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Mossman artists shortlisted in Silver Jubilee Telstra Art Award

Mossman Gorge's Herbie Salt, Patrick Stanley and Michael Bamboo are amongst more than 100 entrants to be short listed in this year's prestigious 25th *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

Their 'seven shields' piece was submitted as a collaborative work by the three artists from the Kuku Yalanji Tribe. Traditionally, Kuku Yalanji cut shields from the buttress roots of rainforest fig-trees for use in ceremonies and as weapons.

As custodians of rainforest country, Kuku Yalanji aren't permitted to chop down rainforest trees to make shields for art or to sell, instead, they make modern shields from fibreglass. Herbie, Patrick and Michael are all artefact makers at Mossman Gorge who worked together to make the different shapes of the shields which are believed to renew the Kuku Yalanji artists' connection to traditional culture and traditions. The pigments used to paint the shields are mostly traditional colours – black, red, white and yellow.

Herbie Salt

Herbie has been producing artwork for 15 years. He works in a variety of mediums including painting on canvas and wood carvings, burning on wood carvings and traditional artefact wood making.

Patrick Stanley

Patrick has been creating different styles of artefacts for three years. His work with wood has led him to design traditional and contemporary wood carvings and furniture pieces. His artwork is mainly using wood designs which he is able to also paint and burn traditional art styles on the wood.

Michael Bamboo

Michael has been designing and creating artefacts for six years. Michael has a keen interest in a variety of artefact creations and, as a young worker in the Mossman Gorge workshop, he has gained skills to work with different types of pieces.

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) Acting Director, Apolline Kohen said the great diversity of Indigenous expression is reflected in the artworks submitted this year which range from 2D works on paper, bark and canvas to 3D works made from fibre, ironwood and fibreglass.

"The quality of the art works we have received for this year's Silver Jubilee is outstanding, and there is no doubt the judges will have a difficult time selecting the winners," Ms Kohen said.

Lawrie Mortimer, General Manager of the Telstra's Indigenous Directorate, said the Telstra Art Award provides incredible exposure for Indigenous artists from all around Australia.

"Telstra's support of this Award helps ensure the continued development of Indigenous art in Australia by identifying and recognising the country's most talented artists, no matter where they live," Mr Mortimer said.

The overall \$40,000 Telstra Award and further four media categories will again be non-acquisitive in 2008, which means the winning artists can retain or sell their works.

“We’re expecting many of the works to be in great demand following the announcement of this year’s winners,” Ms Kohen said.

“Last year, over two thirds of finalists sold their works for a combined total of more than \$850,000.”

Winners in the Telstra Art Award will be announced on Friday 15 August at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, and works will be on display until Sunday 26 October 2008.

The Telstra Art Award is open to all adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and aims to showcase the very best Australian Indigenous art from around the country.

For further information contact:

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Media note: To speak to Telstra Art Award finalists call Melanie Neilson 0400 599 463

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