

3 May 2016

## Sophie's creative talents find a common thread among SACE Art Show visitors

An intricate portrait composed of more than 3000 metres of coloured thread and 11,300 nails has been voted the most popular work in the SACE Art Show 2016.

Mt Barker's Sophie Maher was today (Tuesday 3 May) named the winner of the 2016 Credit Union SA Community Award for her commanding work *Tension*.

Sophie described her work – which took almost a year to complete – as portraying “raw emotion and feeling”, like that seen in the work of photographer Jill Greenberg.

“Intrigued by how people portray controversial and sensitive topics through art, I decided to focus on the theme of child abuse and how that affects a person growing up,” Sophie said.

“My work is a very impactful, powerful piece, and it turned out better than I could ever have hoped.”

Sponsored by Credit Union SA, the Community Award was introduced in 2015 to more closely engage the public in the creative efforts of South Australia's young up-and-coming artists and designers.

SACE Board Chief Executive, Dr Neil McGoran, said: “During the past six weeks, we have received a record 1700 votes from students, teachers, families, and members of the broader community.

“It has been fantastic to see the South Australian public recognise the creative talents of our young people, with the range of voting preferences matching the diversity of work on display.”

The winners of the 2016 Credit Union SA Community Award are:

- Sophie Maher (overall winner) – for *Tension*, a powerful portrait inspired by the work of New York-based artist Kumi Yamashita. She receives \$500 in prize money.
- Ben Abanat (runner-up) – for *String Art Portraits*, a self-portrait using mixed media, including watercolour, silver and copper leaf, nail, and thread, to symbolise his bicultural identity. He receives \$250 in prize money.

Credit Union SA Chief Executive Officer, Grant Strawbridge said: “The creative thinking process and dedication it would have taken to create these works of art, and the support provided by the teachers, should not be underestimated and is a testament to all involved.

“The number of visitors to the exhibition and large numbers voting for their favourite piece is a great reflection of the level of community interest in the SACE Art Show and the professionalism of the artworks exhibited.”

“We have had the pleasure of showcasing the winners' works from 2015 in our corporate head office over the past 12 months, with significant interest and favourable comments provided by visitors on the quality of the masterpieces,” Mr Strawbridge said.

**Media Contact:** Daniel Dew, SACE Board of South Australia  
(08) 8372 7571 / 0448 671 050 or email: [daniel.dew@sa.gov.au](mailto:daniel.dew@sa.gov.au)  
Learn more about us online: [www.sace.sa.edu.au](http://www.sace.sa.edu.au); or follow us on Twitter: @saceboard

“Credit Union SA has been delighted to again be involved as a sponsor of the show and wish to congratulate everyone involved,” Mr Strawbridge added.

Dr McGoran said the SACE Art Show 2016 at Light Square Gallery attracted almost 5000 visitors.

“Thousands of students have visited the Show to ponder, be stimulated, and gain inspiration for their own work. Members of the public have also been dazzled by the creative talents of our young people,” he said.

“The Show has been successful in raising awareness about how SACE art and design subjects can be used as stepping stones to higher education and career pathways.”

Dr McGoran said this year’s Show marked an important milestone as it featured works created by the fifth group of students to complete Year 12 since the introduction of the ‘new SACE’ in 2011.

“The SACE develops students’ capabilities in a range of areas including critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving and personal development, which lead to new experiences and career directions. These capabilities are reflected in the high quality of work on display at the SACE Art Show,” he added.

For further information about the SACE Art Show, visit: [sace.sa.edu.au/news/events/sace-art-show](http://sace.sa.edu.au/news/events/sace-art-show) or follow @saceboard on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).