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JAMES AHMAT WINS 2011 GAB TITUI INDIGENOUS ART AWARD

Mr James Ahmat of Badu Island was named winner of the prestigious Gab Titui Cultural Centre's Indigenous Art Award last night, receiving \$5,000 in prize money for his wood carving titled *Naraw Dhangal*.

Runner Up was Ms Ellarose Savage of Erub Island, for her ceramic work titled *Sai Neur*, taking home a prize of \$2,000.

General Manager of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Mr Wayne See Kee stated, "This is the first time a theme has been selected for the annual Art Award and has created an opportunity for local artists to communicate the significance of *land, sea and sky* in our culture and lifestyle.

"I congratulate this year's winner Mr James Ahmat and commend everyone who has contributed to the fourth Gab Titui Indigenous Art Award, whose work across a variety of media can be seen in the exhibition space until 30 August 2011.

Subcategory winners were – 'Best Craft Work \$500': Frank Whap (Mabuiag); 'Best Cultural Artefact \$500': Vincent Babia (Saibai); 'Best 2D Work \$500': Mersane Loban (Moa); and 'Best Secondary Student Work \$500': Taicee Pearson (Iama).

The 'National Museum of Australia - History Through Art' award, a new category went to Ceferino Sabatino (Hammond).

'Highly Commended' awards went to – Joseph Banu (Boigu); Michael Nona (Badu); Weldon Matasia (Badu); Sedey Stephen (Erub); Kapua Gutchen Jnr (Erub); Segar Passi (Mer); and Zacharia Gaidan (Badu).

'Commended' awards went to – Edmund Laza (Badu); Harry Nona (Badu); Angela Torenbeek (Moa); David Bosun (Moa); Racy Oui-Pitt (Erub); and Maria Ware (Moa).

The entries were judged by Ms Nici Cumpston, Associate Curator of Australian Paintings, Sculpture and Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia who told guests the exhibition was an outstanding success.

"The works of art are of a very high standard, the exhibition is a testament to the strength and vitality of the Torres Strait Islander people and their culture," Ms Cumpston said.

"Each piece is rich in cultural expression and the originality of the work is truly inspiring.

Community members still have the opportunity to vote for their favourite artwork in the 'People's Choice Award' category, with the winner set to receive a prize of \$1,000.

The 'People's Choice Award' winner will be announced in the Torres News and on the Gab Titui website in the first week of August 2011.

A catalogue containing photographs of all work featured in the exhibition will be available for purchase at the Gab Titui Cultural Centre's Gallery Shop from September 2011.

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