Gerry McCarthy
MINISTER FOR ARTS & MUSEUMS

6 December 2010

Yalangbara: Art of the Djang’kawu

A travelling exhibition showcasing captivating Aboriginal artworks by members of the Marika family from the Rirratjingu clan of north-east Arnhem Land is set to open in Canberra tomorrow.

Arts Minister Gerry McCarthy said the Yalangbara: Art of the Djang’kawu travelling exhibition has been developed by the Marika family together with the Museum and Art Gallery (MAGNT) of the Northern Territory and the National Museum of Australia (NMA) in Canberra.

“Indigenous art and culture is central to the lives of thousands of Territorians and it’s great to see this travelling exhibition set to make its national debut,” Mr McCarthy said.

“The Marika family is an important dynasty of Indigenous artists, Indigenous rights advocates and cultural ambassadors - their work is synonymous with art awards and art development in the Northern Territory.

“Their long association with MAGNT includes Banduk Marika’s past membership on the MAGNT Board and her instigation of significant community engagement projects with MAGNT such as the Yalangbara project and support for the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAA). Her late brother Wandjuk Marika has the NATSIAA Memorial 3D Award named in his honour.

“The Marika family’s homeland is Yalangbara - known also as Port Bradshaw - south of Yirrkala in north-east Arnhem Land.

“This exhibition shows the public the important role art plays in preserving the Yolngu people’s connection to their culture, heritage and land.”

Yalangbara was registered as a sacred site in 1983 by the Northern Territory Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and became part of the Register of the National Estate in 2003.

The Yalangbara project supports this protection and honours the clan’s sacred land via their art and ceremonies.

Highlights of the travelling exhibition include works produced at the Yirrkala mission in the 1930s, rare crayon drawings commissioned by Dr Ronald Berndt, monumental barks from the 1950s and a series of contemporary prints, fibre items, barks and carvings.

“I congratulate everyone involved in making this exhibition possible and look forward to it coming to Darwin next November,” Mr McCarthy said.

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