



A DOCUMENTARY BY **BIG hART** CREATED WITH THE NAMATJIRA FAMILY

NAMATJIRA

P R O J E C T

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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER

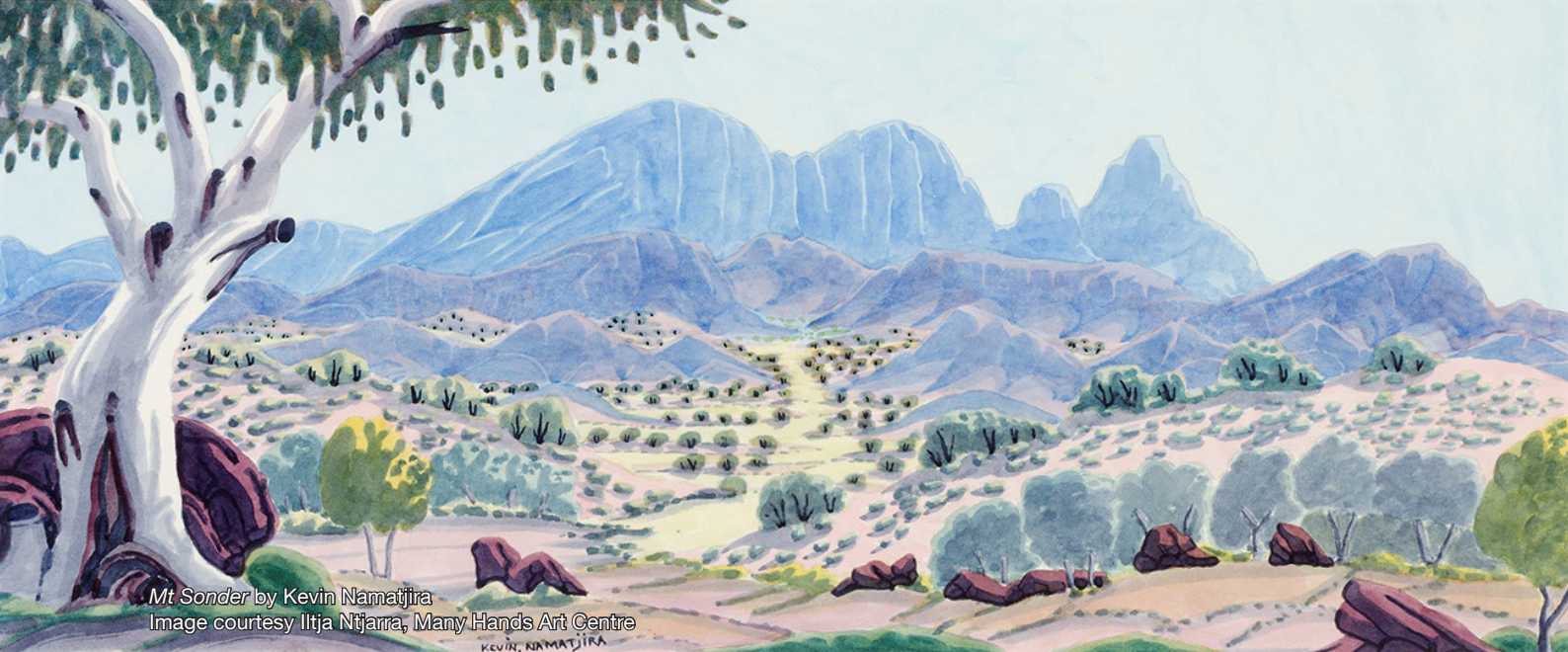


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Mt Sonder by Kevin Namatjira
Image courtesy Iltja Nijarra, Many Hands Art Centre

‘THIS FILM IS ABOUT ALBERT NAMATJIRA ... WE COME TO TELL THE STORIES, HOW HE LIVED. ALBERT TAUGHT ALL THE FAMILY TO CARRY ON PAINTING. WE’RE TRYING TO TEACH OUR YOUNGER GENERATION, AND OUR KIDS, OUR GRANDKIDS. KEEP THIS LEGACY STRONG.’

– Gloria Pannka, granddaughter of Albert Namatjira

Namatjira Project (2017), a feature documentary, directed by Sera Davies, tells the iconic story of Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira, and of his descendants’ attempt to reclaim the copyright of his life’s work. The documentary was created with the Namatjira family and is dedicated to them, and artists of the Hermannsburg Watercolour movement.

From Western Aranda* Country in the Central Australian Desert, Albert Namatjira and his watercolour paintings pioneered the Aboriginal Art movement that is celebrated today. His descendants continue to paint the desert landscapes in watercolours, yet despite this art tradition’s success over five generations, they continue to struggle for survival.

In collaboration with arts for social change organisation Big hART, Namatjira’s descendants have embarked on a quest for justice and reconciliation that will hopefully see the copyright of his paintings returned to the Namatjira family.

Namatjira Project acknowledges Western Aranda* Elders of the Central Australian Desert - past, present and future - and their stunning Country on which this project is based.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.

<http://www.namatjiradocumentary.org/>

*Other ethnonyms for the word Aranda are Arrernte, Arunta and Arrarnta.

HYPERLINKS TO SECTIONS 1–6

About the resource

These education resources were created in partnership with Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali program. Teachers and educators are encouraged to use Namatjira Project to foster knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. To find more professional learning and curriculum resources and to engage in whole school planning around

reconciliation, visit Narragunnawali at:

www.reconciliation.org.au/Narragunnawali

Film
duration:
87 mins

Recommendation before viewing in the classroom

As with all resources, teachers are encouraged to watch *Namatjira Project* and the associated clips before showing it to students. The content addresses complex themes and it is important teachers are comfortable with the content beforehand. These resources have been designed to help you feel confident to engage in safe and robust discussions in your classroom.

Talk, if possible, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, family or community members from your local area before using *Namatjira Project* learning resources. *Namatjira Project* raises themes that may be confronting to students, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Be wary of students that struggle with the content and support them accordingly. If necessary, provide information about relevant external support services.

Set classroom ground rules: Due to the complex nature of some of the content in *Namatjira Project*, setting classroom ground rules with your students before viewing is an important step in creating a safe space and helping develop mutual respect and understanding between the members of your classroom community.

- Be respectful: Each person has their own beliefs and values.
- Value diversity: Each person has their own world views, experiences and opinions.
- Listen politely: Each person has a right to contribute without pressure or intimidation.
- Act with honour and courage: Be brave in sharing experiences, ideas and opinions.
- Appreciate privacy: Each person has the right to uphold their privacy.
- Act responsibly: Share feedback with thoughtful consideration and a positive attitude towards others. Work collaboratively with students to create a contract that outlines the expected standards of behaviour around using the documentary.
- Use the think/puzzle/explore reflection protocol to prompt discussion and reflection after viewing the documentary. THINK: What ideas, emotions or situations did the documentary make you think about? PUZZLE: What ideas, people or situations in the documentary puzzled you? EXPLORE: What ideas presented in the documentary would you like to explore further?
- Encourage students to frame discussion comments as their own (as in "I think") and avoid forceful language (such as "You should").
- When responding to others in classroom discussion or in the associated activities encourage students to challenge ideas rather than people.
- Allow adequate time at the end of each viewing session to debrief the content, associated activities and discussion.

Talking or writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. When talking or writing about Australia's Indigenous peoples, it is considered respectful to say 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'. The Indigenous peoples represented in *Namatjira Project* are all Aboriginal, so you will not notice any reference to Torres Strait Islander peoples. However this study guide raises some questions of broad and national significance and therefore often refers to 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'. Any guidance from your own community about terminology should take precedence over other advice.

Curriculum links

Namatjira Project is a story of national and international significance, given its examination of the historical and contemporary relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous people in Australia.

Namatjira Project is recommended for students in Years 7 – 12. Age appropriate excerpts could be shown to students in Years 5 – 6.

