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NGV ANNOUNCES AH XIAN AS RECIPIENT OF 2009 CLEMENGER CONTEMPORARY ART AWARD



The National Gallery of Victoria today announced Ah Xian as the recipient of the *2009 Clemenger Contemporary Art Award*. Ah Xian was awarded the prize of \$50,000 for the work, *Concrete forest*.

Concrete forest presents thirty-six beautifully executed concrete human busts, each delicately imprinted with the foliage of different plant species.

NGV Director Dr Gerard Vaughan said: "We warmly congratulate Ah Xian on this outstanding achievement and we look forward to following his career as one of Australia's leading contemporary artists.

"Since the first exhibition in 1993 the Clemenger has become one of the most prestigious and anticipated events for the display of new works. I extend warm congratulations to all of the participants in this year's award."

Dr Alex Baker, Senior Curator Contemporary Art, NGV said: "Rather than employing the traditional Chinese decorative techniques such as porcelain, jade, lacquer ware, bronze and cloisonné that he is well known for, Ah Xian has made a dramatic shift in materials by using concrete to cast the busts. Each of the figures emanate with a stillness that suggests a transcendent 'human power' that lies behind each visage."

Since he began experimenting with porcelain in Sydney in the late 1990s, Ah Xian has continued to unite traditional Chinese materials and techniques with a contemporary sculptural practice to address issues surrounding cultural displacement, identity politics and the relationship between East and West.

"*Concrete forest* is Ah Xian's response to environmental degradation, the encroachment of urban development on the landscape and the inherent fragility of life," said Dr Baker.

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The *2009 Clemenger Contemporary Art Award* is a triennial exhibition and award that celebrates the ongoing achievement of some of Australia's most distinguished contemporary artists. This is the sixth and final award in the series.

Dr Vaughan said the Clemenger Contemporary Art Award is one of the most respected and important awards for Australian contemporary arts.

"Through their generosity in establishing this Award, the Clemengers have made a profound and important statement of support for contemporary art in Australia. We are deeply grateful to them for establishing and supporting this award for the past 18 years," said Dr Vaughan.

The artists represented in this year's exhibition are Peter Atkins, Vivienne Binns, Stephen Bush, Domenico de Clario, Destiny Deacon, Janenne Eaton, Julie Gough, Louise Hearman, Janet Laurence, Trevor Nickolls, Dennis Nona, Scott Redford, Julie Rrap, Guan Wei and Ah Xian.

Previous recipients of the Award are Bea Maddock (1993), Richard Larter (1996), John Nixon (1999), John Mawurndjul (2003) and Judy Watson (2006).

The *2009 Clemenger Contemporary Art Award* will be on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square from 17 September 2009 until 7 February 2010. The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia is open 10am-5pm, closed Mondays. Admission to this exhibition is free.

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IMAGE CAPTION: Ah Xian, *Concrete Forest 2: Sagittaria trifolia (Threeleaf Arrowhead)* 野慈菇 2008-2009 (detail), concrete 55.5 x 45.5 x 27.5 cm, Collection of the artist, ©Ah Xian