

# Ramsay Art Prize

25 May – 25 August 2019

Presented by



People's Choice Prize



# Vincent Namatjira

Vincent Namatjira, Western Arrernte people, was born in 1983, Alice Springs, Northern Territory. He spent most of his childhood in Perth and returned to Hermannsburg after he finished high school. It was not until he returned to Hermannsburg that Vincent learnt about his famous great-grandfather, Albert Namatjira and family of renowned artists. Vincent would watch his aunty, Eileen Namatjira, make pots in the Hermannsburg ceramic studio.

Vincent Namatjira began painting with his wife at Iwantja Arts, in the Indulkana Community, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in the north-west of South Australia. With the help of his wife he first started painting in a traditional dot painting style and after a few years he felt confident to paint a portrait of his great-grandfather Albert Namatjira. Vincent has continued to develop his distinctive figurative style, expressively painting portraits of politicians, historical figures and members of his family and community.



Vincent Namatjira with his winning work *Close Contact*, 2019 photo: Nat Rogers

**"Art has given me joy, prosperity and  
it's given me power also, because  
with a paint brush you can do  
anything."**

Vincent Namatjira

quoted by Mathew Smith 'Indigenous artist Vincent Namatjira wins the  
\$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize', *ABC News*, 24 May 2019

# 2019 Ramsay Art Prize Winner

Vincent Namatjira's *Close Contact* was the winner of the 2019 Ramsay Art Prize. The painting is a double-sided portrait in acrylic paint on plywood, with a depiction of Captain James Cook on one side and a self-portrait of Vincent Namatjira on the other. The double portrait represents two perspectives of the colonisation of Australia, one through the eyes of the British Empire and the other through the eyes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The figure of Captain Cook in *Close Contact* has been borrowed from E. Philips Fox's painting *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*. This painting depicts the historic moment that Captain Cook made first contact with Aboriginal people. The title of Namatjira's painting refers to the 'close contact' between Indigenous Australians and Captain James Cook.



Vincent Namatjira, Western Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1983, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Close Contact*, 2018, Indulkana, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on plywood, 188.0 x 62.0 x 3.5 cm; Gift of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation for the Ramsay Art Prize 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Vincent Namatjira/Copyright Agency, photo: Grant Hancock.

# Vincent Namatjira

## Humour

**“Having just a little bit of humour can take the power out of a serious situation, whether something is happening to you right now, or it happened long ago. Painting some humour into a serious event or an important person let’s you be in a little bit of control again, you can get a little bit of cheeky revenge.”**

Vincent Namatjira

quoted by Laura Thomson, ‘Vincent Namatjira at THIS IS NO FANTASY + Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne’, Ocular, 3 February 2016,

### Think and Discuss

How has Namatjira conveyed humour in *Close Contact*?

Namatjira states that using humour to portray a serious event or issue allows you to be in control. What do you think he means by this?

Can you think of a situation where humour has alleviated a serious situation for you?

# *The richest* by Vincent Namatjira



Installation view: 2017 Ramsay Art Prize featuring *The richest* by Vincent Namatjira, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; photo: Saul Steed.

*The richest* by Vincent Namatjira was selected as a finalist in the 2017 Ramsay Art Prize. In this series he has painted portraits of the seven wealthiest people in Australia in 2016. Namatjira, presents a chronicle of our times in his bold and expressive paintings. As he says:

*'I'm interested in who these people are, and how they made their fortunes. While I'm painting them, these figures become more real to me, more personal. It feels like these powerful people are really here in the art centre with me, in my home community of Indulkana in the APY Lands. Their lives must be really different from ours – from mine and my friends'.*

# EARLY YEARS and PRIMARY

## Responding

- Recreate the two poses of Vincent Namatjira and Captain Cook. How are the two poses different? What do you think the body language of the two figures is trying to say?
- What other differences do you notice between the two sides of the work of art?
- Is *Close Contact* a painting or a sculpture?

## Making

- Vincent Namatjira has created a life size self-portrait. Create your own life-size self-portrait by tracing around your own shadow while you strike an interesting pose. What identifying features would you add to your portrait so people could identify you?
- Vincent Namatjira has used one shape to create two different images on either side of *Close Contact*. Cut a shape out of cardboard and draw two different images on either sides.