LEARNING AREAS: YEARS 5 – 10

- The Arts
- Drama
- Media Arts
- Visual Arts
- Civics and Citizenship
- English
- History
- Health and Physical Education
- Languages
- Work Studies

Teachers are advised to consult the Australian Curriculum documentation for these learning areas online at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>, as well as curriculum documents for these learning areas endorsed by their state or territory.

LEARNING AREAS: YEARS 11 – 12

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
- Art
- Media
- Australian History
- Drama
- English

Teachers should consult the study designs for these subjects relevant to their state or territory and consult the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary Curriculum advice at: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/seniorsecondary/overview>.



Viewing and studying *Namatjira Project* will build knowledge, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Key discussion points include:

- the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, past and present;
- relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians

In completing the tasks, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- analyse the construction of the *Namatjira Project* documentary and comment on the ways it represents an interpretation of ideas and experiences;
- respond to *Namatjira Project* both personally and in objective and critical ways;
- discuss the historical, social, cultural and political values embodied in *Namatjira Project*;
- use their own written and spoken texts to explore the issues in *Namatjira Project* and to clarify their own and others' understanding of these issues.

Using the Resource

Teachers should preview *Namatjira Project* prior to screening it in the classroom.

The study guide is divided into sections that address the documentary's key ideas. Teachers may select from the information and activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Namatjira Project*. Teachers are also able to determine whether student responses will be presented as written, spoken or multimedia texts. In some cases, the information and activities may need to be adjusted to meet the literacy levels of students.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that the program contains images and voices of people who have passed away.

Cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

The documentary and study guide aligns with the organising ideas of the Australian Curriculum's cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. The Australian Curriculum acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross curriculum priority in all learning areas. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world's oldest continuous living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich students' ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia.

Details about integrating this cross curriculum priority can be accessed at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/crosscurriculumpriorities/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-histories-and-cultures>.

Units of Work

The *Namatjira Study Guide* allows teachers to construct units of curriculum of varying length. Teachers may use the film to launch units of work about one of the documentary's key ideas or issues.

For example:

1. A viewing of *Namatjira Project* may be the springboard for a unit of work about Citizenship in Civics and Citizenship and/or History.
2. Longer units of work could begin with students completing a viewing chart, following with scaffolded analysis via the activities in sections 1 - 6 and then concluding with the extension activities described in the sections titled 'Remembering Albert Namatjira; Years 5 - 9' and 'Extended response: years 10 - 12'.
3. Teachers working in different domains are also encouraged to team teach *Namatjira Project* and in doing so make the documentary the focus of a significant cross curriculum unit. For example, having viewed *Namatjira Project* in English and discussed the documentary as a biography, students could then complete activities in History about the past and present relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The cross curriculum unit could conclude with students working in a Visual and/or Performing Arts subject to construct a creative response to the documentary.

About the documentary

+ SYNOPSIS

Can justice be restored to the Namatjira family?

Albert Namatjira was the first Aboriginal person – an Aranda man – to be made a citizen by the Australian Government. This was a time when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were still considered flora and fauna – some 170 years after Europeans arrived in Australia. Albert was an extraordinary man. He founded the Aboriginal art movement in Australia, giving many Australians their first glimpse into the outback heart of the country, he was exhibited globally and was introduced to Queen Elizabeth II.

Albert was taught to paint by non-Indigenous artist Rex Battarbee when they met in the 1930s at Hermannsburg Mission in the Central Australian desert. Their close friendship was to have a decisive impact on Australian art, and by the 1950s Namatjira had become the most famous Aboriginal person of his time.

However, Albert was caught between cultures – paraded as a great Australian while simultaneously treated with contempt, and eventually wrongfully imprisoned. Albert passed away in 1959. In 1983 the copyright to his entire catalogue of artworks was sold by the Australian Government to an art dealer.

Despite Albert's work being reproduced commercially as prints, tea towels and calendars, his family today fight for survival, justice and crucially, to regain the copyright to their grandfather's work.

Namatjira Project traces the family's quest as they team up with art and social justice organisation Big hART to tour a theatre production about Albert's life. The objective is to raise awareness about Albert and his life and to engage support for the return of the copyright.

When Big hART is invited to stage the show in London, they use this opportunity to generate international pressure. Queen Elizabeth II invites Albert Namatjira's grandchildren Kevin and Lenie Namatjira to Buckingham Palace, and the UK media report the story of the Namatjira family's struggle. In Australia, despite valiant efforts, the silence is deafening and Kevin and Lenie return home powerless.

The Namatjira family continue to deal with issues faced by many remote Indigenous Australians – poor health and life expectancy, overrepresentation in prisons, unemployment and limited education. The copyright remains a deeply symbolic issue and speaks to the unresolved relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

+ THE FILMMAKERS

SERA DAVIES | DIRECTOR & CINEMATOGRAPHER



Sera Davies is a director, cinematographer, photographer and video artist whose work has been screened both nationally and internationally. Sera has directed and shot documentaries and short films with some

of Australia's hardest to reach communities and most prolific arts and social change companies and NGOs, such as Big hART Inc, Back to Back Theatre and World Vision. She is passionate about representing people who are under-represented in traditional media. She has worked on numerous films, documentaries, video installations, music videos and TVC's, including Big hART's documentaries for the ABC *Drive* and *Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji*, Back to Back theatre's film installation *The Democratic Set*, and Genevieve Lacey's sound and film work *Pleasure Garden*.

SOPHIA MARINOS | PRODUCER

Sophia Marinos has worked in diverse areas of social justice and the arts, both internationally and locally. Sophia has been the creative (overarching) producer of Big hART's multi-platform Namatjira Project since mid-2009. Under her guidance the project has won four awards and generated: an original new Australian theatre work that has toured nationally and internationally; a published theatre script; an App for iPhone; two CD albums; a feature documentary and a social impact campaign. Sophia has also worked on Big hART documentaries for the ABC: *Drive* (2010 – assistant line producer) and *Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji* (2010 - production assistant), and produced a TVC for SBS TV in 2009. Sophia is passionate about the capacity of art to spearhead positive social change. She has worked on numerous social impact campaigns, on issues as diverse as slavery at sea, Indigenous languages policy, cultural diversity and Indigenous incarceration. With the Namatjira Project she has established the Namatjira Legacy Trust, of which she is a Trustee, aimed at restoring justice to the Namatjira family and supporting the future of Western Aranda communities in the Central Desert.



+ DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"It's truly extraordinary, this story" is usually followed by "I had no idea..." when you begin to discuss Albert Namatjira's remarkable journey and the complex set of paradigms that his life presents to us now.

My entry into this story began when I was contracted during the Namatjira theatre show's first creative development, to filmically explore Alice Springs and Ntaria for Albert's legacy. My first stop was a visit to Elton Wirri, master watercolour painter and Albert's grandson kin-way, at his home in a town camp on the Todd River.

Elton was away, and on this typically beautiful Alice Springs day I paused in the sunshine at the front gates, looked down and noticed a faded playing card, the King of Spades lying face up in the dirt. The King of Spades represents the most powerful of the Kings, David in his battle with Goliath, a King equipped with the enormous inner strength needed to counter the crushing responsibilities that are bestowed upon him. The King of Spades represents the demands we make of our greatest leaders, a commission too great for some to bear. I placed the card on the dashboard of the car and like a GPS it has guided me directly into some of the most challenging conversations of my career.

That week provided my induction into a world unexpectedly and shockingly similar to Albert's – the continuing injustice and imposition that Australian citizenship presents the Namatjira family and their desire to revoke it, the meshing narrative of the arrival of the Queen and the arrival of the grog story in Central Australia, a family of master painters camping on a road siding on the edge of town being invited to give watercolour classes to Prince Charles.

