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Artist wins with nature

By CHRIS HARROWELL

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• *Howick and Pakuranga Times*

A FORMER teacher is planning on using her winnings from an art competition to rid herself of a phobia of creepy crawlies.

Sarah Brill took out first place in the Estuary Artworks with her work *Conserve or Catalogue*.

Run by Uxbridge, Howick's creative centre, the contest aims to promote the message of preserving the environment, with a focus on the Tamaki Estuary.

Sarah's piece comprises images of bird and plant life on pieces of round concrete. It's intended to resemble a museum exhibit and beat more than 80 other entries.

The work will eventually hang in the offices of Auckland Council, which funded the event and provided the \$8000 first prize.

"I wanted to get across that either we look after it, or we'll see it in a museum," Sarah told the *Times* about her creation.

The mother of four-year-old twins taught art at Macleans College in Bucklands Beach for seven years before leaving the school to devote herself to her passion.

Her winning entry is one of the more difficult and challenging pieces she's created.



DELIGHTED: Sarah Brill didn't expect to take out a popular art competition. Times photo Chris Harrowell.

"I didn't want to just look at the negative side of what's happening in the Tamaki Estuary, so I thought about what we're doing [to preserve the environment] and focus on the positive," explains the 37-year-old. "I like art to be viewed on more than one level, and for people to look at it and decide if they like it or not.

"If they do, then they can delve into it. I want to hold the person's attention for as long as I can."

Uxbridge curator Sophie Keyse narrowed down the entries into the group of finalists now on show.

The winner was chosen by a judging panel that included Linda Tyler, director of the Centre for New Zealand Art Research and Discovery at the University of Auckland, and Howick Local Board member David Collings.

While many artists are happy just to enter competitions, Sarah had a goal in mind from the start.

She went along to the exhibition's opening in February and was thrilled to hear her name announced as the winner.

"I wanted to win, but I didn't think I had a chance as I thought a painter would," she says.

"I thought the judges would be after something with layers. They started describing the winner's work and I thought, 'that sounds like mine', but I was still not sure. This is a great start to the year."

Sarah, who lives on the North Shore, plans to use part of her prize money on hypnotherapy to overcome a phobia of

spiders.

“I’m terrified of spiders and it stops me from doing things,” she says. “I have a friend in Australia who I won’t go and see because of my fear. I want to be in a room with a spider and not care. I will be able to do more work with nature.”

The Estuary Artworks exhibition runs until March 9 at the arts centre at 35 Uxbridge Road, Howick. Visitors can vote for their favourite work through the people’s choice award, which will be announced on March 10.

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