

# Artist's prized glasswork a cut above



**CUTTING EDGE:** Canberra glass artist Masahiro Asaka with his work, *Surge 12*, in which he explores the physical attributes of glass. Photo: STUART WALMSLEY

**By Diana Streak**  
Arts Editor

A first time entrant, Japanese-born Canberra glass artist Masahiro Asaka, has won the \$15,000 Ranamok Glass Prize.

The announcement was made last night at the Canberra Glassworks where the exhibition of 35 finalist works by 32 artists will be exhibited until September 22.

Asaka's entry, *Surge 12*, is part of a series in which he has explored the physical attributes and changing forms of glass using plastic and styrofoam moulds to shape his work, which resembles solid ice and glistening razor sharp shards.

Asaka said he was "quite amazed" to have won the prize for his work that combines cast and cold worked glass. "It seems incredible, just looking at all these other works that are so beautiful."

He said he had been influenced by traditional Japanese crafts, particularly ceramics. "There are traditional techniques thousands of years old, but they also make a lot of really modern cool products."

He was also intrigued by the properties of glass and how it could be transformed. "Heat transforms the state of glass from solid to liquid. The mass of the glass inside the mould collapses under gravity and density increases as melting

continues. My process allows the object to inherit both the beauty of the material as well as my desire to control it," he said.

Asaka came to Australia from Japan in 2000 and studied at the Australian National University from where he graduated with a Master of Arts in 2008. He was one of five Canberra finalists, the others being Brian Corr, Mel Douglas, Jennifer Kemarre Martiniello and Nikki Main.

Andrew Plummer, who founded the Ranamok Glass Prize in 1995, said the standard of this year's works was exceptionally high which made the decision of the four judges, who included the director of the National Portrait Gallery Louise Doyle, more

difficult. "Asaka's powerful work embodies strong contrasts. *Surge 12* highlights extreme tensions in the medium of glass; between a sense of repose and of dynamism, of fragility and mass, yin and yang, smoothness and sharpness, warmth and an icy coldness. Asaka's work has a compelling sense of flow and movement," Mr Plummer said.

Other works in the exhibition include a giant pair of knitting needles, a wishbone in a jar and a series of coloured butterflies.

The Ranamok Glass Prize, now in its 17th year, aims to encourage creativity, skill and innovation in contemporary glass from Australia and New Zealand.