

MEET DARWIN

CONVENTION CASE STUDY – DARWIN, AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

EVENT NAME:	Darwin International Art Fair 2010 www.darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au
DATE:	12-14 August 2010
TOTAL ATTENDANCE:	38 art centres, 93 indigenous artists and art workers. The event attracted 5, 000 visitors
EVENT MANAGER:	Alison Copley, Indigenous Arts Officer, Top End Arts

EVENT BACKGROUND:

Established in 2007, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) exists to provide Aboriginal owned Arts Centres a platform to market the works of the artists they represent. The Fair has grown rapidly since 2007 when 16 art centres participated, to 19 in 2008, 32 in 2009 and 38 art centres participated in the 2010 event.

The Art Fair provides a unique opportunity for arts industry buyers and the public to purchase art directly from the Indigenous owned and incorporated art centres. To see the work of emerging as well as established artists, to meet the artists and to find out about the variety of different cultural groups producing art. Paintings on canvas, bark paintings, works on paper, timber and metal sculptures, limited edition prints, didjeridus, fibre art and jewelry were showcased during the three day event.

Supported by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), and Arts NT, there were 25 Indigenous art centres from the Northern Territory, seven Association of Central Australian Aboriginal Arts & Craft Centres (Desart) and Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA) Art Centres from Western Australia and two Desart Art Centres from the APY Lands in South Australia.

Held to coincide with the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA's) and the annual Darwin Festival, the dates are chosen at a time when the whole city is alive with visitors who have an interest in Indigenous art and culture to enhance and promote this vibrant sector of the Indigenous community in Darwin.



EVENT OBJECTIVE:

- To provide opportunities to meet the artists and experience the diversity of Australian Indigenous art
- To showcase the work of established and emerging artists from 38 community-owned, incorporated Aboriginal Art Centres across Australia
- To ensure the proceeds of purchases go directly to the artists and their communities

DAAF Event Manager, Ms Alison Copley said many of the artists reside in remote locations and this event provides the ideal forum to showcase the unique diversity of creative expression all under one roof.

“You would need a small aircraft, and many days travelling in a 4WD vehicle all around the nation to view the diversity of art styles that are showcased over three days at the annual Art Fair,” she said.

“There are only two dedicated Indigenous Art Fairs in Australia, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and one in the North Queensland city of Cairns, that promotes Queensland artists,” added Copley.

The event has a multitude of flow-on benefits for both the artists and the purchasers such as;

- Artists benefit from the exposure to a vast range of styles from other communities
- Professional industry experience to engage in customer relations and sales
- Encourage interaction between artist and purchaser ‘to share their story’ behind the artwork
- Boosts self esteem encouraging artists to continue their work
- ‘Face-to-face’ meetings to personalise relationship between artists and gallery personnel
- Sale of works benefits the greater Indigenous communities throughout Australia
- The combination of these elements provide education, inspiration and motivation to remote area residents

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair has developed into an annual national event providing the art centres with a major marketing platform to grow their profile and build their business capacity.



EVENT FORMAT:

To kick-off the event, a networking breakfast was held at 'The Jetty' Restaurant overlooking one of Australia's largest harbours. The idea was for all artists to meet each other in a relaxed environment.

Held in the Exhibition Halls of the Darwin Convention Centre, the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair was opened by Hetti Perkins, Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Arts - Art Gallery of NSW and the Northern Territory Minister for Arts, the Honorable Gerald Francis McCarthy MLA.

A memorable welcome was performed by local Larrakia women, artist and singer, Ali Mills. Followed by an enchanting display of cultural dancing was performed by the 'One Mob Different Country' dancers from the Darwin Correctional Centre at Berramai.

THE DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE:

The event has had four different homes in the past four years. In 2010, the priority was to find a venue to maintain consistency, with additional space for future growth and ultimately to raise the professionalism of the event overall.

"The Darwin Convention Centre is the right place to hold our event. The professional services offered in a purpose built venue made our jobs so much easier and all the venue staff were super helpful," added Copley.

The advantages of having a dedicated loading dock, access to the essential transporting equipment such as forklifts, trolleys, rubbish removal and cleaning services with on-site catering and bump-in staff to assist certainly made the difference and can never be underestimated with planning an event of this scale.

