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## Six Artists from Tiwi Islands Shortlisted in 2009 Telstra Art Award

Indigenous artists from the Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory are renowned around the world for their signature artworks and prints, and this year's 26<sup>th</sup> Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award features six pieces from the islands.

Tiwi artists' Pedro Wonaeamirri and Janice Murray are just two of the 93 Indigenous artists to be considered for the prestigious prize.

Both artists have called on their ancestry to create their 3D pieces entered in this year's Telstra Art Award, with Pedro Wonaeamirri's, *Pukamani Pole – Jilamara* entry inspired by the pukamani (funeral) ceremony and Janice Murray's entry a traditional Tunga Basket.

In his accompanying artist statement Pedro describes the traditional burial grounds on the Tiwi Islands, with their spectacular weather worn poles surrounding each person's grave. "The *Jilamara* design featured on the Pukamani Pole was inspired by the work of relatives that have since passed away," Pedro said.

Janice's artist statement describes how the traditional Tunga Baskets are made. "The Tunga Baskets are made from stringy bark and sewn up with bush string before being painted...they are used to carry food and water, but they also have a role in the pukamani ceremony, with the deceased persons Tunga baskets or bags placed on top of the pukamani pole at the burial ground," Janice said.

Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory (MAGNT) Director, Anna Malgorzewicz said there had been a diverse range of artworks submitted, from general paintings, three-dimensional works comprising sculptures, fibre works and ceramics, bark paintings and works on paper.

"I congratulate all of the artists from across Australia who entered this year, the Telstra Art Awards continue to be a celebration of Indigenous culture and an opportunity for Indigenous artists to showcase their high quality artworks," Ms Malgorzewicz said.

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

"Telstra has been involved with the Award for the last 18 years and our ongoing support helps ensure the continued development of Indigenous art in Australia, while also playing a key role in driving the flourishing Australian art industry," Ms Symmons said.

Now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year, the Telstra Art Award is the longest-running art award dedicated to the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, and has come to be regarded as one of the premier national events in the Australian Indigenous art community.

The overall \$40 000 Telstra Award and further four media categories ensure a high profile for the winning artists, who can retain or sell their works due to the non-acquisitive nature of the Award.

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.

Winners in the Telstra Art Award will be announced on Friday, 14 August 2009 at the Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory, and works will be on display until Sunday, 25 October 2009. For more information go to [www.magnt.nt.gov.au/natsiaa](http://www.magnt.nt.gov.au/natsiaa)

**For media interviews please contact Anne Marshall on 0437 915 366 to arrange.**

**Images: Pedro Wonaeamirri and Janice Murray with examples of their work.**

The 26<sup>th</sup> Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

