

Austrian wins Ireland's biggest international art award

£20,000 MAC International prize presented to Nikolaus Gansterer at ceremony in Belfast

Gerry Moriarty



Austrian artist Nikolaus Gansterer has won the 2018 MAC International prize.



The work of the 44-year-old Vienna-based artist was chosen from more than 800 international submissions for the £20,000 award, which has been described as "Ireland's Turner Prize".



The award, which is funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Tourism NI and Belfast City Council, is Ireland's largest art prize and one of the most substantial in the UK.

The shortlist of 13 included artists from Ireland, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Canada, USA, Palestine, Austria, France and Turkey. The artists worked across a range of mediums including photography, film, installation, sculpture and drawing.

Gansterer's winning work is *Wor(l)ding: a meshwork of sense in flux*, described as a mixed-media installation with a wall drawing, three-channel video work and a hanging object.

The prize was presented by Anne Barlow, one of the three judges, at a ceremony in the MAC centre in central Belfast on Thursday.

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The prize raises Northern Ireland's profile as a serious player on the international arts scene

Previous winners of the biennial award were Northern Ireland-born artist Mairéad McClean (2014) and Slovenian artist Jasmina Cibic (2016).

An exhibition of Gansterer's work and that of the 12 others shortlisted for the prize will run at the MAC until the end of March.

Roisin McDonough, chief executive of the North's Arts Council, said she was delighted that the award "has created such a positive stir internationally".

"The prize represents a serious commitment to the promotion of contemporary visual arts, and it does much more than reward the remarkable talents of a single, winning artist – it raises Northern Ireland's profile as a serious player on the international arts scene and it creates the opportunity for audiences here to encounter some of the freshest, most exciting and ambitious work currently being produced by artists around the world."

Terence Brannigan, chairman of Tourism NI, said events such as the prize and exhibition "create a positive perception about Northern Ireland and help to profile the destination to those who are culturally curious, ensuring our continued success in growing our visitor numbers."