Vincent Namatjira, Western Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1983, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Close Contact*, 2018, Indulkana, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on plywood, 188.0 x 62.0 x 3.5 cm; Gift of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation for the Ramsay Art Prize 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Vincent Namatjira/Copyright Agency, photo: Grant Hancock.

**“I’m interested in people and their stories, and how someone from today is connected with the past. I like to paint people interacting with each other, or to paint familiar characters in unexpected places with other characters – this way the person looking at the painting has to bring a story too.”**

Vincent Namatjira

quoted by Laura Thomson in; ‘Vincent Namatjira at THIS IS NO FANTASY + Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne’, *Ocular*, 3 February 2016,

# PRIMARY

## Responding

- *Close Contact* is a double-portrait. Imagine that Vincent Namatjira and Captain Cook could meet and have a conversation, what might they say to each other? Act out this conversation with a classmate.
- Vincent Namatjira has said that “There’s two sides to every story.” Discuss what two stories you think Namatjira is trying to tell in *Close Contact*?
- Vincent Namatjira was inspired by carnival cut-outs (the type you see at amusement parks) in his creation of *Close Contact*. Carnival cut-outs allow people to pose with well-known figures or even pose as other characters. Why do you think Namatjira has referenced these carnival cut-outs in *Close Contact*?
- Write a diary entry from the point of view of Captain Cook and one from Vincent Namatjira.

## Making

- Create a double-portrait that shows two different perspectives. Your double portrait could include a self-portrait with a portrait of a friend living in another part of the world or a family member.
- Research a historical figure and imagine you could have a conversation with them. Create a video or write a screen play about this meeting.



Vincent Namatjira, Western Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1983, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Close Contact*, 2018, Indulkana, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on plywood, 188.0 x 62.0 x 3.5 cm; Gift of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation for the Ramsay Art Prize 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Vincent Namatjira/Copyright Agency, photo: Grant Hancock.

# SECONDARY

## Responding

- The title, *Close Contact* references the meeting between Captain Cook and the Gweagal and Bidgegal people, the tradition custodians of what is now known as Botany Bay. Research the two different perspectives of this encounter. How could have this meeting turned out differently and changed the course of history?
- Vincent Namatjira has adapted a historical portrait of Captain Cook and juxtaposed this with a self-portrait. In what ways does *Close Contact* challenge traditional portraiture as seen in art history?
- How have other Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists such as Ali Baker, Julie Dowling and Christian Thompson explored themes of identity in their work?
- Look at Namatjira's series *The richest*. Do you think the people in these portraits would be happy with how they have been depicted?

## Making

- Namatjira interested in people and their stories, how someone from today is connected with the past. Create your own double sided portrait which references the past and the present. You may like to have a self-portrait on one side and and someone who you admire or who has influenced you from your past.

# SENIOR SECONDARY

## Cultural, social and historical contexts

Vincent Namatjira discussing the portrait of Captain Cook from E. Phillips Fox's painting *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*:

“This painting is a typical heroic representation of Cook, and the Indigenous Australians in the painting are off in the background, pretty much out of the picture. So, when I was planning my work I was thinking, ‘What might be the flipside of the heroic portrait of Cook?’ I like the idea of an unexpected contact or conflict between past and present and that’s what I was thinking about with this work, and why I decided to experiment with the double-sided painting, trying to say, ‘There’s two sides to every story.’ ”

Quoted in ‘Vincent Namatjira wins 2019 Ramsay Art Prize’, *The Adelaide Review*, 24 May 2019



E. Phillips Fox, Australia 1872-1952, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*, 1902, oil on canvas, 192.2 × 265.4 cm, Gilbee Bequest, 1902, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

# SENIOR SECONDARY

## Cultural, social and historical contexts

- How is the meeting between Captain Cook, his crew and Aboriginal people depicted in E. Philips Fox's *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*? What was the purpose of such a painting?
- Research other artists who have responded to E. Philips Fox's painting. How have these artists represented Captain Cook's historical landing through an Aboriginal perspective? **Tip:** Investigate Daniel Boyd *We Call them Pirates Out Here, 2006* or Julie Gough's *Chase 2001*, , and *Imperial Leather 1994* with E. Philips Fox's *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*. Percy Trompf, *The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1929* and Ben Quilty *Inhabit 2010*
- Find out more about Fox's *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770*. With what you know about Australian history and the impact colonisation had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, create your own response to Fox's painting.

