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NY accolade for M'sian architect

Dublin-based Ooi a runner-up in international design contest for memorial park

By **CHRISTOPHER QUAH**

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ALOR SETAR: Hope and memories were the winning elements that earned Dublin-based Malaysian architect Ooi Yin Mau international recognition at a worldwide design contest for an AIDS memorial park.

His *Forest of Memories* finished among the runners-up in the two-month AIDS Memorial Park Design Competition that ended in New York on Jan 29. The results were announced on Feb 1.

In an e-mail from Dublin, an excited Ooi, 38, said he was surprised by his win at the contest, which drew 475 entries from 33 countries including the United States.

"My design is mainly about memories and hope. They are universal," he said.

"They are part of our life and our driving force to move forward," he said, adding that it was "a great honour" for him to be listed as one of the three runners-up.

Ooi, who hails from Kota Sarang Semut, near here, added: "I hope my design will touch the hearts of many people. I feel proud."

The graduate of the University of South Australia School of Architecture and a former student of SJK Keat Hwa also said: "This is one of the proudest moments in my career and a great opportunity to prove Malaysian architects can compete at international level.

"Hopefully, I will be able to return home one day to serve Malaysia.

"Nothing would be better than seeing my designs accepted in my own country."

Ooi has been working in Ireland for more than seven years.

The competition, organised by the New York AIDS Memorial Park and prominent architectural magazine *Architizer* and *Architectural Record*, saw architects and designers planning a design for a 17,000sq ft plot of land across the epicentre of New York

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City's St Vincent's Hospital.

The top prize offered was US\$5,000 (RM17,500) while each of the three runner-ups were awarded US\$2,000 (RM7,000).

The jury was led by Michael Arad, the designer of the National Sept 11 Memorial, and included novelist and journalist Kurt Anderson, Museum of Modern Art chief curator of architecture and design Barry Bergdoll and popular actress and comedienne Whoopi Goldberg.