As a filmmaker, the heart of our country has provided me with an invaluable and privileged education. It's required me to fashion a craft in scrambling around the slippery circumference of our single east-coast story and pushing outward for another view. It is quiet and urgent work. It's working in the shadows, always listening and observing, and then stepping out blushing but brave when the story demands.

It's thousands of dusty kilometres in rubbish cars with bomb-proof equipment boxes and maybe a baby rattling around in the back. It's shooting and editing and mentoring and trying to hold onto bits of languages and ways of understanding this country so foreign to me. It's embracing not presuming to know anything of how it is to be another person and the freedom that brings to your work together. It's being filled up. It's this process that allows us to go to the heart of the film, as we traverse the intersections where our stories meet.

On one level, this film acknowledges all the stuff of grand whitefella narratives; exoticism and genius and art, cultures clashing and connecting, unthinkable malice and the quest for justice, all threaded into one life. Albert's story plays right to the heart of our preoccupation with telling a particular type of narrative; our making of an unlikely hero, our impossible demands upon them, our destruction of them when they fail to meet our expectations, our saying sorry about it.



Organ Pipes by Dougie Kwarple Abbott.

Image courtesy Iltja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre

On another level though, *Namatjira* challenges this singular monocular representation of Albert's legacy and examines the enduring impact that this type of representation has for current generations of the Namatjira family. It's our gaze through the single story that ultimately killed Albert and continues to present dire implications for contemporary inter-cultural relations.

This documentary questions the permissions that we on the east coast have given ourselves to play out this singular tragedy story again and again, and does so by positioning the story in alternate and little explored spaces for us to sit together.

It's this Aranda concept of 'nama', or sitting side by side in learning and observation, that was demonstrated in the unique friendship of Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira. Through their friendship, we are afforded an opportunity to witness the first learnings from a rich dialogue that has forged new pathways into contemporary inter-cultural collaboration.

The longitudinal and observational framework of the film allows multiple and sometimes conflicting truths to present themselves equally in intimate and honest moments of genuine exchange. This process comes right from the engine room of how this company Big hART operates, to a simple yet powerful ethos that "It's harder to hurt someone when you know their story".

SERA DAVIES



+ ALBERT (ELEA) NAMATJIRA

ALBERT NAMATJIRA WAS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST NOTABLE ARTISTS. HIS PAINTINGS, WATERCOLOURS OF THE LANDSCAPES OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA, ARE REPRESENTED IN AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL ART GALLERIES AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

Namatjira, was born on 28 July 1902 at Hermannsburg (Ntaria), near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, son of Jonathon Namatjira and his wife Ljukuta. He belonged to the western group of the Aranda people.

Albert attended the Hermannsburg mission school. In keeping with the practice of the missions, he lived separately from his parents in a dormitory. At age thirteen he spent six months in the bush and underwent initiation. He left the mission again at the age of eighteen and married Ilkalita, a Kukatja woman. Eight of their ten children were to survive infancy: five sons – Enos, Oscar, Ewald, Keith and Maurice – and three daughters – Maisie, Hazel and Martha. The family moved to Hermannsburg in 1923.

When Australian artist Rex Battarbee visited Hermannsburg in 1934, the men became acquainted. Namatjira began painting watercolours in a European style drawing on techniques that he learnt from Battarbee while he worked for him as a camelier. In 1938 with Battarbee's help, Namatjira held his first exhibition in Melbourne.

National and international acclaim followed. In 1944, Namatjira was included in *Who's Who in Australia*. He was awarded Queen Elizabeth II's coronation medal (1953), presented to the Queen in Canberra (1954) and elected an honorary member of the Royal Art Society of New South Wales (1955).

Namatjira was granted full citizenship rights in 1957. Unlike many other Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory,

Namatjira was then entitled to vote, to live where he wished (although he was prohibited from purchasing land), and to purchase alcohol. His immediate and extended family were not granted the same privileges. His citizenship rights also enabled the government to tax him – during this time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were classed as 'flora and fauna'. Namatjira could not be taxed on the income from sales of his artwork until he was made a citizen in the eyes of the law.

In 1958, the Alice Springs Police charged Namatjira with supplying alcohol to Aboriginal people – as a result of supplying alcohol to community members, there was an incident that ended in a murder, a death that Namatjira himself had no part in. At the time, it was illegal for all Aboriginal people, except those who had been made citizens, to possess and consume alcohol. Namatjira denied the charge and fought the sentence in both the Supreme Court and the High Court. When his appeals were unsuccessful, Namatjira was sentenced to six months labour. He served only two months, and died shortly after his release on 8 August 1959.

Teachers and students are recommended to access detailed biographical records for Albert Namatjira online. Suggested links:

Australian Dictionary of Biography: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/namatjira-albert-elea-11217>

National Archives of Australia: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs145.aspx>

+ THE CAMPAIGN

'For our family, Albert's copyright is part of his legacy. They're not separate. They're the same thing. To us, Albert represents something to be proud of. But we won't be able to be happy until we know that his legacy is being looked after by its rightful owners – his family.' – Gloria Pannka, granddaughter of Albert Namatjira

Albert Namatjira is one of the most revered names in Australian art history. His artworks gave most Australians their first glimpses into the heart of the country. The Namatjira family are holders of this celebrated heritage, and yet today face many challenges. The watercolour movement is their strongest asset – internationally recognised, and an avenue to generate income at the same time as connecting to Country, heritage and culture. Namatjira taught his children to paint, and they taught theirs. The fifth and sixth generations are now taking up the tradition.

Namatjira Project is more than just a film. It is part of a campaign to restore justice to the Namatjira family.

Since 2009, Australian arts and social justice company Big hART has helped raise awareness and support for the family through the Namatjira Project. Big hART is working with the family to get the copyright over Albert Namatjira's works back. The group has held watercolour exhibitions and workshops, created a theatre show which has toured nationally and produced the feature documentary *Namatjira Project*.

The Namatjira Legacy Trust is the centerpiece of this campaign – aiming to secure the future of the iconic Namatjira family and community. The Trust aims to reinstate the copyright of Albert Namatjira's artworks to his family, and will support the future of this art movement. By supporting the health, welfare, education and sustainability of their families and community in Hermannsburg, the Namatjira Legacy Trust will ensure the remarkable traditions of the Western Desert watercolour movement thrive into the future.

Namatjira Project is a platform to activate audiences to participate, to donate to the Namatjira Legacy Trust, to host grass roots screenings and to encourage others to support.

Suggested links:

Big hART Namatjira

<http://www.namatjira.bighart.org/>

Namatjira Legacy Trust

<https://www.namatjiratrust.org/>



SCOTT RANKIN



GLORIA PANNKA



LENIE NAMATJIRA

+ DOCUMENTARY PARTICIPANTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

- **Philip Brackenreg** – Namatjira copyright holder
- **Trevor Jamieson** – performer *Namatjira*
- **Mostyn Kentaltja** – grandson of Albert Namatjira
- **Derik Lynch** – performer *Namatjira*
- **Sophia Marinos** – producer *Namatjira Project*
- **Aretha Namatjira** – 5th generation watercolour artist
- **Kevin Namatjira** – grandson of Albert Namatjira
- **Lenie Namatjira** – granddaughter of Albert Namatjira
- **Gloria Pannka** – granddaughter of Albert Namatjira
- **Gayle Quarmby** – daughter of Rex Battarbee
- **Scott Rankin** – writer and director *Namatjira*
- **Conrad Ratar** – grandson of Raberaba
- **Mervyn Rubuntja** – grandson of Albert Namatjira
- **Senator Nigel Scullion** – Minister for Indigenous Affairs
- **Helen Webb** – Housing Case Worker
- **Betty Wheeler** – granddaughter of Albert Namatjira
- **Marcus Wheeler** – husband of Betty Wheeler
- **Semra Williams** – 5th generation watercolour artist

The following people feature in the archival footage:

- **Rex Battarbee** – landscape painter
- **Bill Harney** – friend of Namatjira
- **Wilfrid Thomas** – broadcaster

VIEWING CHART

+ YEARS 7-9

As you watch *Namatjira Project*, make notes about the film. Use the labelled columns to help you organise your notes. Use these notes to help you complete questions and activities about the film.

