

HK artist's silky skills snare US\$25,000 prize

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A local artist has overcome stiff regional competition to take first place in this year's Sovereign Asian Art Prize.

Tsang Kin-wah's entry, a silk-screen entitled *I Love You*, was selected from 552 entries for the US\$25,000 prize.

"I'm a little surprised as I wasn't really expecting to win," Tsang said, adding that he would invest the prize money in his career.

The Guangzhou-born 28-year-old was one of 30 finalists in last year's competition, which was won by Hong Kong-based Jeffrey du Vallier D'Aragon Aranita. The competition is only two years old.

Howard Bilton, chairman of the Sovereign Art Foundation, said because they relied on the goodwill of curators to publicise the prize, it may not be promoted as widely as they would like.

"I hope that having a Hong Kong winner will increase public awareness of art in Hong Kong and around Asia," he said.

Aranita, who was one of the judges this year, described the winning entry as "timely in a social context".

Tsang said *I Love You* depicts various meanings of the common phrase in a pink floral pattern shaped from the words in both English and Chinese. For last year's entry, he used obscenities in the shape of leaves and florets.

"The phrase 'I love you' denotes extreme emotion and is supposed to be organic and warm, which is why I used flowers," Tsang said.

He started working on the entry in early 2003, and according to the foundation, it is valued at between US\$1,400 and US\$2,000.

Mr Bilton said the structure of the competition would be revised for next year. Changes may include bringing in judges from around the region, rather than just Hong Kong.

The winning entry will become the foundation's property, while the 29 other finalists' works will be auctioned on May 20, with the proceeds split equally between the artists and the foundation.