**Appropriation** in art is the intentional use of pre-existing images. Artists often use appropriated imagery in the hope that the viewer will know the context of the original work of art and use these associations to develop a new meaning. In this way, sometimes artists who use appropriated imagery are attempting to recontextualise the original imagery.

# Albert (Elea) Namatjira (1902-1959)

Vincent's great-grandfather was Albert Namatjira, a renowned Western Aranda artist. Although the two artists never met, both explore the intersection of European culture and their Aboriginal heritage. Albert Namatjira is best known for his watercolour landscapes painted in a traditional European style that also depict his connection to Country.

Albert Namatjira was born Elea and named Albert by a Lutheran pastor when he was baptised at the Hermannsburg Mission. He developed the European painting style he is most well known for, under the guidance of Rex Battarbee. As a traditional custodian of Western Arrernte culture, Albert Namatjira painted his father's country in the MacDonnell Ranges, Northern Territory and his mother's country was in the Palm Valley region in Central Australia.



Albert Namatjira, Western Aranda people, Northern Territory, born 1902, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, died 1959, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Ghost gum, Central Australia, 1956, MacDonnell Ranges, Northern Territory, watercolour on paper, 26.0 x 36.5 cm; Gift of the Deutscher Family, 1987 in commemoration of their arrival in South Australia from Germany in 1848., Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Namatjira Legacy Trust/Copyright Agency.*

**“I hope my grandfather would be quite proud. I keep carrying him on – his name and our family’s stories.”**

Vincent Namatjira, Iwantja Arts

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

## Albert Namatjira



In 1939 the Art Gallery of South Australia was the first Australian state gallery to acquire a work of art by an Aboriginal artist after the acquisition of Albert Namatjira's , *Illum-Baura (Haasts Bluff), Central Australia*, 1939, (pictured).

Albert Namatjira is a key figure in Australian history and one of the country's most renowned artist. The Namatjira legacy continues with many of his decedents working in Central Australia.

Albert Namatjira, Western Aranda people, Northern Territory, born 1902, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, died 1959, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Illum-Baura (Haasts Bluff), Central Australia*, 1939, Haasts Bluff, Northern Territory, watercolour on paper, 34.9 x 52.7 cm; Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1939, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Namatjira Legacy Trust/Copyright Agency.

### Discover more about the life and art of Albert Namatjira.

- Create a children's book that illustrates key moments in Albert Namatjira's life.
- After researching more about the life of Albert Namatjira, discuss what role art can play in changing public perceptions.
- Compare the work of Albert Namatjira to the work of other Hermannsburg artists. How has he continued to inspire artists at Hermannsburg today?

# PRIMARY

## Albert Namatjira



### Responding

- Look closely at Albert Namatjira's watercolour painting (*Waterhole, MacDonnell Ranges*). What can you see? Imagine you could travel through this landscape, where would you start and what direction would you go? Write a creative story based on your journey through the painting and capture all of the things you encountered.

Albert Namatjira, Western Aranda people, Northern Territory, born 1902, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, died 1959, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Other side of Rungutjirpa (Simpson's Gap), Northern Territory, 1950s*, Northern Territory, watercolour on paper, 26.0 x 36.3 cm (sight); Bequest of Marjory Edwards 2005, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Namatjira Legacy Trust/Copyright Agency.

### Making

- In (*Waterhole, MacDonnell Ranges*), Albert Namatjira has used **receding colours**. These are **cool colours**, such as blues, that become lighter as they recede into the distance. Look closely at how Namatjira has used receding colours.
- **Advancing colours**, are **warm colours** such as yellow, orange and reds, that make colours appear closer. Look at where Albert Namatjira has placed warm violet and terracotta colours in (*Waterhole, MacDonnell Ranges*). Experiment with receding and advancing colours. Create a work of art with these effects, contrasting warm and cool colours.

