

Embargoed until Friday 24 May, 11:30am

South Australia's Vincent Namatjira wins \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize 2019

Adelaide, Australia: Vincent Namatjira has been named the winner of the Ramsay Art Prize 2019, Australia's most generous prize for young people, with his work *Close Contact*.

Art Gallery of South Australia Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM said, 'The Ramsay Art Prize sets out to elevate and accelerate careers of young contemporary Australian artists. Vincent Namatjira is at a pivotal point in his career and his work *Close Contact* represents a new way of working for him.'

The judges were unanimous in their appreciation of the work and feel that Namatjira's bold new work represents the very essence of the Ramsay Art Prize, which is now in its second iteration.

Great-grandson of watercolourist Albert Namatjira, Vincent Namatjira lives and works in Indulkana in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands of South Australia.

Upon accepting the award, Vincent Namatjira said, 'Winning this prize means a lot to me and it will hopefully create more opportunities for me to continue to make more ambitious work and to share my practice with new audiences. I also hope to use my position to create opportunities for other young artists in remote Indigenous communities. I can honestly say that becoming an artist turned my life around and now I want to be a leader and a role-model for the next generation of young artists.'

The winning work was selected by a panel of international and national contemporary art experts. Guest judge Russell Storer, Deputy Director (Curatorial and Research), National Gallery of Singapore said 'Vincent's work stood out for its directness and clarity, but also for its wit and complexity.'

'*Close Contact* is a startling self-portrait combining painting and sculpture, and as such represents a major shift in Vincent's practice. Cook is represented as a persistent shadow of the artist showing how Indigenous and white Australia are inextricably linked by history, but also in the present. Vincent's thumbs-up stance expresses resilience and humour, crucial strategies for resistance and survival.' Russell Storer said.

Established in the name of South Australia's leading cultural philanthropists James and Diana Ramsay, the Ramsay Art Prize is an important acquisitive art prize for contemporary Australian artists. Presented by the Art Gallery of South Australia and supported in perpetuity by the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, the Ramsay Art Prize aims to inspire generation after generation of artists and art lovers.

Chair of the Foundation, Nick Ross, says, 'The Ramsay Art Prize embodies the values and vision of James and Diana's legacy. It is a privilege to provide young artists with the opportunity to radically change their trajectory.'

All 23 finalists are also eligible for a People's Choice Prize supported by sponsors Lipman Karas. This non-acquisitive cash prize of \$15,000 is chosen by public vote and will be announced on 9 August 2019.

The Ramsay Art Prize 2019 was judged by a panel of leading contemporary art specialists - Russell Storer, Deputy Director (Curatorial and Research), National Gallery of Singapore, Richard Lewer, contemporary artist, and Dr Lisa Slade, Assistant Director, Artistic Programs, Art Gallery of South Australia.

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People's Choice Prize



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Ramsay Art Prize 2019

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The Ramsay Art Prize 2019 exhibition runs from 25 May to 25 August 2019 at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Admission is free. For further information on the 23 finalists and the Ramsay Art Prize visit <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/ramsay-art-prize/>

About Ramsay Art Prize 2019 winning work

Close Contact is a double-sided portrait in acrylic paint on plywood. This work represents a new way of working for Vincent Namatjira, breaking away from the familiar and traditional wall-based painting on canvas. The artist made preparatory drawings directly onto the plywood, working from life and from reference images, including E. Philips Fox's painting *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*. The plywood figures were then cut out using a jigsaw before Namatjira made his trademark bold and lively application of paint.

Close Contact irreverently looks at colonisation and the idea of the heroic portrait. The title refers to the concept of 'first contact' between Indigenous Australians and Captain James Cook. Namatjira uses the double-sided painting as a strategy to explore the reversal of historical narratives of colonisation. *Close Contact* presents an unexpected conflation of past and present, coloniser and colonised, and the British invasion/discovery of Australia.

Vincent Namatjira, Born 1983 Alice Springs, Australia

Lives and works in Indulkana, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, South Australia, Australia.

An artist from Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, Vincent Namatjira has established himself as a subversive and witty portraitist. Vincent is the great-grandson of the renowned Western Arrernte watercolour artist Albert Namatjira. Since 2013, Vincent has been painting portraits of important figures, both personally familiar and famously political. He is an acute observer of national and international politics and the connections between leadership, wealth, power and influence.

Namatjira was a finalist in the Archibald Prize 2019, was awarded Highly Commended in the Archibald Prize 2018, an invited finalist in the UQ Museum National Self Portrait Prize and Art Gallery of South Australia's Ramsay Prize 2017. He was a finalist in the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013 and the John Fries Memorial Award 2015, 2013. Namatjira's work is held in significant institutional collections including the British Museum, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of Western Australia and Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art.

Images and video available for download

[https://files.artgallery.sa.gov.au/ftp/marketing/Ramsay Art Prize 2019 winner announced.zip](https://files.artgallery.sa.gov.au/ftp/marketing/Ramsay%20Art%20Prize%202019%20winner%20announced.zip)

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