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SLOW DEATH FOR FAST



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Artist pays lip service to business supporters

FORGET the Opera House. The essence of Sydney is more like a tipsy Bondi girl or a friendly drag queen leaving a big, sloppy kiss.

A Manly artist, Lynda Howitt, has won the inaugural Signature of Sydney art competition for her depiction of a lipstick smudge, which judges said best expressed the Sydney spirit. Artists were asked to include 493 business logos and capture Sydney's soul.

Howitt, 36, left Australia's most lucrative art competition last night \$150,000 richer. Her work expressed "the passion and spontaneity of Sydney", she said. "You are there for a day, you feel like you have been touched by something."

The prize pool was made up of donations from businesses, which each gave \$2000 after organisers promised their logos

would be included in the works. Howitt said she was initially reluctant to mix art with advertising, but "in entering the prize, you accept that and work with it". Her work includes a silhouette of the city skyline in the mouth, with tiny logos radiating from the lips.

The Byron Bay artist and Wynne prize winner John Dahlesen was the runner-up,

taking \$20,000 for his digital print of a pile of thongs. The Art Gallery of NSW curator, Anthony Bond, said: "The image needed to be something that could be reproduced and work as a print because all the [business] donors get a print."

The artworks were auctioned last night. Proceeds went to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

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Logo lips ... Lynda Howitt and her prize-winning work. Photo: Jon Reid