# SECONDARY

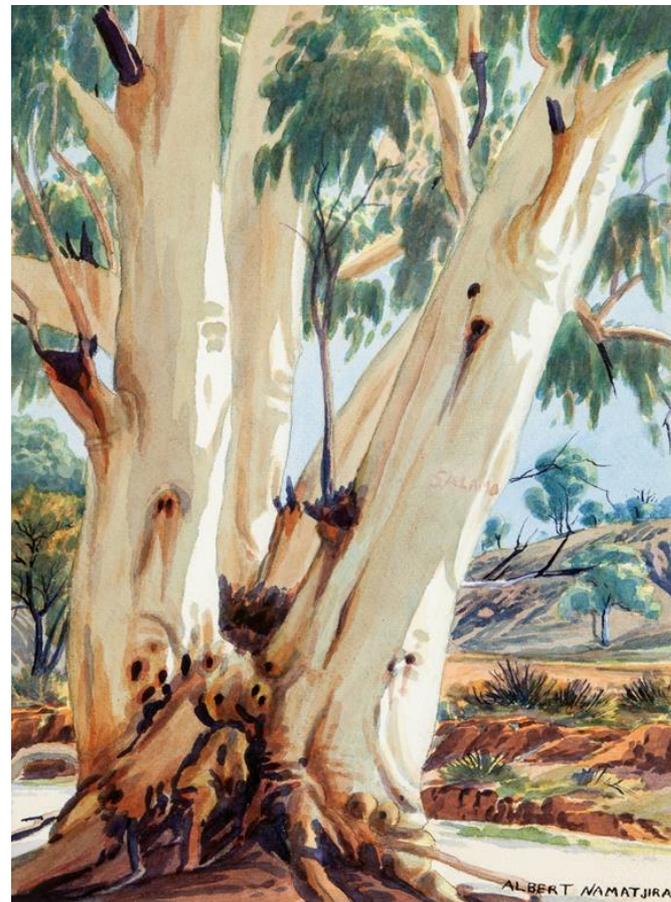
## Albert Namatjira

### Responding

- In Albert Namatjira's *River Red gum – Salam* 1950s, the Arabic word *Salam* can be seen inscribed on the tree trunk. Investigate Namatjira's connection to the Afghan and Pakistani cameleers who worked in outback Australia. What do you think Namatjira is communicating about this relationship?

### Making

- Albert Namatjira paid close attention to gum tree in this painting, capturing great detail, as if he was painting a portrait of that individual tree. Find a tree and create your own 'portrait'. Consider different ways to represent the tree, such as capturing different angles, textures of the bark of the bark and leaves in the one composition.
- In *River Red gum – Salam*, Albert Namatjira has paid homage to the Afghan and Pakistani cameleers he worked with. Create a work of art that pays homage to someone you admire, without including a physical portrait. The work may include objects or refer to your memory of them.
- As Albert Namatjira painted in a predominately European style it was long overlooked that he was expressing his connection to Country. Create a work of art which expresses your connection to a place important to you.



Albert Namatjira, Western Aranda people, Northern Territory, born 1902, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, died 1959, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *River Red gum - Salam*, 1950s, Northern Territory, watercolour on paper, 34.4 x 25.5 cm (sight); Gift of Douglas and Barbara Mullins 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Namatjira Legacy Trust/Copyright Agency.

**“What non-Aboriginal people didn’t understand, or chose not to understand, was that he was painting his country, the land of the Arrernte people. He was demonstrating to the rest of the world the living title held by his people to the lands they had been on for thousands of years.”**

Galarrwuy Yunupingu,  
quoted in Wally Caruana (ed) *Windows on the Dreaming: Aboriginal paintings in the Australian National Gallery*, 1989

# The Hermannsburg Potters

*Ntaria* (Hermannsburg) is 130 kilometres from Alice Springs. The Hermannsburg Mission was established by Lutheran missionaries in 1877 on the banks of the Finke River, west of *Mparntwe* (Alice Springs). The Aranda people have a long tradition of making art at Hermannsburg, drawing inspiration from traditional knowledge systems while using innovative approaches to new media.

