DARWIN ABORIGINAL ART FAIR ANNOUNCES GROUND-BREAKING DIGITAL FORMAT

Tuesday 30 June, 2020

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) will be held in an online format for the first time this year, providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and arts lovers a unique digital platform through which to connect.

Like many arts events globally, plans for DAAF were thrown into doubt following COVID-19 border closures and the introduction of social distancing measures.

However, seeing these unprecedented times as a unique opportunity to reach an even broader Australian and international audience through digital channels, DAAF organisers have embraced the concept of a 'virtual fair' and supporting program of online events.

Staged by the not-for-profit Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation and now in its 14th year, the online DAAF program is set to run for nine days from 6-14 August 2020. It will comprise:

- **14th Annual Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.** The new online platform will connect Arts Centres with art buyers while creating wider community awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in innovative ways. Online exhibition portals will be included on the DAAF website to enable Art Centres to showcase and sell their artists' work.

  DAAF takes no commissions on the artworks sold, with 100% of sales returning to Art Centres and their communities.
- **DAAF Public Program.** A vibrant program of cultural performances, artist workshops and demonstrations, Indigenous food experiences, panel discussions and a children's collaborative art project will be hosted on the DAAF website and social channels.
- **Cultural Keepers Program.** Six online sessions will bring together Indigenous curators, senior Art Centre staff and special guests from international Indigenous Nations to facilitate an exchange of stories and a 'behind the scenes' look into the world of arts workers and curators.
- **Inaugural National Indigenous Fashion Awards.** A celebration of innovation, diversity and ethical practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and fashion designers, the NIFAs will culminate in an awards ceremony, broadcast NITV's digital channels, in August.

The popular *Country to Couture* fashion show has been postponed, with consideration being given to running it as a separate event later in the year, pending changes to current restrictions.

Foundation Executive Director, Claire Summers, said the program had been crafted to deliver a range of vibrant, engaging opportunities to immerse audiences and participants in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, fashion and culture.

Ms Summers said art's ability to promote joy, hope and inspiration had never been more important, as the world emerges from what has been a time of isolation for many. She said reconsidering DAAF's usual delivery mode had unlocked new ways to share and tell stories.

"Creativity can be expressed and shared in many ways, so moving beyond the boundaries of a physical fair made sense in 2020, particularly given our collective yearning for a sense of connection and meaning as we move out of lockdown," said Ms Summers.

"It's exciting to be able to deliver DAAF in such an engaging and accessible format – by moving to a digital platform, we can reach a truly global audience and help people from all walks of life explore the wonderful world of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and design."

DAAF is internationally celebrated as a world-class event. In 2019, DAAF attracted 2,000 artists from 70 Art Centres, each representing their own unique culture from every corner of the country, and a record attendance of over 17,000. It also generated significant art sales of $2.84 million. The Fair had an economic impact of more than $13.2 million in the Northern Territory.

In delivering DAAF, the Foundation's mission is to encourage the production and ethical promotion of Aboriginal arts, with 100 per cent of all sales generated by the event returned to Art Centres and their

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respective Indigenous communities.

Ms Summers said in addition to creating important flow-on benefits for Indigenous communities, DAAF was the only event of its kind that brought diverse local and international audiences together with artists, performers and arts workers from some of Australia's most remote regions.

"In either an online or offline format, DAAF creates an important meeting place for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together to celebrate the rich heritage and vibrant culture of our First Nations Peoples," she said.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture, Lauren Moss, congratulated the DAAF team on their leadership and ingenuity with their swift adaptation to the current environment by moving to an online model.

"The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair is the only national event of its kind and has secured a reputation as the country's most significant and internationally recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts event, which will now move into the digital sphere this year," she said.

"Now more than ever, the preservation, protection and elevation of culture is critical to the health and wellbeing of communities throughout the Northern Territory – I commend the wonderful team at DAAF on their forward thinking and adaptability during these times.

"I am also excited to see the inaugural National Indigenous Fashion Awards come to fruition. The Awards will offer fresh opportunities for remote Aboriginal designers and a platform to promote their unique couture creations both nationally and to the world."

For more information about the 14th
Annual Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, visit www.daaf.com.au.

To learn about the inaugural National Indigenous Fashion Awards, go to www.nifa.com.au.

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and the National Indigenous Fashion Awards form part of an alliance of Indigenous arts events, held in August each year, which include the Garma Festival, Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, National Indigenous Music Awards and the Salon des Refusé. Together they form the most significant celebration of Australian Indigenous art, music and ideas in the world. DAAF is also a proud umbrella event of the Darwin Festival.

Keywords:

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