

Lady Gaga, Maori inspirations for winning Rotorua designer

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Rotorua designer Adrienne Whitewood didn't think her woven streetwear stacked up against other well-known designers in the Cult Couture awards but it did – and she scooped the top prize in the competition.

The 25-year-old won \$6000 from the event in which her label was judged against some top Kiwi designers, including Shona Tawhio, Kiri Nathan and Linda Lepou. Miss Whitewood was happy to have taken out the supreme award in the fashion competition with her creation called Taniko.

Her piece was one of 120 entries in the contest, taking out the streetwear section before winning the supreme award.

"I was just ecstatic. I was thinking I didn't have a chance ... it's a real big deal. There were some big names up there."

Taniko, a multi-coloured handwoven dress featuring geometric patterns, was inspired by Lady Gaga and Maori design.

It was constructed from thousands of tiny woollen stitches woven on a board.

Miss Whitewood was exceptionally proud to see Maori design in the limelight.

"I entered because I am passionate about seeing Maori design elevated to a high-end sort of couture arena."

Miss Whitewood graduated from AUT in 2009 with a bachelor of design and successfully launched her own label, Kimihia He Ngaro, which means search for the unseen or unobtainable, in 2010.

She now has an online business and also sells her work through her Facebook page. She plans to use her prizemoney to launch 700 new pieces with another local designer, Amiria Skipworth, at the upcoming Te Matatini Kapa Haka Festival.

Model Stevie Rowley, 20, who also did the hair and make-up for Miss Whitewood's other models, said she loved strutting down the catwalk in her friend's designs.

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