

Tassie artist's quake terror

Narrow Chile escape

HELEN KEMPTON

IMAGINE waking up in a foreign hotel room to find the walls vibrating and the sound of glass and debris smashing all around.

That is the scene Tasmanian artist Bobby-z Lambert found when he was shaken awake in Santiago city, Chile, last weekend.

He had just arrived in Santiago after spending five months in the far north of Chile where he crafted a paint-



SHAKEN: Bobby-z Lambert after quake.

ed metal sculpture in honour of the miners of Potosi.

"At first I thought it was a powerful storm," Bobby-z said via internet from Chile yester-

day. "Then I began to realise the vibration was getting stronger and I began to hear things falling outside my room."

"Glass was smashing and I instinctively looked for my shoes and the key to unlock the room. "Pieces of the ceiling and walls started to fall on to my bed as I tried to stay calm and get the door open."

Bobby-z then got to the hotel's front door and out into a small plaza.

“Pieces of the ceiling and walls started to fall on to my bed as I tried to stay calm and get the door open”

— BOBBY-Z LAMBERT

"Looking around the plaza and at the buildings, I decided it was not safe and ran to a big, double street where I sat down on the centre island," he said.

Around him was total chaos. "There were cars flying everywhere and fire trucks and police sirens all over," he said.

While a few drunks walked by without a care in the world, others were scrambling in a panic, looking for family and friends.

"To me it was quite terrifying. If you can't trust the ground you are standing on,

what can you trust?" he said. "As things settled down a bit just before dawn, I went back to the small plaza and helped a Belgian lady with three kids."

"They had been staying at the same hotel as me but had to run with nothing but their bed clothes."

Bobby-z decided he would go back inside the building and grab the woman's passport and some clothes and shoes for her and the children.

"Then I got the hell out of there until daybreak," he said.

Bobby-z and a group of others huddled around a local

shopkeeper's TV to try to make sense of what had just happened.

Reports were coming through that the epicentre of the earthquake was nearer the coast.

The Hobart artist knew people had died in the debris around him, but he also suddenly realised how lucky he had been to survive.

He moved into another hotel, which had cracks in its walls. "I was woken by a few small aftershocks," he said. "But all the buildings in Santiago seem to be very strong and thank God they are. If the building had not stood up to the quake we would all be dead."

Bobby-z will fly home on March 9.

"I can't wait to get back to Hobart and my friends," he said.



IN THE RUNNING: The portrait of Adam Gilchrist.

Artists vie for Aussie honour

SALLY GLAETZER

TASMANIAN lawyer turned thief John Avery is mixing with fellow convict Schapelle Corby and a host of sportsmen and TV stars as entries roll in for Australia's most prestigious portrait prize.

Hobart artist Stewart MacFarlane's depiction of Avery in his prison cell has been unveiled to the public for the first time in the packing room at the Art Gallery of NSW.

The artist said he hoped the notoriety of his subject, who is serving six years for theft, would increase his chances of winning the \$50,000 first prize.

"The Archibald is a bit of a bunfight really and a bit of a carnival. The media's looking for interesting stories and to me [Avery] increases my chances of getting seen and talked about," MacFarlane said yesterday.

The finalists will be announced on March 17 and the winner on March 26.

The deadline for entries is tomorrow and so far MacFar-



UNDER GUARD: Artist Stewart MacFarlane's portrait of former lawyer John Avery, flanked by a prison guard.

lane's portrait is competing against paintings of Corby, author Colleen McCullough, TV personality Amanda Keller, St Kilda skipper Nick Riewoldt and former cricketer Adam Gilchrist.

In the portrait, Avery is no longer the rotund figure most Tasmanians would recognise from his days as the lawyer for Port Arthur gunman Martin Bryant.

He is thin-faced in a white T-shirt with a prison guard hovering in the background.

The portrait is unlikely to

be picked by staff for the Packing Room Prize, which traditionally features an instantly recognisable subject.

"I hope the packers don't pick it because that's usually a curse," MacFarlane joked.

"Most people probably will not recognise him."

It is a nerve-racking time for MacFarlane who also has entries in the Sulman and Wynne art prizes and is a finalist in Australia's richest landscape contest, the Glover Prize, to be announced tomorrow.

Doctor hopes to find donor

THE plastic surgeon behind Australia's first double hand transplant says he is optimistic a donor can be found for 64-year-old Peter Walsh.

The former plumber from Cobden in Victoria had his hands and feet amputated three years ago after contracting pneumococcal disease.

The father of five and granddad to 16 said he yearned to hold his grandchildren. "You'd love to be able to pick 'em up, but I can't," Mr Walsh said.

St Vincent's Hospital plastic surgeon Professor Wayne Morrison said his opposition to limb transplants changed after he met Mr Walsh.

"He was a person who has previously been extremely well and physically active and is now absolutely confined to a life of total dependency where he can't eat, can't dress himself, can't pick up the phone," Prof Walsh said.

"This is a huge alteration of his lifestyle. He's become a recluse in a sense."

Prof Morrison said it would be a challenge for donor agencies to find a willing donor, as Australians were familiar with donating organs, not limbs.

The O'Brien Institute, the microsurgery research centre of which Prof Morrison is director, is preparing for the potential transplant procedure alongside St Vincent's Hospital's hand surgery unit.

Prof Morrison said it was likely such a transplant had not taken place in Australia before because the risks of lethal side-effects from anti-rejection drugs outweighed the benefits of the procedure.

Unlike organ transplants, which were often a matter of life or death for patients, limb transplants were less common.

Anti-rejection drugs that must be taken for the rest of a patient's life come with the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

But Mr Walsh's case was unique.

"He's different in that he's lost both hands, both feet. Even if he only has one hand transplanted that's going to be an enormous functional benefit to him," Prof Morrison said.



BEHIND BARS: Schapelle Corby by artist Dan Sheridan.