About the artist
Have you ever looked closely at the money that you use? Brisbane-based artist Ryan Presley carefully studied the lines, patterns and colours of Australian banknotes before reinventing the currency as a celebration of Aboriginal history. Ryan's father's family are Marri Ngarr people from the Northern Territory. In 2009 he began creating his Blood Money series of large watercolour paintings featuring detailed portraits of Aboriginal leaders, warriors and activists. These paintings are reproduced and sold in a currency exchange installation project that has raised over $80,000 for Aboriginal youth programs.

About the work
This painting commemorates the life of Uncle Stephen ‘Stevie’ Gadlabarti Goldsmith, a courageous and beloved Elder of the Kaurna and Narungga people.

Every detail was carefully chosen to celebrate his identity and achievements as a champion of language and culture. He is shown speaking passionately onstage, and dancing with Paul Keating at the launch of the 2015 Tarnanthi festival. The red kangaroo is a totem for the Adelaide region, and the native bee represents his Kaurna name, Gadlabarti. It took Ryan around three days to paint Uncle Stevie’s beard!

“Kardla pawulyarninga! (Keep the fire burning!)”
Kaurna language quoted on Blood Money - Infinite Dollar Note - Uncle Stephen Gadlabarti Goldsmith Commemorative, by Ryan Presley
Materials you need

- A3 paper
- Scrap paper
- A lead pencil
- An eraser
- A pencil sharpener
- A black fineliner pen
- Coloured pencils or textas

Create your own narrative portrait

1. Choose the person that you would like to draw – a friend, family member or famous person. This portrait is going to tell a story about their life.

2. Think about the person you have chosen and why they are special to you. What activities do they like to do? What interesting things have happened in their lives? What objects or colours do you associate with this person? Brainstorm and make practice drawings on scrap paper.

3. Fold the A3 paper three times, then unfold it and flatten it back out. You will be left with faint fold lines dividing the paper into 8 sections. Trace these lines lightly with lead pencil.

4. Across the middle four sections of the paper, sketch out a large drawing of your chosen person. You could draw their whole body, or just their head and shoulders. Fill up the whole middle of the paper with this drawing.

5. You should have four empty sections left on your paper. In one of these sections, draw your chosen person doing an activity that they love. In another section, draw an important moment from their life. In a third section, draw an object that is significant to them. And in the last section of the paper, draw something that represents their home.

6. Erase the lines dividing up your page. Outline your drawing with black fineliner then colour it in. This portrait shows a lot more than what somebody looks like!

Take it further

Which moment from this person's life did you choose to draw – a happy event, or something dramatic and challenging? If you were drawing a narrative self-portrait, which events and activities from your own life would you choose to show?

Look at how Ryan Presley has included text in this work. Is there a special word or phrase you could incorporate into your portrait? What other kinds of art use a combination of words and pictures?

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

@agsa.adelaide #agsastart