This viewing chart could also be used as a data chart to support student research of the nominated subjects.

ABOUT ALBERT:

His life	His art	His family	His Country

Your thoughts

Your questions



VIEWING CHART



+ YEARS 10–12

As you watch *Namatjira Project*, make notes about the film. Use the labelled columns to help you organise your notes. Use these notes to help you complete questions and activities about the film.

This viewing chart could also be used as a data chart to support student research of the nominated subjects.

Identity

Family

Knowledge

Land

Power and privilege

Respect

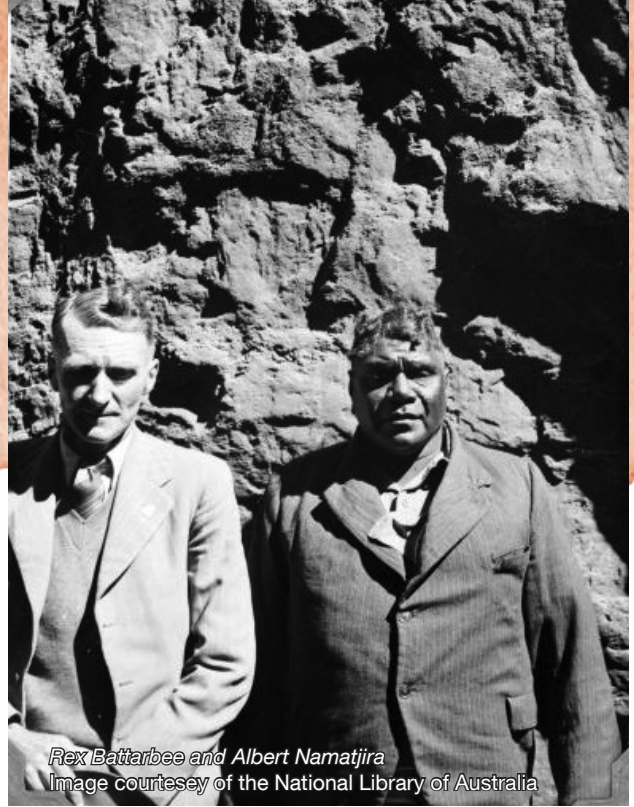
ALBERT NAMATJIRA: THE ARTIST AND HIS LIFE

Archival footage is used throughout *Namatjira Project* to portray Albert Namatjira's life.

- What is archival footage?
- Working as a class, list the archival footage used in *Namatjira Project*.
- Why do you think the filmmakers decided to use archival footage?

Drawing on the archival footage featured in *Namatjira Project* complete the following tasks:

- Write a description of Hermannsburg Mission. Use print and electronic resources to research the history of and significance of Hermannsburg Mission to Albert Namatjira's life story. Add this information to your description.
- In an interview with radio broadcaster Wilfrid Thomas, Albert Namatjira tells Thomas that he is from the Aranda* Language Clan.
- Other ethnonyms used to describe the Aranda people are Arrernte, Arunta and Arrarnta. Use the internet to research the Aranda people. On a map of Australia show the Traditional Land of the Aranda people. Compile a timeline to show the history of the Aranda people.
- 'During those two months, Albert and I lived continuously on our own and that is really the only real tuition that Albert had. The amazing thing about Albert was that he was a man of 34 years of age, who had great ambition, a very clever man, with a marvelous pair of hands and marvellous eyes. He was just like a piece of



Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira
Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia

blotting paper. He absorbed everything. He had all the, the qualities of greatness. He only made one mistake in composition. He never made it again.' – Rex Battarbee

'Yes. When he paint some picture in the MacDonnell Range and big mob people come and see them pictures. My idea, what I been think, I might do something just like Mr Battarbee paint.' – Albert Namatjira

'I had the intuition to pick him. I could have picked a hundred men and they would've all been failures but I put my reputation on him, really. So much hinges on the success of Albert.' – Rex Battarbee

Write a description of the beginning of Albert Namatjira and Rex Battarbee's relationship. Use the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? to organise your description.

What do you think Rex Battarbee meant when he said, 'So much hinges on the success of Albert.'?

- Write a description of Albert Namatjira's rise to fame. What does this archival footage suggest about the public's response to Namatjira's paintings? Read the following review of Namatjira's 1938 exhibition in Melbourne and letter responding to the review. Both articles were published in the Melbourne daily newspaper of the time, *The Argus*.
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12071812?searchTerm=albert%20namatjira&searchLimits=l-title=13||sortBy=dateAsc>
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/12072417?searchTerm=albert%20namatjira&searchLimits=l-title=13||sortBy=dateAsc>
What views of Namatjira's art and artistic ability are expressed in these articles?
What views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are expressed in these articles?
What were you feeling and thinking as you read these articles?



Albert and Rubina Namatjira, image by Pastor SO Gross
Image courtesy of Strehlow Research Centre



Albert Namatjira, image by Pastor SO Gross
Image courtesy of Strehlow Research Centre

- Albert Namatjira was presented to Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh in Canberra during the Royal Tour of 1954. He had been awarded a Coronation Medal in 1953.

What is a Coronation Medal? Why did Namatjira receive a Coronation Medal?

Before you begin, read the following newspaper articles about the meeting:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/49416502>

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/206083889?searchTerm=Namatjira%20meets%20Queen&searchLimits=>

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/49416502?searchTerm=Namatjira%20meets%20Queen&searchLimits=sortby=dateDesc|||I-decade=195>

What do these articles reveal about the views and values of the time?

Imagine if you had the chance to rewrite history, how would you report Namatjira's introduction to Queen Elizabeth II? Write a newspaper report that provides an account of Namatjira's introduction to Queen Elizabeth II.

Albert Namatjira's great grandson Vincent Namatjira is a painter. How does his painting 'Albert Namatjira receiving Coronation Medal from Her Majesty' - <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-10/albert-namatjira-receiving-coronation-medal-from-her-majesty/6610664> - portray his great grandfather's introduction to Queen Elizabeth II?

- 'Never before in the history of this country has an Australian Aborigine been born to his last resting place, under conditions as we witness today. I venture to say he was not looked upon as belonging to Australia only.

He was a world figure. In spite of many honest attempts to make him happy and a valuable member of our society, we have fundamentally failed.' – Pastor Albrecht

What comment does the footage of Albert Namatjira's funeral, particularly the eulogy by Pastor Albrecht, make about Namatjira and about the way he was regarded by others? Who do you think Pastor Albrecht is referring to when he says 'we'?

- **Refer to Clip 1: Mostyn remembers his grandfather** <https://vimeo.com/223999066> (1min 29secs)

'My name is Mostyn Kentaltja. I'm the grandson of the great painter, Albert Namatjira. I was five years old and I started going out with him as a little boy. We used to follow him 'round, you know? So when he finished painting, he used to call us, "C'mon, kids! Let's go to town, get something for you mob". And Albert had the ute and he had the caravan. So when he travelled around with that ute, all the little ones used to be in the caravan sitting there laughing.' – Mostyn Kentaltja

In *Namatjira Project*, Mostyn Kentaltja, one of Albert Namatjira's grandsons recalls his childhood memories of his grandfather. Archival footage is also used to portray this relationship

Watch Clip 1: Mostyn's remembers his grandfather.

- How does this clip portray Albert Namatjira?
- What does the archival footage suggest about Namatjira's sense of family?
- How does this clip portray Mostyn and his life, past and present?
- Explain the significance of Mostyn's memories to the telling of Namatjira's story.



Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira
Image courtesy Battarbee collection and Gayle Quarmby

- **Refer to Clip 2: Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira**
<https://vimeo.com/224000281> (6min 8secs)

'It was Albert that chose the relationship. In 1928, there was that horrendous drought through those lands and eighty percent of the children died of scurvy. Albert had experienced that loss and because he was such an entrepreneurial thinker, he was always questing towards how to make it better for my community. And when he saw Dad's paintings, he said, "How much does this man get for this?" And he was told, you know, five guineas, and he said, "Well, I have to work for six months for six shillings. I could do this.'" – Gayle Quarmby

'Then he learned painting. Right way. That must be the right way I gotta learn, from old Battarbee. It was a really good life for him, you know? Once he learned how to paint, he used to keep going, keep going. Nobody could stop him.' – Marcus Wheeler

Watch Clip 2: Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira.

<https://vimeo.com/224000281> (6min 8secs)

- a. Drawing on the comments made by Rex Battarbee's daughter, Gayle Quarmby, Marcus Wheeler, the husband of Albert Namatjira's granddaughter Betty Wheeler, and the interview footage with Wilfrid Thomas, explain Namatjira's decision to pursue a career as an artist.
- b. Describe the landscapes that feature in this clip and the significance of these landscapes.
- c. How does this clip portray Namatjira and Battarbee's relationship?

*Note to teachers: this clip could also be used to discuss the beginning of the Namatjira tradition – see activities in **2. The Namatjira tradition** – and Namatjira and Battarbee's friendship – see activities in **6. Respect**.

- If you were given the job of compiling a biographical entry for Albert Namatjira, what would you write? Draw on the knowledge and understanding of Albert Namatjira's life that you have gained from watching *Namatjira Project*. Use your responses to the questions and activities that you have already completed. Read the biography published in this study guide and online

biographical entries about Namatjira to assist you in completing this task.

- When Albert Namatjira visited Sydney in 1956 as the guest of the writer Frank Clune, whose travel books helped popularise Central Australia in the 1950s, he spent five consecutive mornings in the studio of well-known portrait painter, William Dargie. View the painting online: <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/1956/15530/>. A good portrait offers some insight into the subject's personality and captures something of the attitude, unique mannerisms or any of the other features or traits that help form the individual nature of the person. What do you think Dargie's portrait conveys about Albert Namatjira? Use an observation sheet to help you make an analysis of the portrait. *See Appendix 1. Use the internet to research the portrait's public and critical reception.

- *Namatjira Project* features some of Albert Namatjira's descendants, in particular his grandchildren Kevin and Lenie Namatjira. Write a description of:
 - Lenie
 - Kevin
 How do they view their grandfather and his legacy? Kevin Namatjira tours with the *Namatjira* theatre production, appearing on stage and participating in watercolour workshops and exhibitions. Explain the significance of Kevin's participation in the project.



Albert and Rubina Namatjira, image by Pastor SO Gross
Image courtesy Strehlow Research Centre



Intergenerational On-country painting workshop
Finke River NT

THE NAMATJIRA TRADITION

'This is Wilfrid Thomas in Alice Springs in the centre of Australia, interviewing Albert Namatjira, the first Aboriginal artist to achieve recognition as a painter in the 'white man's manner'. His pictures reproduce vividly the red and purple ranges, the valleys of pale green grass on rust coloured earth, dotted with smooth white ghost gum trees.' – Wilfrid Thomas

'Down the beautiful sandy Finke River, where the red sheer sandstone cliffs, scored by wind and rain, shoot up out of the white riverbed. Where the ghost and river gums glow like white giants in the distant mauve of the horizon. Where the sheer spinifex shimmers across pale green tufts across the silence.' – Trevor Jamieson (in performance)

Albert Namatjira is an important Australian artist. His watercolours drew on a European tradition of landscape painting to portray his Country. Namatjira's father's Country lay towards Mount Sonder and Glen Helen Gorge, in the MacDonnell Ranges, and his mother's Country was in the region of Palm Valley in Central Australia. Namatjira's paintings express his relationship with the Aranda country, particularly the Western Aranda lands, for which he was a Traditional Custodian.

Recommended link: https://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Namatjira_map.htm

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a deep understanding and connection to the Australian environment. The term Country is based on an individual's sense of belonging to a particular place. The relationship with this place is based on traditional ancestral knowledges and practices that has been passed down through the generations and comes from the Land itself.

- Country is a word used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to refer to the Land to which they

belong and their place of Dreaming.

- Ownership of Country is hereditary, but detailed knowledge of what Country is learnt in successive stages through ceremony, song, anecdote and contact.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country throughout all of Australia.
- Connection to Country is important whether a person lives in the city or in a rural area.

Note to teachers: Conversations about the depiction of Country in Albert Namatjira's paintings could begin with a discussion about each student's knowledge and understanding of Country. For example:

- Choose three adjectives that you think best describe your connection to the place where you live.
- Are there any places that are really special places for you and your family?
- How do you stay connected to the places that matter to you?
- What is the difference between the use of the word 'Country' by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the use of the word 'country' by non-indigenous people?
- During the early years of his career, Albert Namatjira painted portraits, scenes of daily life, animals and buildings. Examples of these artworks can be found online.

Use an observation sheet (See Appendix 1) to respond to the following artworks:

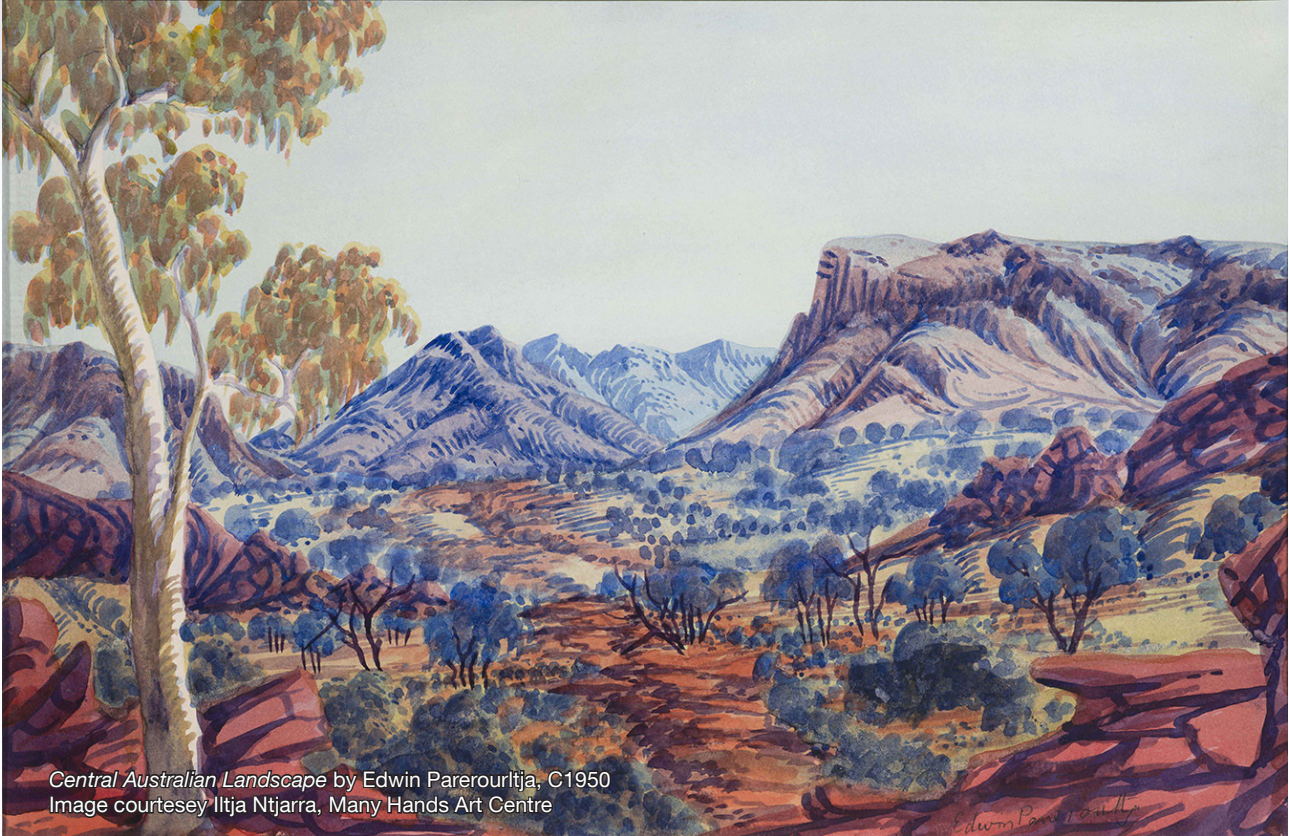
'Hermannsburg Mission with Mt Hermannsburg in the Background' (1936 – 1937)

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/just-deserts-for-namatjira/2006/10/19/1160851068583.html>

'Boomerang' (1936)

https://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Namatjira_pokerworkboomerang.htm

How do these two artworks differ from the paintings of the natural landscape that came to define Namatjira's work as an artist?



