

MEDIA RELEASE

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National Gallery of Australia opens largest and most diverse contemporary Australian Indigenous art exhibition in the USA

Australian Indigenous Art Triennial: Culture Warriors

10 September – 8 December 2009

American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington DC

The National Gallery of Australia's first Australian Indigenous Art Triennial *Culture Warriors* opens in Washington DC this week.

Ten of the thirty Australian indigenous artists featured in the exhibition will travel to Washington to participate in a week of arts and education events and celebrations to mark the opening. Artists travelling from across Australia to the USA include Jean Baptiste Apuatimi, Daniel Boyd, Ricky Maynard, Christopher Pease, Christian Thompson, Judy Watson, Vernon Ah Kee, Richard Bell, Gordon Hookey and Arthur Pambegan Jr.

"The National Gallery of Australia is delighted to present this outstanding contemporary Australian exhibition in Washington DC. It so perfectly reflects the enduring power of Australia's Aboriginal culture and the vitality of our artists. The promotion of our best art internationally and the development of new audiences for our own visual culture are significant elements of our National Gallery's charter. This exhibition honours that commitment to our art and artists and follows on from its acclaimed four city Australian national tour", said Rupert Myer AM, Chairman of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Culture Warriors has been curated by the National Gallery of Australia and the USA showing is part of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade's Australian International Culture Council's initiative presented by the Australian Embassy's, 'Australia Presents' program. Australian Minister for the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP will open *Culture Warriors* in Washington DC on 10 September.

"This exhibition showcases the diversity of contemporary Australian Indigenous art practice by artists from all over the country. It is a significant project that has attracted the support and cooperation of different levels of government and represents an important cultural exchange between Australia and the United States of America. Some of the foremost Australian Indigenous artists will be in Washington DC to introduce their works of art and artistic practice to an American audience", said Arts Minister, Peter Garrett.

Featuring the work of thirty artists from every Australian state and territory, from urban, regional and remote outback areas, the exhibition showcases the incredible range of contemporary Indigenous art practice. *Culture Warriors* features works created between 2004 and 2007 in a variety of media including painting on bark and canvas, sculpture, textiles, weaving, new media, photo media, print making and installation.

Curated by Dr Brenda L Croft, former Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia and a member of the Gurindji and Mudpurra peoples from the Northern Territory, *Culture Warriors* opened in Canberra at the National Gallery of Australia in late 2007 and toured to the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane.

Culture Warriors highlights accomplished, powerful and innovative works of art; some using traditional materials in highly original ways, some revitalising cultural practices, and others tantalising us with the heady use of contemporary technologies and cross-cultural references.

Culture Warriors draws inspiration from the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum and pays specific tribute to a core group of artists whose careers span the four decades since the Referendum: Jean Baptiste Apuatimi, Phillip Gudthaykudthay, John Mawurndjul, Lofty Bardayal Nadjamerrek AO and Arthur Koo'ekka Pambegan Jr.

The exhibition is the premier visual arts component of the Australian Embassy's 'Australia Presents' program that celebrates the talent and creative excellence of Australian performing and visual artists.

The National Gallery would also like to thank principal sponsors BHP Billiton and Qantas, the Australia Council for the Arts, and the state governments of Queensland, Victoria, Northern Territory and Western Australia who have assisted in making the tour of this exhibition possible.

Media inquiries in Washington DC

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