In 1990 the Hermannsburg Potters began working in clay after assistance from the ceramicist and teacher, Naomi Sharp from the Northern Territory Open College of TAFE. The Hermannsburg Potters continue to express their own stories in their sculptural pots, gaining inspiration from their connection to culture as well as daily life such as their passion for Australian Rules Football.

Vincent Namatjira has family members who work in the Hermannsburg Potters Studio and when he was younger he would watch his aunty, Eileen Namatjira, make pots.



Elaine Kngwarria Namatjira, potter, Western Aranda people, Northern Territory, born 1962, *Ntaria* (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory, Hermannsburg Potters, *Ntaria* (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory est 1990, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, Australia, *Ant jar*, 1996, *Ntaria* (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory, earthenware, 15.5 cm, 16.0 cm (diam); Maude Vizard-Wholohan Art Purchase Award 1996, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Elaine Kngwarria Namatjira/Copyright Agency.

# PRIMARY and SECONDARY

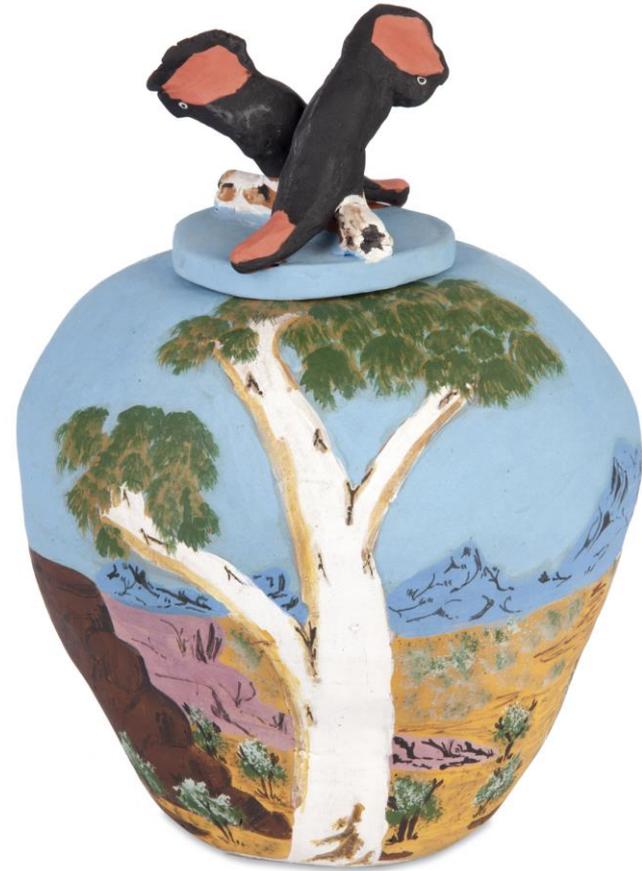
## The Hermannsburg Potters

### Responding

- Compare one work by the Hermannsburg Potters with another contemporary ceramic artist, such as Peter Cooley, Penny Evans and Gerry Wedd. What similarities do they share in terms of form and imagery?

### Making

- The Hermannsburg Potters make their terracotta pots by using the hand-coil technique. Explore this hand-building technique to make your own vessel in clay.



Elizabeth Kngwarriya Moketarinja, potter, Arrernte people, Northern Territory born 1960, Ntaria (Hermannsburg) Northern Territory, Hermannsburg Potters, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory est 1990, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory, *Landscape with birds jar*, 1996, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory, earthenware, 24.0 cm, 16.5 cm (diam); Maude Vizard-Wholohan Art Purchase Award 1996, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Elizabeth Kngwarriya Moketarinja and Hermannsburg Potters/Copyright Agency.

# PRIMARY and SECONDARY

## The Hermannsburg Potters

### Making

- Artists such as Elizabeth Kngwarriya Mocketarinja work at the Hermannsburg Potters Studio and have created vessels that tell stories of the surrounding Country and wildlife. Design a jar or vessel that depicts an Australian animal and its natural habitat. Alternatively, research an animal that is endangered and show the threats that are contributing to its decline in your design.
- Hermannsburg Potters such as Rona Panangka Rubuntja, made pots that captured the sporting achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian Rules Football. Create a work of art that depicts your greatest achievement.

