out rhythms when it hits suspended drums and cymbals, creating random compositions.

Nicole Durling, curator of the Museum of Old

and New Art in Hobart, this year's Churchie judge, was intrigued with Ross's work.

Ross, 33, who works as an exhibitions officer at the Institute of Modern Art, Fortitude Valley, has been experimenting with homemade instruments since he was a child, growing up in Bald Hills, on Brisbane's northside. "I remember doing a performance for my parents using an instrument made from a vacuum cleaner hose filled with water and marbles," he says.

An interest in avant-garde musicians such as John Cage has kept Ross experimenting, turning his hobby into a form of performance art. He does solo gigs with his invented instruments and performs with local band Sky Needle.

His win highlights The Churchie's interest in cutting-edge art, which is reflected in all 47 works chosen, from 680 entries, as finalists. Three artists were singled out and highly commended by Nicole Durling: Simone Eisler's *Accoutrement*, a sculpture made of cured and tanned salmon skin; Catherine Sagin (with collaborator Kate Woodcroft) for a looped digital video entitled *Duel*; and Adam Lee for



STANDS OUT ... a detail from *Dissonant Rhythm for Drums*, Brisbane artist Ross Manning's winning installation at The Churchie 2011, which also includes Simone Eisler's *Accoutrement* and *Man with Medals* by Adam Lee

his painting *Man with Medals*. Simone and Catherine are Brisbane artists, which reflects well on the local visual arts community.

To make *Accoutrement*, Simone took a skin that is normally wasted and turned it into a beautifully designed helmet or mask.

Catherine Sagin's video features a fencing duel between Kate Woodcroft and herself. And to the winner went the spoils: naming rights to the work itself.

It's also good to see figurative painters represented. Adam Lee's painting *Man with Medals* draws on early colonial portraits and historical images and has a touch of the grotesque about it.

There are a number of other impressive paintings in this exhibition, including Karla Marchesi's impressive *Like Autumn, I was in*

for Change and William Mackinnon's jaunty *Kintore Sports Weekend* depicting an AFL game in a remote indigenous community.

I did love Emma Lindsay's exquisite *20 Small Birds* based on the Queensland Museum's taxidermy collection. Her work is an elegiac response to the many species threatened by the march of progress.

From year to year, The Churchie prize, established under the auspices of the Anglican Church Grammar School at East Brisbane, is an annual window to the world of emerging art in its infinite variety.

THE CHURCHIE 2011, until Aug 13, Tue-Sat, 11am-4pm, Griffith University Art Gallery, Queensland College of Art, 226 Grey St, South Bank, ph: 3735 3140. www.griffith.edu.au