

Prize won with ancient knowledge



Healing plant: *Tea Tree* by Helen Pynor

Ashleigh Wilson

SYDNEY photographer Helen Pynor became \$15,000 richer last night after she won an annual prize to support artists in the early stages of their careers.

Pynor, 45, won the RBS Emerging Artist Award 2009 for her photographic work *Milk*, which draws its inspiration from Aboriginal medicinal remedies. The work is divided into three panels — *Tea Tree*, *Bird's Nest Farm* and *Wattle* — and will form part of the corporate collection of the Royal Bank of Scotland in Australia.

As part of the award, Pynor will also participate in an international development program and receive a round-the-world plane ticket.

There is no age limit for the award, which is now in its sixth year and covers a range of media. To be eligible, artists need only to live in Australia and their works must consistently sell for less than \$10,000.

Pynor, who will graduate from the Sydney College of the Arts this year, is in Paris and missed last night's formal presentation in Sydney.

But in her absence the judging panel —

including Art Gallery of NSW director Edmund Capon, Sydney artist Ben Quilty and Sydney Museum of Contemporary Art curator Glenn Barkley — was full of praise for her work.

Of the winning entry, Capon says: "There is something intriguing about the work; you get a sense of mystery, as though there is something organic in the way the images evolved. They seem to represent a sense of evolution." Quilty describes it as a "magical and beautiful" work.

In a note that accompanies her entry, Pynor says *Milk* takes as its starting point the medicinal plant remedies of the Dharawal people of the southern Sydney and Illawara region. She thanked local elders for providing information on medicinal practises used in the project.

Among the other entries, the judges commended a blown-glass work by Kristel Britcher, *Spacial Composition IV*. And in a separate prize, Victoria Reichelt won \$2000 and a round-the-world ticket for winning the employees choice award.

The finalists' works will remain on public view in the foyer of the RBS tower in Phillip Street, Sydney, until the end of the month.