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Territory Artist Pays Homage to her Love of Weaving

Territory artist Karen J Mills entry in this year's *25th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* was influenced by Indigenous weaving, memories of hand-knitted woollen garments and Western abstract art.

Born in Katherine in 1960 Karen was adopted as a baby by a non-Aboriginal school teacher mother and raised in South Australia before returning to the Territory as a young adult to seek out her Aboriginal birth mother and Indigenous cultural heritage.

"Although I've always had a strong interest in art it wasn't until later in life, after I had raised my own family that I began developing my career as a visual artist," Ms Mills said.

"The loop stitch technique commonly used by Aboriginal women to make bags from bush string is a central motif in my piece, and is used as a metaphor for identity and connection/disconnection, reflecting my background as an Indigenous woman who has experienced and learned from both black and white worlds."

Museum and Art Gallery (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.

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