



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Franchesca Cubillo Awarded a Churchill Fellowship

Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory Indigenous Senior Curator of Aboriginal Art and Material Culture Franchesca Cubillo is set to travel overseas later this year after being awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship.

Ms Cubillo said the Fellowship would allow her to spend eight weeks at various institutions in New Zealand, Canada, the United States and United Kingdom that have an active role in the repatriation of Indigenous human remains and other valuable items.

“I have a personal and professional commitment to the repatriation of Australian Indigenous human remains and have worked closely in this area for more than five years,” Ms Cubillo said.

“I know the importance of getting things right from an Indigenous and museum perspective, so repatriation occurs in the most culturally appropriate, efficient and effective way possible.

“It is emotionally and spiritually stressful for Indigenous people to know their ancestors’ remains have been removed from country and held in museums and institutions within Australia and overseas.

“Equally state and national museums in Australia have been working with Indigenous people to repatriate ancestral remains back to their communities of origin.

“However, there is still a lot of work to be done in this area, as there are extensive collections of Indigenous remains that are currently held overseas.

“The Churchill Fellowship will allow me to visit some of these centres and examine the varied approaches these institutions have towards repatriation.

“I hope to learn what these overseas institutions do in practical terms with their own Indigenous populations.

“On my return, I will compile a report based on what I have learnt to determine what might be the best practice for the return of overseas collections of Australian Indigenous ancestral remains.

“I will be recording the perspectives and experiences of my international colleagues as well as interviewing Indigenous people to gauge their feelings and ideas regarding the repatriation of ancestral remains.

“It is critical that the voice of Indigenous people be heard and considered.”

Ms Cubillo has recently returned from the United States after being invited to give the opening lecture at the opening of *Dreaming Their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters*, at Washington DC’s National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The exhibition, curated by Britta Konau, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art NMWA and Margo Smith, Curator & Director, The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, contains approximately 80 works by 33 Indigenous female artists, with a large number of these artists coming from either central Australia or Arnhem Land.

*Dreaming Their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters* is exhibited until 24 September 2006.

“The trip to Washington DC was wonderful, the exhibition and museum looked great and are right in the middle of Washington DC, just one block away from the White House,” Ms Cubillo said.

“The United States is developing a strong interest in Indigenous art, so I was glad to be over there to answer all sorts of questions, such as what the term ‘Dreaming’ means and why it relates so much to Indigenous art.

“So to come home from the United States and then find out I have another opportunity to go back there to do something of major importance is extremely humbling and exciting.”

Ms Cubillo urged other people to consider applying for a Churchill Fellowship as it provides many benefits to the individual, the field in which they work and the wider community.

“We can learn so much by investigating how other international communities deal with similar issues,” Ms Cubillo said.

Ms Cubillo plans to travel overseas as part of her Churchill Fellowship later this year after the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* opens at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory on Friday, 11 August 2006.

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Franchesca Cubillo on 8999 8228**

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