The idyllic harbour-side location of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct provided a spectacular backdrop for the event with colourful banners of the 38 Art Centres positioned to provide a visual connection throughout the parklands, retail outlets, restaurants and coffee shops. The close proximity and convenience of the Vibe Hotel and Medina Apartments adjacent to the Convention Centre was a benefit for all attendees.

The Indigenous artists also agreed with 13 rating the location as excellent, 16 managers rated the size of the Convention Centre as excellent and 16 good. 15 rated the facilities as excellent and 18 rated the parking as excellent.

Fusion Displays and Graphics have been a committed partner of the Fair since its inception in 2007. There are very strict rules on the framing and presentation of all artwork that leads to challenges in the exhibition booth set up and design to suit a retail environment.

The Fusion team are very focussed on offering the best possible solutions, repositioning artwork when sold, with new replacement pieces to be hung in the fastest possible timeframe to maximise the retail opportunities for the artists. It was also essential that five-star presentation and lighting of all artwork was maintained throughout the event.

Survey responses indicated that 15 Art Centre managers rated the size and layout of the booths excellent. 10 managers rated the signage as excellent and 16 rated the Fusion staff as excellent.

VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS

Each year, a buyer survey was conducted. This year, 302 surveys were completed with the following results;

- 69% said the Fair exceeded their expectations
- 37% advised they had purchased art elsewhere in the Northern Territory
- The average amount spent on artwork was AU\$1892 (range A\$30 to AU\$29,000)
- 76% have had other Aboriginal cultural experiences in the Northern Territory in 2010
- 58% respondents said they were 'completely satisfied' and 38% were satisfied with their experiences of art and culture in the Northern Territory

Attendees also took advantage of what the city of Darwin has to offer during their stay. 71% attended the Darwin Festival, 71% visited Mindil Beach Markets, 72.5% also explored the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and 65.5% had previously attended an art exhibition opening.

CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS:

Communication is always one of the greatest challenges with the organisation of the scope of this event. The majority of the artists reside extremely remote locations with limited access to telephone, internet and postage services.

Registration of artwork, letters of support for funding applications, proof of ownership, obtaining images for publicity are only some of the many challenges involved with an event of this nature.

However, the rewards far outweigh the challenges with the following outcomes delivered;

- AU\$672,690 worth of business was done over the 3 days of the fair, with a further AU\$434,800 of forward business generated - around \$1,107,490.00 in total revenue.
- This compared to AU\$627,620 business and AU\$242,000 forward sales for 2009
- Income to individual art centres ranged between AU\$47,000 and AU\$4,150
- One non-collector spent AU\$25,000 at the Fair

Feedback from visitors topped off the success of the event by saying;

"I think this event is one of the best places to see, experience and purchase arts owned by Indigenous people."

"Loved the stories behind the work we purchased."

"Loved to see the community artists here with new work and being proud of it."

"Best part is greater connection with remote centres."

"Opened my eyes to an ancient, yet very civilised culture."

"Better venue than last year, always too short."

"This (Darwin) is a magnificent place, will be back."

"Love experiencing the real Australia and Aboriginal people."

"The art is of a phenomenal standard."

CLIENT QUOTES:

"Many of the artists reside in remote locations and this event provides the ideal forum to showcase the unique diversity of creative expression all under one roof. You would need a small aircraft, and many days travelling in a 4WD vehicle all around the national to view the diversity of art styles that are showcased at the annual Art Fair."

Alison Copley, Event Manager, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

"We are proud to have our works on display and people buying them."
Indigenous artist

"The Darwin Convention Centre is the right place to hold our event. The professional services offered in a purpose built venue made our jobs so much easier and all the venue staff were super helpful."

Alison Copley, Event Manager, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair

"It was good to see all the different arts from other places and meeting other people too."
Indigenous artist

Download hi resolution images to support this media release http://www.darwinconvention.com.au/image_library.asp

For further information or comment, please contact:

Ms Carrie Altamura, Business Development Manager

Darwin Convention Centre, PO Box 735, Darwin NT 0801

T: + 61 8 9823 9000 | **E:** caltamura@darwinconvention.com.au | www.darwinconvention.com.au

Darwin Convention Centre is a project of Darwin Cove Convention Centre Pty Ltd and the Northern Territory Government and is proudly operated by international venue management specialist, AEG Ogden. www.aegogden.com

