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## Desert Artists Feature in Telstra Art Award

More than 20 Indigenous artists from Utopia, Hermannsburg, Kintore, Lajamanu and the Alice Springs region have been shortlisted for judging in this year's 26<sup>th</sup> *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, with the desert artists works recently announced in the 93 pre-selected pieces to be considered for the prestigious prize.

The entries from the desert region range from general paintings to ceramics to watercolour on paper, but they all reflect the artists' surroundings and country.

Local Hermannsburg potter Judith Pungkarta Inkamala's ceramic piece, *Two Black Birds*, depicts the red tailed black cockatoos which fly over country near Hermannsburg, while Haasts Bluff artist Kevin Wirri, has entered a watercolour on paper titled *Near Gosses Bluff*.

Another renown desert artist and 2001 Telstra Award winner is Warlpiri woman Dorothy Napangardi, her entry in this year's Telstra Art Award, *Salt on Mina Mina*, depicts a women's ceremonial site and uses a myriad of white dots against a black background.

While starkly different entries, Napangardi's Aunty, Mitjili Napanangka Gibson, was inspired to start painting seriously after watching her niece paint. Gibson's colourful acrylic on linen, *Kunamanarra and Wimparku*, uses an aerial perspective to highlight the two important sites.

Gibson has also been embraced by the screen industry, with her debut playing the title role in Warwick Thornton's short film *Nana*, and more recently she appeared in the critically acclaimed Australian film, *Samson & Delilah*, which starred her granddaughter.

Museum and Art Gallery of the 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)

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

**Images – Mitjili Napanangka Gibson and Dorothy Napangardi (note images of other artists mentioned are available on request)**

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.



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