



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 23, 2016, 11PM

Nine-Time Awarded World of WearableArt™ Designer Takes Out Top WOW® Award

From a field of 133 garments, New Zealand designer Gillian Saunders' *Supernova* won the Brancott Estate Supreme WOW® Award at tonight's international World of WearableArt™ (WOW®) Awards Show. *Supernova* also won the David Jones Avant Garde Section, seeing Saunders take home two of the 20 top awards won this year by international designers from the UK, USA, China and New Zealand.

WOW® is an international phenomenon that attracts entries every year from designers from over 40 countries, and showcases the finalists in what has become New Zealand's largest single theatrical show. The show employs more than 350 cast and crew and plays to an audience of 58,000 over its three-week season finishing October 9.

Supernova is Saunders' 16th garment entered to the WOW® competition since 2000 and her ninth award. Her 2013 garment *Inkling* won the Weta: Creature Carnival Award and an internship for Saunders at the five-time Academy Award winning Weta Workshop. *Inkling* was also selected for the touring WOW® international exhibition. The exhibition is currently in the EMP Museum in Seattle, USA and will be seen by more than 600,000 people.

English-born Saunderson's background is in furnishing and textile design. She has been involved with theatre and television for most of her working life, first in the UK, where she trained in Yorkshire, and then in Christchurch where she worked as a props maker for the Court Theatre.

"I had been making stage props for theatre and TV for years. WOW® was the perfect challenge – could I make props for the body as well?" Saunders says.

Saunders' workspace is filled with her book collections, piles of inspiration and her wearable art creations. Gillian's inspiration often comes from books – a sentence or a word that triggers floods of ideas.

For *Supernova* she says she was inspired by a famous dress, a sea monster fin and images from space.

"I was inspired by the texture and colours of Thierry Mugler's Chimera dress and the iridescent spiny fins of the Hippocampus from the Percy Jackson movie *The Sea of Monsters* and some incredible N.A.S.A images taken by the Hubble telescope," Saunders says. "Once all these elements were combined *Supernova* was brought to life. The large gems represent new stars being born and the dark shadows represent deep space. Each scale has been individually cut, shaded with marker pens and then hand sewn onto the garment. Each gem has had its sticky backing removed and then glued on by hand."

Headed up by WOW® Founder Dame Suzie Moncreiff, the 2016 WOW® Award Show judging panel included distinguished judges Zambesi fashion designer Elisabeth Findlay and sculptor Gregor Kregar. The judging process takes place over three months and involves viewing the garments three times; up close and on the stage in performance.

At the awards ceremony in Wellington, New Zealand, Dame Suzie emphasised the high calibre of the finalists in this year's competition. "To win this international design competition is an incredible achievement," Dame Suzie says. "*Supernova* has the design innovation, the construction quality and vibrant stage presence in performance to win WOW®'s top award."

More about Gillian Saunders, 2016 Brancott Estate WOW® Supreme Winner:

Gillian Saunders has entered WOW® regularly since 2002 and has won a host of awards. In 2007, Saunder's *Equus: Behind Closed Doors* was winner of the Avant Garde Section and *Tikini* placed second in the 2009 Air New Zealand South Pacific Section. *Inkling* won the 2013 Weta Workshop Costume & Film section, which included a four-week internship prize at the five-time Academy Award winning film effects studio in Wellington, New Zealand.

2016 WOW® Awards Summary:

To the 2016 WOW® Awards there were a total of 133 entries by 163 designers (some, who worked in pairs on one entry) chosen to appear in this year's show to compete for a prize pool of 40 awards with a combined value of NZ\$165,000. A total of 12 New Zealand-designed garments won 17 awards and 23 awards were won by 19 international designs.

The 2016 WOW® Award Winners:

2016 WOW® Sections:

David Jones Avant Garde Section

First: *Supernova* by Gillian Saunders from Nelson, NZ.
Second: *Khepri* by Miodrag Guberinic and Alexa Cach from New York, USA.
Third: *Alecto* by Maria Tsopanaki and Dimitri Mavinis from London, UK.

American Express Open Section

First: *Renascence* by Yuru Ma and Siyu Fang from Shanghai, China.
Second: *Stella Nova* by David Walker from Alaska, USA.
Third: *Digital Stealth Gods* by Dylan Mulder from Wellington, NZ.

Spyglass Creative Excellence Section

First: *Mai (I)* by Pritam Singh and Vishnu Ramesh from Gujarat, India.
Second: *Brighter Side of Pail* by Julie Brawley from Nelson, NZ.
Third: *Minuet & Trio* by Philippa Stichbury from Melbourne, Australia.

MJF Lighting Performance Art Section

First: *Queen Angel* by Adam McAlavey from London, UK.
Second: *Lippydeema* by Daisy May Collingridge from Woldingham, UK.
Third: *Chameleon* by Catherine O'Leary and Cheryl McHugh from Melbourne, Australia.

Weta Workshop Costume & Film Section

First: *Baroque Star* by Natasha English and Tatyanna Meharry from Christchurch, NZ. This award wins prize money and a four-week internship at the academy award-winning Weta Workshop and travel and accommodation.
Second: *Lord Maharaja & Star Bride* by Liam Brandon Murray from Derbyshire, UK.
Third: *Goodbye Versailles Starring Madame Du Barry's Monkey* by Mercy Brewer of Auckland, NZ.

