

MEDIA RELEASE

4 October 2010

NGA COLLABORATES WITH UAP TO PRODUCE TWO MAJOR COMMISSIONS FOR 'NEW LOOK' GALLERY

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) last week unveiled its new Indigenous Galleries and main entrance to the public which features two unique public works.

Visitors to the gallery are greeted by "Eran". The 2.7 metre spherical sculpture by renowned Indigenous artist Dr Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher (Thanakupi), and a 12 metre suspended piece interpreted from a Maningrida fish trap. Both of which were curated by the NGA and fabricated under the artist and collaborators' direction at UAP's Brisbane studio and workshop.

At the entry to a wing devoted entirely to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, the installations recognise traditional origins in the context of contemporary architecture.

Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia, said, "UAP have been fabulous to work with – they are so enthusiastic, professional and quick. The staff of UAP demonstrate a great understanding of materials, they are sensitive to artists' wishes and have been so co-operative during the whole process. We have really enjoyed working with them on these two projects."

Ron Radford continued, saying "Thanakupi is Australia's most senior female Aboriginal artist working today with a career spanning over forty years. Her beautiful *Eran* is the largest of her metal sculptures created to date. The Gallery was very pleased to be able to work with such a renowned international artist on the realisation of this project. The inclusion of this stunning spherical sculptural work complements the forms of the new wing and galleries very well. The fish trap is based on a 1960s Maningrida fish trap and UAP have been able to interpret and enlarge the original woven piece into a stunning 12 metre long intricate metal work. The fish trap is a feature work in the atrium and the shadow pattern it produces is almost as beautiful as the work itself."

The Maningrida fish trap is an important sculptural commission and presents a contemporary interpretation of a traditional woven fish trap from the Maningrida Aboriginal community in Australia's Northern Territory. Works of art from Maningrida carry a strong reputation and are represented in collections nationally and internationally.

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UAP's design team travelled to the Northern Territory to work with George Ganyjbala, Maningrida elder and skilled fish trap maker and his family. The knowledge shared in this process allowed designers to find a respectful translation of Maningrida's distinctive weaving methods into stylised elements for casting in aluminium. UAP then collaborated with PTW Architects and Robert Bird Group Engineers in order to successfully integrate the artefact within the NGA's new wing.

Jamie Perrow, UAP's lead designer on the project, said, "It was an honour to work with George Ganyjbala and the Maningrida Aboriginal community to create the Maningrida fish trap sculpture. Our intention for this piece is a reverent and symbolic interpretation of a historic and culturally important indigenous artefact. We hope that visitors from all over Australia and overseas will be inspired by the piece."

The final installation, which measures 12 metres in length, is suspended inside the atrium of the NGA's new main entrance. The fish trap is the focal point in the visitor's entry into the gallery and has multiple vantage points from the ground floor and second storey walkway. Not unlike the humble tool of its origin, the fish trap functions to draw visitors in and guide them through the gallery as they become immersed in the wider collection.

Thanakupi's sphere, entitled *Eran*, is truly a stunning sculpture which stands in front of the Gallery's new entrance and creates a striking entry statement in the forecourt landscape. The Gallery enjoyed working with the artist and UAP to the creation of this exciting new sculpture.

Eran means river. The work depicts various land-based creative legends through representations of animals in the stories of the tribes along the rivers of Weipa—the Evath eran and N'Gath eran—that is the Mission, Hay and Embley rivers to give their common English names. Weipa is on the western coast of Cape York and is now the site of the Rio Tinto bauxite mine. For Thanakupi the new medium of aluminum, derived from bauxite from her traditional lands has special significance.

The galleries and entrance, designed by Andrew Andersons AO of PTW Architects, were opened on Thursday 30 September in an official ceremony by the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC.

PROJECT DETAILS

Artist: Dr Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher (Thanakupi)

Artist's collaborator: Jennifer Isaacs AM

Maningrida Community Representative: George Ganyjbala

Curator: NGA, Franchesca Cubillo

Design: UAP Studio, Jamie Perrow

Fabrication: UAP Workshop

Architect: PTW Architects, Andrew Andersons AO

Project Engineer: Birzulis Structural Engineers

Artwork Engineer (Fish Trap): Robert Bird Group

Landscape Architect: McGregor Coxall

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Notes to Editors:

Urban Art Projects – <http://www.uap.com.au>

Urban Art Projects is a specialist design consultancy creating site-specific art and design commissions for architectural and landscape environments.

The firm ensures that art and design outcomes align with a project's aesthetic and the client vision. It collaborates with project teams in master-planning, art strategy, artist appointment, design, construction, installation and project management to ensure the creative intent of an installation is preserved and delivered on time and to budget.

UAP offers a unique turn-key approach to commissioning large-scale artwork and creative design solutions, providing low-risk solutions for clients.

National Gallery of Australia

For further information, visit: <http://nga.gov.au>

Dr Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher (Thanakupi)

For further information, visit: <http://www.jenniferisaacs.com.au/thancoupie/>

Maningrida Arts Centre, Northern Territory – <http://www.maningrida.com/>

The coastal town of Maningrida has a population of 2600 and lies on the estuary of the Liverpool River, located approximately 400 km east of Darwin in North East Arnhem Land. The Kunibídjí people are the traditional landowners of this country. The name Maningrida is an Anglicised version of the Kunibídjí name Manayingkarírra, which comes from the phrase 'Mane djang karirra', meaning 'the place where the dreaming changed shape'.

Maningrida Arts & Culture is one of Australia's largest Aboriginal artist's co-operatives. It concentrates on the marketing of traditional and contemporary arts, including bark paintings, wooden sculpture, fibre craft, prints and items of material culture.

PTW Architects

For further information, visit: <http://www.ptw.com.au>

Robert Bird Group Engineers

For further information, visit: <http://www.robertbird.com/>

McGregor Coxall Landscape Architects

For further information, visit: <http://mcgregorcoxall.com>