



Trevor Nikkolls posthumously wins Blake Prize for painting Metamorphosis; Artist Trevor Nikkolls wins the Blake Prize posthumously with a work painted just before his death in 2012.

MacBean, Nic.
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This year's Blake Prize has been posthumously won by Indigenous artist Trevor Nikkolls for his 2012 painting Metamorphosis.

The \$25,000 art prize, now in its 62nd year, accepts paintings, photos, sculptures and videos that explore religion and spirituality.

The winning painting depicts an Aboriginal man who has been transformed into a "mimi spirit butterfly" on his way to the spiritual realm.

After painting Metamorphosis and shortly before his death in 2012, Nikkolls said he tried to capture the spiritual connection Aboriginal people have to the world around them.

"I have included elements that are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal - like the peace doves on each side of the Aboriginal man, which are Christian," he said.

"This represents me, I am Aboriginal and also have other ancestry and was brought up Christian."

Friends of Nikkolls say he would have been delighted just to be shortlisted in the long-running prize, let alone winning.

"The inclusion of his painting at this time also makes sense as spirituality was a key concern for Trevor in his work during his final years," said Angelika Tyrone, who is Nikkoll's estate executor.

"This will make an important contribution to fulfilling his wish of creating an award for young Aboriginal artists. This is an amazing turn of events that I'm sure would have made Trevor very happy."

According to his wishes, the \$25,000 prize money will go towards creating a new award to help emerging Indigenous artists go to university.

- The 73 shortlisted artworks will be exhibited at Galleries UNSW at the College of Fine Arts (COFA) from October 18 to November 16.

Credit: By Nic MacBean