

# Prized depiction of Gallipoli

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SAVE



Idris Murphy with his prize-winning painting *Gallipoli Evening 2013* at the Gallipoli Memorial Club in Sydney. Picture: Bradley Hunter Source: News Corp Australia

**BEFORE** Idris Murphy's mother died a year ago, she told him to look after a solitary letter written by his grandfather, Charles Idris Pike. So it came as something of a shock for him to discover a trove of more than 160 love letters, all of them written by his grandfather during World War I from battlefields including Gallipoli, Passchendaele and the Somme. They were addressed to Violet, a young Sydney woman who eventually became Murphy's grandmother.

"You would think that after all the shit and death and people getting blown up, any kind of thoughts of love would have been squashed, but in fact these letters are filled with poignancy, love and humanity," he says.

Murphy, a Sydney based landscape artist of 30 years' experience, subsequently visited Turkey for the first time and painted *Gallipoli Evening 2013*, which won the \$20,000 Gallipoli Art Prize yesterday.

"I am thrilled," he says. "I don't actually enter many prizes because they are distracting and often get in the way (of) making a good painting."

The prize — now in its ninth year — was conceived of as a 10-year acquisitive project by the Gallipoli Memorial Club, and was initially designed to conclude with next year's centenary of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli.

Murphy's work features a solitary tree in a golden metallic landscape, depicting the area known as Brighton Beach. It also includes a small piece of paper collage — depicting a rock — suggestive of the work's epistolary inspiration.

"Many of the letters from my Grandad were on similarly tiny scraps," the artist says.

Jane Watters, a member of the judging panel for the past eight years, says this year's field, which featured a record 166 entries and 37 finalists, was notable for greater participation by professional artists. In previous years, "people have been very focused on conflict and battlefield scenes, mainly done from photographs", she says. "Idris has been to Gallipoli so there is a greater sense of connection in his work."

Murphy departs for Turkey today with other landscape painters to work on a group project titled *Your Friend, the Enemy*. The phrase is taken from one of his grandfather's letters, a poignant sign-off used by Turkish soldiers in a letter to their Australian counterparts after an exchange of bully beef for cigarette papers.

"There wasn't enough time on my first visit, but it was enough to realise that we want to go back and make something really serious and meaningful," he says.

The finalists' works will remain on display at the Gallipoli Memorial Club near Sydney's Circular Quay until May 4. The club also runs a parallel version of the prize in Turkey, which is to be announced later today.



Charles Idris Pike, pictured in 1918. Source: Supplied