Art environment award delivers a message

Albumen, by Collingwood artist Julia de Ville, took out the $5000 first prize in the 2014 SCOPE Galleries Art Award Exhibition.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] A [/dropcap] "seductive" art work with a powerful message has taken out the 2014 SCOPE Galleries Art Award for works based on an environmental theme.

Collingwood artist **Julia De Ville** won the $5000 first prize for her work, *Albumen*, which features three taxidermy chicks with eyes of black diamond, sitting in a highly-polished, engraved silver goblet.

And while the piece is immediately visually appealing, if not even humorous, it contains a sobering message about battery hen farming and the many ways – beyond a dozen eggs – that battery hen products slip into the food stream.

The SCOPE Galleries Art Award: Art Concerning Environment is a biennial, non-acquisitive award that is fast becoming one of the most prestigious and lucrative awards in South-West Victoria since it was first held in 2012.

This year the award attracted a range of first-class entries from around the south-west and every state of Australia, making it a difficult task for guest judge **Marita Smith**, director of Gallerysmith, North Melbourne, to select just one winner. Eventually, however, she settled on *Albumen*.

“Julia’s piece is really intoxicating and seductive in its presentation,” Marita said.

“You are seduced by the work and, because of this seduction, you are drawn to look at the work in greater detail – and that’s when it delivers its punch.”

SCOPE Galleries director Dr Liza McCosh, left, with guest judge for the award, Marita Smith, director of Gallerysmith North Melbourne.

[dropcap style=”color: #dc943c;”]S [/dropcap]COPE Galleries director **Dr Liza McCosh** established the award to encourage the

exploration of environmental issues through art and provide a forum to provoke discussion around the environmental challenges of today.

The environmental focus also complements SCOPE's location in Warrnambool, which sits between some of Victoria's most dramatic coastline and its most beautiful hinterland: a combination that continues to inspire both local artists and those from further afield.

"Personally, my own work has always been influenced by the natural environment around me and its various elements – the sky, the landscape – so I am aware of its impact," Liza said.

[box type="bio"] **The Art Concerning Environment Award exhibition will run until July 20. SCOPE Galleries, at 38 Kelp St, is open Thur-Sun 12-5pm.**[/box]

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