Central Australian Landscape by Edwin Parerouritja, C1950
Image courtesey Iltja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre

- Locate images of Albert Namatjira's paintings online. Choose three of Namatjira's paintings to complete the following activity:
 - Use an observation sheet (See Appendix 1) to make detailed notes about each painting.
 - Drawing on these notes, write an extended analysis of the way that the landscape is portrayed in the three paintings that you have selected.
 Use the internet to locate written and visual information about the places portrayed in these paintings.

- The word 'sacred' is used to describe places that are very special to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Namatjira's paintings depict landscape as sacred place. Paintings of sacred sites include 'Ulaterka' (Green Caterpillar Dreaming) and 'Lukaria' (Honey Ant Dreaming). Locate images of these paintings online. Use an observation sheet (See Appendix 1) to make detailed notes about each painting. Drawing on these notes, write an extended analysis of the way that the landscape is portrayed as sacred place.

- 'It sort of struck Trevor and I that there was this deep, kind of, unspoken love for this artist, and in kind of an iconic way, that Albert was this amazing man creating these port holes of image into central Australia through which suburban families could climb out and glimpse the heart of the country for the first time, and form a new kind of love for it.' – Scott Rankin

Describe the Australia depicted in Albert Namatjira's paintings.

- 'The critics argued about his work. Some held that his popularity was due to the novelty of his black skin. Others were warm in their praise. But the public loved him. His exhibitions were sell outs.' – Wilfrid Thomas

'Every Australian home when we were children, you know you had a calendar with Namatjira's paintings. And they were always so different. Such vibrant colours.' – Workshop participant

Many of Albert Namatjira's paintings have been reproduced as prints and on things such as greeting cards, placemats, tea towels, biscuit tins and calendars. What do the reproductions of Namatjira's paintings suggest about the public's interest in his art?

- 'A lot of men came back from the First World War with incredible physical and emotional damage. Had great difficulty fitting back into a city lifestyle. I think there's, there's a stillness in the outback that would have been very therapeutic to Dad.' – Gayle Quarmby

What reasons are given to explain Rex Battarbee's decision to travel to Central Australia to paint?



Kevin Namatjira teaching grandsons to paint

Albert Namatjira's artworks are now regarded as part of their own tradition of painting. This tradition is called the Hermannsburg School.

- Use the internet to research the Hermannsburg School. Drawing on your research, write a profile of the Hermannsburg School.

'My name Kevin Namatjira. I seen his painting in art gallery, in book. I didn't see Albert. He passed away when I was baby. When my father was doing painting, when I was schoolboy, tried to do water landscape painting then.' – Kevin Namatjira

- Kevin Namatjira is an established contemporary artist, so too is Lenie Namatjira. You can locate images of Kevin and Lenie Namatjira's paintings online.

Recommended links: <https://manyhandsart.com.au/artist/kevin-namatjira/> and <https://manyhandsart.com.au/artist/lenie-namatjira/>.

Use an observation sheet (See Appendix 1) to make detailed notes about a painting by Kevin Namatjira and a painting by Lenie Namatjira.

Drawing on these notes, write an extended analysis of the two paintings that you have selected. In your analysis, acknowledge how the paintings you have selected draw on the tradition of art established by their grandfather.

Namatjira Project features footage of the 'Australia' exhibition held at The Royal Academy of Arts in London. The 'Australia' exhibition was the biggest survey of Australian art ever to be held in the UK. The largest collection of works selected were by Albert Namatjira. Lenie and Kevin Namatjira, two of Namatjira's grandchildren attended the exhibition.

- Visit the 'Australia' exhibition online at <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/australia>.
- 'Well done. I've taught you painting now. You gotta stay strong, to do painting and learning, so you can teach your children then...and then tell them.' – Lenie Namatjira

Namatjira Project features footage of Lenie teaching watercolour painting.

Explain the significance of her statement to the children participating in the workshop. Why is it important to her for young people to learn this tradition?

- *Namatjira Project* features footage of an exhibition of five generations of Namatjira artists at Parliament House, Canberra.

'So in the spirit of reconciliation, I'm pleased to open this exhibition of five generations of Namatjira artists. And whilst, I think we've called it an art movement, I think we really need to acknowledge it's a movement of people. To all the artists, you can be very proud of



Lenie Namatjira

carrying, not only your own story, but Australia's story across the world.' – Senator Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs

'I like painting around the community of Hermannsburg, Ntaria. Best part was painting the Hermannsburg mountain. First I vision it. I look first and sketch with pencil. Then watercolours. The colours just comes to me. Sometimes it doesn't look right so I keep working on it until it's okay. Thanks for listening.' – Semra Williams, 5th Generation Watercolour Artist

What do these two statements reveal about the legacy of Albert Namatjira and the importance of the Hermannsburg School?

The Namatjira watercolour painters are now the directors of their own art centre and gallery – Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre in Alice Springs.

- Visit the Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre online at <https://manyhandsart.com.au/>.
- What is the ongoing significance of the art centre as a community hub?

Recommended links:

Art Gallery NSW
<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/namatjira-albert/>
 Art Gallery of South Australia
<https://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Collection/Australian/index.jsp?artist=n>
 Iltja Ntjarra: Many Hands Art Centre
<https://manyhandsart.com.au/>
 National Gallery of Australia
<https://nga.gov.au/namatjira/>
 NGV Australia
<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/4304/>

POWER

Until his death in 1959, Albert Namatjira supported up to 600 members of his family and community using the proceeds of his artwork. Despite Namatjira's fame and success, and the ongoing income generated by his artwork, his descendants struggle with many of the circumstances of disadvantage that Namatjira endured in his lifetime.

- 'The community have never known money like this. Now Albert is now supporting the whole extended family. 600 people now.' – Trevor Jamieson (in performance)

'There you find them. Albert has showed them the way of earning money in the centre by painting. The people up there, they hated the fact that he earned over 7500 a year. Behind it all is this economic thing that they dislike, the Aboriginal that appeared to be better than themselves. And so Albert suffered under that thing.'

– Bill Harney, friend of Namatjira

How did Namatjira's prosperity impact on his family and on his community?

For Albert Namatjira his fame as an artist meant that he had to negotiate living within his own community and the world of White Australia.

