



'The hyphen I live on' by Whitecliffe Photo Media student Yann-Ru Yang / Image by Karen Crisp

## Whitecliffe Wins Eden Arts Art Schools 2016 Top Award

The judges of the 2016 Eden Arts Art Schools Award have selected the winners of this year's award. We are proud to announce that Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design Year 4 Photo Media student **Yann-Ru Yang** was the Overall Winner for her work entitled *The hyphen I live on* and wins \$5,000 in prize money. One of the three Highly Commended awards, with a prize of \$1,000, went to Whitecliffe Year 4 Fine Arts student Anthony Mauinatu. The awards were blind judged by artists Denys Watkins, Peata Larkin and Artspace Director Misal Adnan Yildiz. Whitecliffe students have won awards every year since the Eden Arts Trust founded the awards in 2011, with 5 overall winners from 6 events.

The annual Eden Arts Art Schools Award brings together Central Auckland's four major art institutions: Whitecliffe, AUT, Auckland University Elam School of Fine Arts and Unitec. This year, the awards event and exhibition are being held at Unitec's Snowwhite Gallery. Six undergraduate students were selected as finalists from each school. Finalists from Whitecliffe included Anthony Mauinatu, Shanti Brown, Melanie Arnold (All Year 4 Fine Arts), Samantha O'Brien & Yann-Ru Yang (Both Year 4 Photo Media) and Clare Merrill (Year 3 Fine Arts).

Whitecliffe HOD Photo Media Becky Nunes reflects on her student Yann-Ru's installation and recent success: *Yann-Ru Yang's winning multi-media work is quiet, unassuming. Her father's delicate fingers construct a brightly-coloured feathered shuttlecock. Her brother tries and sometimes fails to keep it aloft. Patiently her father sets and resets a wooden spinning top for her mother to release onto the driveway of their Kiwi suburban home. Floating above these cinematic vignettes is the sound of the artist's parents' voices. They are speaking in Mandarin, describing the culture-shock of adjusting to life in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and how all this strangeness was navigated through their shifting sensibilities towards food. Most of this conversation is a dislocating and unintelligible experience for Western ears, but grounding and familiar for those viewers who also live on the hyphen. Holding all these elements in the now, anchoring and evocative, is the smell of rice cooking. Central to the installation is a domestic rice-steamer, to the artist a foreign object, and at the same time resonating in her DNA.*

*In his remarks, guest judge Misal Adnan Yildiz particularly referenced the poetic and crafted aspects of installation as a strength of the work. In her final year as a Photo Media student at Whitecliffe, Yann-*

*Ru has drawn on her own experiences as a first generation Taiwanese-New Zealander to weave together this subtly complex, shifting and sensual work. We are extremely happy to congratulate Yann-Ru as our fifth Eden Arts Overall Winner, and the first for the Photo Media Department. This is by any standards a remarkable achievement for us as an institution, and we believe that it demonstrates the continuing evolution of our programme as we continue to support and empower our students to make meaningful and engaging work across all lens-based media and platforms.*

Whitecliffe Head of Department Fine Arts Noel Ivanoff comments on the importance of the awards for our students: *Our students have really valued being able to place their work alongside students' work from other Auckland based arts institutions. By being open to all media, including performance, the awards have none of the compromises and format limitations that often bedevil art competitions. This means that the awards can truly reflect the range of contemporary art being produced in art schools today. The finalists' work is blind judged (judges see no details of the artist's name or institution) creating a*



Year 4 Photo Media student Yann-Ru Yang

*strong sense of the work being assessed solely on its merits.*

Whitecliffe Dean of College Tommy Honey comments on the significance of the awards and what this means for fine arts education in Auckland: *Often I am asked "Why Whitecliffe?" or "How do your students compare?" Never an easy question to answer but I usually respond by saying that the only objective measure we have is the annual Eden Arts Awards. With the four key art schools in Auckland participating, and the blind judging, it is the most level playing field we have. And to be able to say with pride (as I have and do, regularly) that we have won it in four out of the five years it had run, always gave me a sense of satisfaction, based on real evidence. This year was a game-changer. To win again, under the same objective conditions, is simply not a repeat of the past; it is a sign of the future. This is not a fluke, a coincidence or pandering to the judges (who were all new to the awards last night). This is not a matter of "oh well, they had good students that year". We have good students every year. But this is more than simply evidence of good students; it is solid (to my mind, irrefutable) evidence that we have a great programme and even better teachers. To win five out of six years is no accident. It is the result of a mature programme delivered with dedication, to eager and committed students. To me and – I would hope – the leaders of the other art schools and programmes, it is time for the art world to sit up and notice. For our students, there should be no doubt as to why they are here: this is where they will get the best art and design education and the best opportunities. They should be confident that they have made the right decision about where to study.*



Year 4 Fine Arts student Anthony Mauinatu

Whitecliffe would like to congratulate Yann-Ru Yang and Anthony Mauinatu on their achievement!

Whitecliffe's record in the Eden Art Schools awards:

**2016 Overall Winner: Yann-Ru Yang**  
**2015 Overall Winner: Guilio Laura**  
**2014 Overall Winner: Alex Matthews**  
**2013 Overall Winner: Veronika Djoulai**  
**2011 Overall Winner: Donna Summer**