

Media Release:

11.09.08

MAGNT Papunya Board Project

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) has embarked on a \$300,000 project towards an international tour of its collection of Papunya Tula Boards.

MAGNT Acting Director, Apolline Kohen said the project which will take place over two years entails research, conservation work and consultations with artists' and families.

"In 1971 school teacher Geoffrey Bardon went to the remote Central Australian settlement of Papunya where he encouraged senior men to paint their traditional body and sand painting associated with ceremony," Ms Kohen said.

"The Papunya Boards created in 1971-72 sparked the development of the Western Desert Art movement, now recognised internationally as one of the most important events in Australian art history.

"MAGNT has the first three consignments comprising 76 paintings created in 1971 and in total holds some 220 works.

"Many of these works have rarely, if ever been seen in public, so the significance of this project, which will bring many of these works to the general public for the first time in history, will be a remarkable achievement for MAGNT.

"The conservation of these works is a major undertaking as precious information and documentation is stuck to the back of each painting which are currently secured to frames.

"The conservation work to commence next January 2009 will be carried out in two phases and is expected to take 12 months to complete."

Community consultations throughout Central and Western Australia are currently taking place by the National Gallery of Victoria Senior Curator Indigenous Art Ms Judith Ryan and Museum Victoria's Senior Curator, Anthropology Central Australian Collection Dr Phillip Batty through Papunya Tula Artists Pty.

Ms Kohen said the consultations involved artists' and their families to ensure that MAGNT respects artists' beliefs and follows appropriate protocols for display and handling of these works.

"Extensive research, documentation and consultation need to take place in order to develop the touring exhibition and publication further," Ms Kohen said.

"There has never been a publication or any kind of extensive documentation, which is a really important part of the project.

"It is a very exciting project and represents MAGNT's future role as a leading arts and cultural institution."

MAGNT is currently considering partnerships to develop international touring exhibition of the Papunya Boards with the touring exhibition scheduled for 2012.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Apolline Kohen on 8999 8220

Issued: 9.20am Thursday, 10 September 2008

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