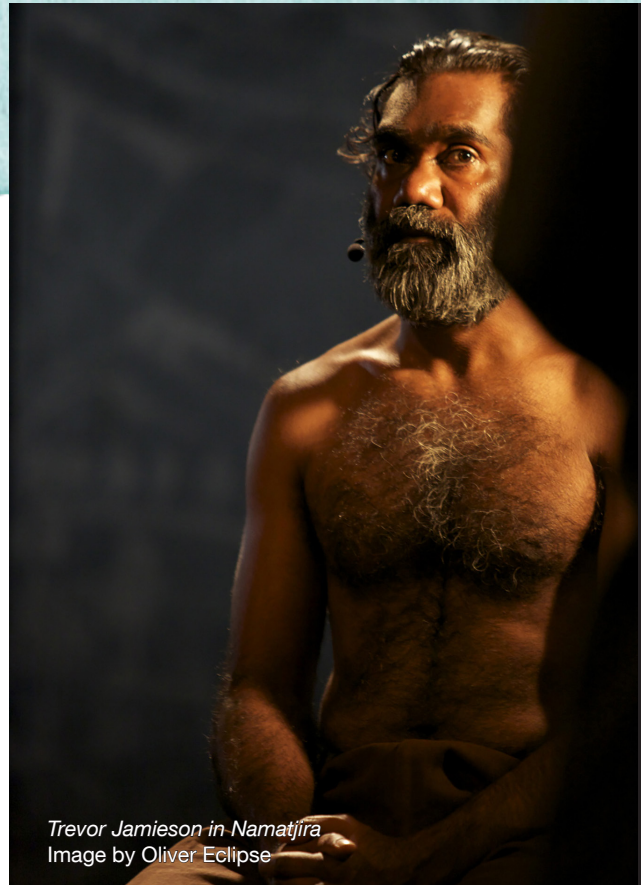
- **Investigation: Citizenship**
Prior to the national referendum of 1967, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were classified under the law as 'flora and fauna'. The referendum asked Australians to decide whether to repeal the definition and to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as citizens of this country
 - What is citizenship?
 - What is a referendum?
 - What was the outcome of the 1967 referendum?

Recommended links:

www.naa.gov.au/collection/factsheets/fs150.aspx
www.wangkamaya.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=107&Itemid=1

In 1957, Albert Namatjira became the first Aboriginal person to be granted conditional Australian citizenship. This entitled him to limited social freedoms and to live in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), although he was prohibited from purchasing land. His relations, including his wife and children, were not permitted the same privileges.

- **Refer to Clip 4: Citizenship**
<https://vimeo.com/224001160> (3mins 33secs)
'Yes, he was a citizen but yet none of his children were citizens. His wife wasn't a citizen. Here you find a strange business of a man that's earning a lot of money, who's made a citizen.' – Bill Harney



Trevor Jamieson in Namatjira
Image by Oliver Eclipse

'If government ask me if I want to be a citizen, I'd just say no, I already here, I belong to this country. Why you want to give me that piece of paper? Keep it for yourself. That's what I'm going to talk to Chief Minister or Prime Minister. I belong to here.' – Mervyn Rubuntja

Watch Clip 4: Citizenship.

<https://vimeo.com/224001160> (3mins 33secs)

- Why did the Australian Government make Albert Namatjira a citizen?
- Why did Namatjira accept the offer of citizenship? Was this an easy or a difficult decision for Namatjira?
- Explain Mervyn Rubuntja's view of citizenship.

In 1958, Albert Namatjira was charged with supplying alcohol to members of the Aboriginal community. As a result there was an incident that ended in a murder, a death that Namatjira himself had no part in. At the time, it was illegal for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, except those who had been made citizens, to possess and consume alcohol. Namatjira was sentenced to six months labour at Papunya.

- 'He was the first citizen to drink. But ain't not black fella way. "You're my cousin", "You're my bro", "You're my uncle", "Give me a taste of that". Things went bad.'
- Mervyn Rubuntja

'So there they are, Alice Springs. Party in the riverbed. Outdoor motel. Newspapers takes photos of them. Can't handle their liquor. It's sad really. Haven't they got homes to go to?' – Trevor Jamieson (in performance)



West McDonnell Ranges by Elton Wirri
Image courtesy Iltja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre
ELTON WIRRI

‘That old fella, it wasn’t his fault, because that was his drink. Albert get punishment by the police, white man law. He was sent to gaol. From there, they done something. Traditional way, punishment. He didn’t get spears through but they done something. That’s why he lost his weight. Like, ah, something like what they have in Africa, like voodoo or something like that, but similar to this one. And they still doing it today.’ – Mervyn Rubuntja

Use the internet to research the circumstances that led to Albert Namatjira’s arrest. What was the charge? Why was he charged, tried and sentenced? How did the sentence impact on Namatjira’s health and wellbeing? How did the sentence impact on his career? How did the sentence impact on his family? Compile a timeline to help you establish the facts.

Drawing on your research, prepare a statement that addresses the accusations made against Namatjira and the authorities response to these accusations.

Was Namatjira denied justice?

- Read Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s poem ‘Namatjira’. The poem can be read online at <https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/noonuccal-oodgeroo/namatjira-0771048>. What is the poem about? How does the poem portray Albert Namatjira? How does the poem portray the way Namatjira was treated by white Australia? Make a line by line analysis of the way Noonuccal uses language in ‘Namatjira’.

- **Refer to Clip 3: Copyright**

<https://vimeo.com/224000761> (2mins 27secs)

In 1957, Albert Namatjira entered into a copyright agreement with John Brackenreg of Legend Press, for the exclusive right to reproduce his paintings. In 1959, when Namatjira passed away, the Public Trustee for the NT Government took on administration of his estate, with Legend Press continuing to manage copyright, paying a 12.5% royalty to the Namatjira family. In 1983, the Public Trustee NT sold Namatjira’s copyright to Legend Press for \$8500, ending the income stream to the family. In 2017, the Public Trustee who oversaw the sale of Namatjira’s copyright admits wrongdoing. Namatjira’s copyright will expire in 2029. Namatjira’s grandchildren and his community, the Aranda people, are hoping to recover the rights to Albert Namatjira’s intellectual and cultural property.

Watch Clip 3: Copyright.

This clip supports the following discussion points about the copyright claim being made by Namatjira’s descendants.

- What is copyright? Make a list of the reasons why copyright is important.
- ‘For our future. Art gallery for Namatjiras. Our great grandchildren, their kids coming up, do painting. Everyone, joined in one group.’ – Lenie Namatjira



Gloria Pannka painting

Why is the copyright of Albert Namatjira's paintings important to the Namatjira family?

- What is the Namatjira Legacy Trust?
*Alternatively teachers can provide students with the information about the Namatjira Legacy Trust published in this study guide.

Why has the work of the Namatjira Legacy Trust been labelled the Mabo moment of the arts world?

How is the return of the copyright an opportunity to restore justice to the family? How will it benefit the community? How will it benefit the nation?

Accompanied by *Namatjira Project* producer Sophia Marinos, Lenie Namatjira and Gloria Pannka meet with Philip Brackenreg at Artarmon Galleries in Sydney, New South Wales to discuss the return of the copyright.

- 'Brackenreg got that thing. Copyright. Big hART mob gotta help us.' – Kevin Namatjira

'You know, he might thinking to sell for quarter of a million. Yeah. That's what I'm thinking.' – Gloria Pannka

'In Namatjira Project, we went to Sydney. We talk about that ... Nothing. Too hard. We think it's too hard to get some. That's why we don't want to talk about that money now.' – Kevin Namatjira

'And we would like something to happen that is fair to all artists.' – Philip Brackenreg

What happens at the meeting with Philip Brackenreg? Why is the copyright important to Brackenreg? Explain the significance of Brackenreg's reference to the prints of Namatjira's work.

What do you think is the 'fair' outcome?

- 'Then we bring this story, project to London, so Queen can see what's happened.' – Lenie

'You know, these events, like meeting the Queen, along with just the show being here and the profile that we're getting, it's all about the impact back home and it's all about what the project has been trying to achieve since its inception.' – Sophia Marinos

The production of *Namatjira* is invited to go to London. What do Kevin and Lenie Namatjira and Big hART hope the tour of London will achieve in terms of the return of the copyright?

- What does Albert Namatjira's story reveal about the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the past? What do the stories of Namatjira's descendants reveal about the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in today's Australia?



