

First prize went to Farhad Bahrami Reykani of Iran, right, for the cartoon Globalisation with the second prize awarded to Ross Thomson from Britain for the cartoon Bank Of Russia Vault, above



Third prize was jointly awarded to Mihai Ignat of Romania, above, for his take on the make-believe of market transactions and the rapacious banker of Robert Gumpertz from the US, below left in text

Cartoonists on the money

LEN PHELAN on the winning entries to the Ken Sprague International Cartoon competition

CALLED in as a last-minute judge substitute, I approached the august confines of the Mayfair club where the panel met on Monday with a fair degree of trepidation.

The Ken Sprague competition, only up and running for three years, has already become one of the most significant internationally and gained extensive press coverage and plaudits in Britain and abroad last year.

This year's theme Money Makes The World Go Round drew more than 500 entries from all corners of the globe.

That's a staggering number and it was with a degree of relief that I learned the organisers had whittled these down to 200.

Under the necessarily ruthless but charming guidance of Guardian and Morning Star cartoonist Martin Rowson — whose biting wise-cracks on the unfolding Tory/Lib Dem lovefest in the near-Westminster village kept us all in stitches — the hours sped past.

The 200 were gradually whittled down to 20 or so and in the end it was, as the cliché has it, incredibly difficult for the panel of journalists and cartoonists to decide on the winners.

Many entrants produced ingenious, highly crafted and satirical responses to the subject, using media ranging from Photoshop images to more "old school" cartooning techniques.

As might be expected piggy banks, dollar and euro symbols and balloon worlds deflating under the weight of financial crises cropped up in a fair number of entries.

But in most cases stock symbols were subverted by highly original, witty takes on what in less gifted imaginations would have been blindingly over-obvious.

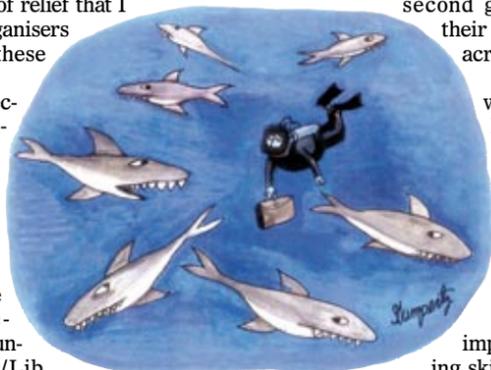
It's true to say that not many produced belly laughs, but then the collapse of capitalism isn't such a rib-tickler. Yet many provoked wry smiles of recognition instead and despite the vast range of cultural contexts, very few of the cartoons needed more than a second glance to get their point tellingly across.

First prize went to Farhad Bahrami Reykani from Iran, at 25 years of age the youngest ever winner of the competition.

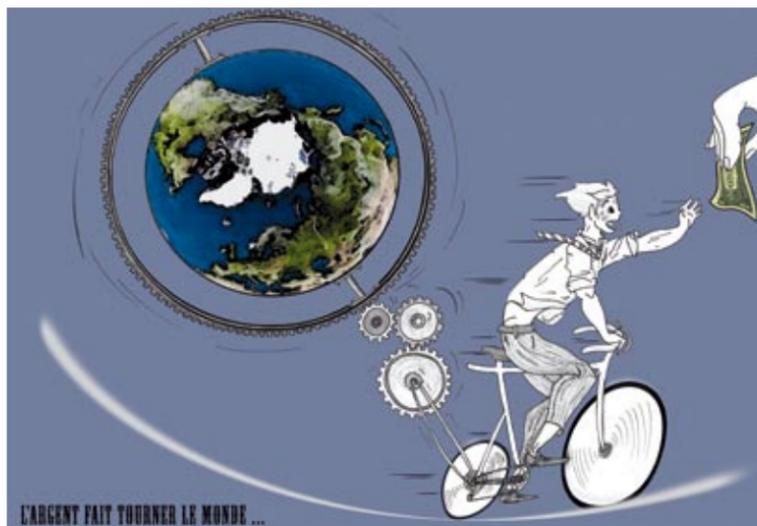
Apart from impressive drawing skill, his characterisation of the "rich West" as an over-fed white tourist glugging coke and pissing polluted waste products tapped by an impoverished black child stood out throughout the selection process and was one which the eye was continually drawn to.

Second prize went to British cartoonist Ross Thomson who cleverly utilises the idea of the famous Russian matryoshka dolls fitting into each other as they become smaller.

The two robbers are opening the



"Banker"



The Appledore Arts Festival special prize for Best Young Cartoonist (under 25) is shared by Helene Crusson Ripoche, above, and Melle Cecile Queau, right

bank's safes, but end up with nothing for their labour, like many in the world today who have lost savings and jobs because of the banking crisis.

The third prize was awarded jointly to two cartoonists as we were unable to choose one above the other.

Romanian Mihai Ignat produced a wonderfully executed work which showed what money signifies for many: without hard cash you can't eat. There's an inexorable and playful logic in the waiter drawing make-believe food on the table cloth as the customer pays with money drawn on the same table cloth in this painterly cartoon.

Banker! by US entrant Robert Gumpertz immediately raised laughs from the jury.

A simple drawing with an immediate

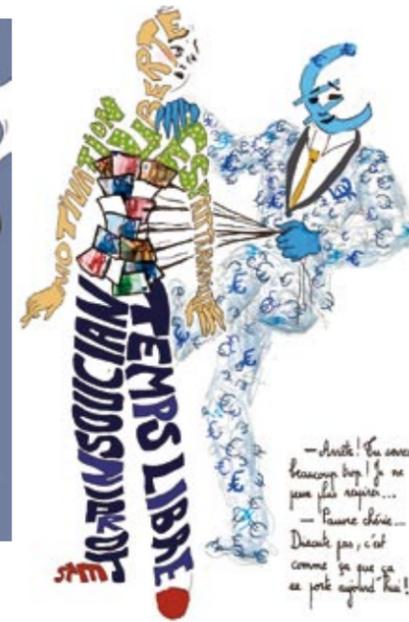
impact, it nails the bankers as the real sharks in our society.

The Appledore Visual Arts Festival Young Cartoonist Prize was won jointly by French cartoonists Helene Crusson Ripoche and Melle Cecile Queau, both 21 years of age.

Both demonstrated high skill in capturing the essence of the subject matter. Queau's cartoon makes a double point: the bankers in the form of an anthropomorphic euro male tightens the corset on a woman, symbolising a trendy "Marianne."

She is suffering and can hardly breathe or move and protests that he's making it too tight but he tells her to stop complaining "as that's the style these days!"

Helene Ripoche takes the competi-



tion's title and interprets it in clear visual terms: the cyclist is continually chasing the unreachable wealth that a bank-note signifies, but in doing so his/her labours keep the world turning.

The winners' work, plus a selection of other entrants, goes on show at the Appledore arts festival in Devon next month and a national tour is planned.

And there's a book deal in the offing too — so it's onwards and upwards for this unique competition.

■ *Coastline: The 13th Appledore Visual Arts Festival runs from June 2 to June 6.* www.appledorearts.org/festival.htm

■ *For further information on the Ken Sprague Fund and its cartoon competition visit* www.kensprague-fund.org.uk