Wellington Airport Aotearoa Section

First: *Princess Niwareka* by Maria Tsopanaki and Dimitri Mavinis from London, UK.
Second: *Tangaroa* by Kelsey Roderick and Rhys Richards from Hastings, NZ.

World of WearableArt™ & Classic Cars Museum Bizarre Bra Section

First: *Come Fly With Me* by Julian Hartzog from Tarpon Springs, USA.

Second: *Strike a Chord* by Janice Elliott from Christchurch, NZ.

Third: *Fried Eggs* by Kelsey Roderick and Rhys Richards from Hastings, NZ.

2016 WOW® Special Awards:

Brancott Estate WOW® Supreme Award

Awarded to the designer with the garment the judges consider to be the most exceptional overall.

Winner: *Supernova* by Gillian Saunders from Nelson, NZ.

Runner-up: *Baroque Star* by Natasha English and Tatyanna Meharry from Christchurch, NZ.

WOW® Factor Award

Chosen by Dame Suzie Moncrieff as the most innovative garment with the 'wow' factor.

Winner: *Incognita* by Ian Bernhard of Auckland.

Runner-Up: *Darling* by Lara Galea, Sophie McIntrye and Ingrid Worrall from Auckland, NZ.

First Time Entrant Award

Recognising creativity and innovation in an entry submitted by a first time entrant.

Winner: *Renewal* by Alexa Cach from Rhode Island, USA, and Miodrag Guberinic and Corey Gomes.

Runner-Up: *Heritage Rocks* by Shantanu Singh from India.

Student Innovation Award

This award is open to all national and international tertiary students.

Winner: *The Knight* by Jiawen Gan, a student from the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, China.

Runner-Up: *In a Bubble* by Talia Baker, New York, USA, who studies at LCI Barcelona.

Sustainability Award

This award is for the designer who is concerned about protecting the environment and uses materials that would otherwise be discarded.

Winner: *Bravada Cycling* by Christina Uebelein from Hawai'i, USA.

Wearable Technology Award

This prize is awarded to the designer who explores and applies the most original and innovative technology to the construction and/or function of their wearable art garment.

Winner: *Digital Stealth Gods* by Dylan Mulder from Wellington, New Zealand.

Runner-Up: *Lord Maharaja & Star Bride* by Liam Brandon Murray from Derbyshire, UK.

Wellington International Award

This award goes to the best international entry.

Winner: *Lippydeema* by Daisy May Collingridge from Woldingham, UK. This award wins prize money and a prize to travel to New Zealand if they have a new entry selected to appear in the WOW® Awards Show within the following two years.

UK / Europe Design Award

For the best design from the UK/Europe region.

Winner: *Lippydeema* by Daisy May Collingridge from Woldingham, UK.

Americas Design Award

For the best design from the Americas.

Winner: *Khepri* by Miodrag Guberinic and Alexa Cach from New York, USA.

Asia Design Award

For the best design from Asia.

Winner: *The Renaissance Happens Again* by Yu Tan from Shanghai, China.

Australia & South Pacific Design Award

For the best design from Australia and the South Pacific.

Winner: *Cascade* by Victoria Edgar from Geelong, Australia.

David Jones New Zealand Design Award

This award goes to the best entry from New Zealand.

Winner: *Voyage to Revolution* by Carolyn Gibson of Auckland, NZ.

Cirque du Soleil Award

Chosen by a judge from Cirque du Soleil, this award is for the entry that best integrates techniques and/or technologies to enhance human performance. This year's Cirque du Soleil judge is Denise Tétreault, Costumes Lifecycle and Creative Spaces Director.

Winner: *Digital Stealth Gods* by Dylan Mulder from Wellington, New Zealand. This award wins prize money and flights and accommodation for a one-month internship at the world famous Cirque du Soleil International Headquarters in Montreal, Canada.

About The World of WearableArt™

One of New Zealand's cultural success stories is the spectacular World of WearableArt™ (WOW®) created by Dame Suzie Moncrieff.

At the core of WOW® is an international design competition that attracts entries from all over the world. The range of garments produced for each year's WOW® competition is simply breathtaking, as the rules of competition mean that anything that is in any way wearable can find a place on stage, as long as it is original, beautifully designed and well-made. This also results in garments that are constructed from an extraordinary array of materials, pushing the boundaries of expectation.

Now staging its 28th production, the annual WOW® Awards Show presents selected designs in what is New Zealand's largest and most technically challenging theatrical production, brought to life by 350 cast and crew. For the 2016 show, 163 designers' garments will be seen in performance by an audience of 58,000 over a three-week season in Wellington, New Zealand.

The winning garments from each year's show are then seen up close by more than 40,000 people at the iconic World of WearableArt™ and Classic Car Museum in Nelson, New Zealand.

WOW®'s international exhibition is currently being held at Seattle's EMP Museum until January 2017 after which it will travel to the Peabody Essex Museum in Boston and is expected to remain in the USA until 2019. The travelling exhibition showcases 32 award-winning garments curated to present the best of New Zealand's creative activity to the world.

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