### Useful Link

Hermannsburg Potters: Aranda Artists of Central Australia <https://hermannsburgpotters.com.au>



HERMANSBURG POTTERS, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, Australia, est. 1990, Rona Panangka Rubuntja, Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1970, Northern Territory, *Football culture - Adelaide Crows versus Geelong Cats*, 2012, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory, terracotta, underglazes, 34.0 x 19.0 cm (diam.); Lillemor Andersen Bequest Fund 2012, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Rona Panangka Rubuntja/Licensed by Viscopy, 2017.

## Find out more Iwantja Arts

Vincent Namatjira works at Iwantja Arts, an art centre located in the community of Indulkana, in the far north east of South Australia within Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands.

Find Indulkana on a map. How far away is it from where you live?

Research other artists working at Iwantja Arts:

- Eric Kumanara Barney
- David Frank
- Peter Mungkuri
- Jimmy Pompey (Vincent's father-in-law)
- Kaylene Whiskey

Compare the work of these artists to that of Vincent Namatjira. What similarities do they share?



### Useful link

Iwantja Arts - <http://www.iwantjaarts.com.au>

Iwantja Arts, Australia, est 1995, Mary Tjapukula Brumby, artist, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1958, Indulkana, South Australia, *Toyota Dreaming*, 2004, Indulkana, South Australia, raffia, 17.0 x 41.0 x 15.0 cm; Gift of Tracey Lock 2004, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Mary Tjapukula Brumby, Courtesy of Iwantja Arts and Crafts.

# RESOURCES

## Articles

'The winning artwork refers to the first contact between Indigenous Australians and James Cook.', NITV News, 24 May 2019, <https://bit.ly/2Nxx8y6>

'Vincent Namatjira wins \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize 2019', Art Review, <https://bit.ly/2JCaEL1>

'Vincent Namatjira wins 2019 Ramsay Art Prize', *The Adelaide Review*, 24 May 2019, <https://bit.ly/2N0legO>

Daniela Frangos, 'South Australian Artist Vincent Namatjira Has Won the \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize', *Broadsheet*, <https://bit.ly/331xB1H>

Wes Hill, 'Vincent Namatjira: Colourful optimism', *Artlink*, <https://bit.ly/34ecmKo>

Suzie Keen, 'Vincent Namatjira's Close Contact wins \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize', *In Daily*, May 24 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NseK9K>

Rohan Neagle, 'Vincent Namatjira wins \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize', *The Lead*, <https://bit.ly/2BW631Z>

John Neylon, 'Ramsay Art Prize winner Vincent Namatjira adds a new dimension to 'Captain Crook' art tradition', *The Adelaide Review*, 12 July 2019, <https://bit.ly/36g9PRH>

Education resources have been developed by AGSA Education in collaboration Dr Lisa Slade, Assistant Director, Artistic Programs, Kylie Neagle, Education Officer and Suzanne Close, Adelaide University Museum and Curatorial Studies Intern. AGSA's education programs are supported by the Government of South Australia through the Department for Education.

Andrew Purvis, 'Vincent Namatjira's portraits of the rich and powerful', *fine print magazine*, <https://bit.ly/2N2cZBd>

Mathew Smith 'Indigenous artist Vincent Namatjira wins the \$100,000 Ramsay Art Prize', ABC News, 24 May 2019, <https://ab.co/2NoVASO>

## Websites

'Vincent Namatjira: Close Contact', AGSA, <https://bit.ly/2JBL0WE>

'Vincent Namatjira', Iwantja Arts, <https://bit.ly/2C14Qq0>

'Vincent Namatjira', *Ocula*, <https://bit.ly/36hhRtE>

'Vincent Namatjira Bio', *This is No Fantasy*, Dianne Tanzer + Nicola Stein, <https://bit.ly/2JD5HS9>

Laura Thomson, 'Vincent Namatjira at THIS IS NO FANTASY + Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne', *Ocular*, 3 February 2016, <https://bit.ly/2JAAIpT>