Mt Sonder by Ivy Pareroulitja
Image courtesy Ilija Nitjarra, Many Hands Art Centre

LAND

'...We have been teaching our younger ones in Hermannsburg School. We take the kids to the same places that Albert and Rex used to paint together. We paint the West MacDonnell Ranges, Finke River and Palm Valley – because that land belongs to our grandfathers, and to us, and to our kids too.' – Lenie Namatjira

Land is fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify themselves through their Land areas, waterways and Songlines.

*Teachers are encouraged to draw on the information in **2. The Namatjira tradition** to support discussions about land ownership.

Ntaria (Hermannsburg) is in Western Aranda Country in the Northern Territory, 120 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

- Use the internet to research Ntaria. Share your findings with the class. Drawing on the research, draw a map showing the location of Ntaria. Your map should be accompanied by a detailed description of Ntaria.
- 'This tree has good shade and this tree is very special. From way back, our ancestors would sit in this shade. And now we are sitting under the shade. It's our place. Nobody is allowed to take it from us.' – Albert Namatjira

What does Albert's claim reveal about his understanding of land ownership?

- Wilfrid Thomas: Are you saving your money for anything special?

Albert: Yes, I'm saving money trying to get some block of land for my house, you know? My house.

'I can see from Glen Helen, nice mountain, Mount Sonder, and Ormiston Gorge and this is my father's country and I like to stay here. I can leave a car and work here about three or four months. We just only live



Lenie Namatjira at Finke River, NT



Standley Chasm by Elton Wirri, 2007
Image courtesy Iltja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre

just like the first people. But I'd like to put a home, you see, like a permanent home. More better than running around everywhere, you see. All of my families like this country too. And I think I got to look after more before I die, my father's country.' – Albert Namatjira

'His place was Morris Soak. See, Albert wanted to live in Alice Springs. They told him to move to Morris Soak. We not living there. We are like dog. We stop in other people place. "Hey you, get out. Other people live on that land."' – Mostyn Kentaltja

'I remember when we were flying back in then plane, we were going over Alice Springs, old Albert touched me and he looked down and said, pointed down to where he used to live in Morris Soak under the tree, and he said to me, "When we was in Darwin Bill, we were gentlemen. But here, rubbish again." And that was the pattern that they live in.' – Bill Harney

Use the conversation between Wilfrid Thomas and Albert Namatjira and the statements of Albert Namatjira, Mostyn Kentaltja and Bill Harney, to write an extended analysis of Namatjira's ambition to own property.

- Newsreader: To the eyes of the Duke and the Queen, accustomed to the deep pastures of England, it was remarkable that the apparently desolate country of the centre should support a gigantic cattle industry. Before the Queen went to the centre, she'd been fascinated by what she'd heard of the colour of the land. Was it true, she'd wondered, that the land held the colours of Namatjira's paintings.

Queen Elizabeth II: After this visit, no one will be able to suggest to me that Central Australia is a dead heart. From now on, I shall always look upon it as a living heart, beating with confident energy.

Watch the footage of the 1963 Royal Tour that features in *Namatjira Project*.

Explain the significance of the Queen's statement about Alice Springs.

You might also like to watch the British Pathe footage of the visit to places in the Northern Territory: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kd6ob0x3h10>.

- Helen Webb is Kevin Namatjira's Housing Case Worker. In *Namatjira Project* she explains Kevin's housing uncertainty:

'The other day, I had to present Kevin with a letter. The Department of Housing weren't happy with the condition of his house. When you're Aboriginal, family is everything, so people may come to town and they may be hungry. They might like a bit of support with some funds to get back out of town or buy some tucker. And of course, too, in the Aboriginal world, that could be up to fifteen people, you know? Just all pile out of cars and come and visit. Which would be great if it was a short time but if people wanted to, decided to camp, whoa. He's tried his hardest to try and, I believe to say no. But when you're not home, things can happen also. Kevin did try to put a lock on his gate and that's been moved by a vehicle. I had to tell him that there is plans afoot to return that house to the Department of Housing. It's a human right, housing, really. It's not an easy one, you know? But in reality, it's his journey and he will find, he'll find a good place to live. Yeah. But his artwork will be the key.'

Use Helen Webb's statement to explain Kevin Namatjira's plight. What does her statement suggest about the Department of Housing's response to the housing issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Can you draw any parallels between Kevin's situation and that of Albert Namatjira when he became more financially prosperous?

- **Clip 6: House, home, country**
<https://vimeo.com/224001689> (4mins 2sec)

'I'd like she could help me get land. For a little house.'
– Kevin Namatjira

'Hey, I'm getting ready to see the old lady. All the white people are here waiting for me to get off the phone. We're going there today, to give the old lady the painting. Uncle's all dressed up. All the white people love him because he looks like a young fella. I just wanna let you mob know to watch the news. That old lady might feel sorry for me... to give me land.'
– Lenie Namatjira (on phone)



Sixty years after their grandfather was presented to Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, Lenie and Kevin Namatjira attend Buckingham Palace. In a scene set in a London hotel room on the eve of their visit to Buckingham Palace, Kevin and Lenie Namatjira speak about land ownership.

Watch Clip 5: A home.

<https://vimeo.com/224001689> (4mins 2sec)

- Why is the meeting with Queen Elizabeth II important to Lenie and Kevin Namatjira?
- What does this clip make you think?
- How does this clip make you feel?
- What comment does this clip make about the status of Aboriginal people in contemporary Australian society?

'It's sort of captured in the phrase, "From Buckingham Palace to homeless in Alice". And you know, it's beautiful that the Queen cared and it does beg the question who else cares and how do you express that care, and if you're in charge of the policy levers in Australia, then you're responsible for something that borders on negligent.' – Scott Rankin

What does Scott Rankin hope the visit to Buckingham Palace will achieve?

What comment do the British media make about Lenie and Kevin Namatjira's visit to the Buckingham Palace? Use the internet to research Australian media reports about Lenie and Kevin Namatjira's introduction to Queen Elizabeth II. In *Namatjira Project*, Scott Rankin expresses his disappointment with the Australian media's coverage of the event. Do you agree that the Australian media's reporting of the meeting was disappointing?

- Write the news report that should have been published in an Australian daily newspaper about Lenie and Kevin's visit to Buckingham Palace.
- 'I feel all right when I been land in Sydney. I like to now go back to Alice Springs. Bit happy then ... We don't grow up in a big city like that. Come back to town. Start doing painting now. See the sun go down, get up. See them hills.'
– Kevin

What does Kevin Namatjira's statement reveal about his relationship with Country?



East McDonnell ranges by Ivy Pareroutja, 2012
Image courtesy Iltja Njarra, Many Hands Art Centre

LANGUAGE

Language identifies who we are, where we come from and which group we belong to.

- What languages do you speak? What languages do your parents, guardians, aunts, uncles and grandparents speak? Do you think it is important to learn these languages?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups. Colonisation and past policies of assimilation have severely affected the continuation and practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Before colonisation, there were more than 250 different languages and more than 500 different dialects throughout Australia. Today less than 30 remain, and there are not many fluent speakers of any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language. However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are actively reviving and maintaining their languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are important as they reinforce identity, culture and connection to Ancestors.

- Visit ABC Indigenous: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>. This map shows the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that are spoken in Australia.
- In *Namatjira Project*, Albert Namatjira can be heard singing 'Flying Ant Dreaming'. *Namatjira Project* also features many members of the Namatjira family talking in language.

Why do you think the filmmakers acknowledge the language of the Aranda people in *Namatjira Project*? Use the internet to make a glossary of Western Aranda vocabulary of relevance to *Namatjira Project*.

- Why do you think it is important to learn and communicate in your native language? Why is it important to be exposed to languages other than your own?
- Working as a class, mindmap the connections between language, culture and heritage. What conclusions can you make?



Derik Lynch and Trevor Jamieson in *Namatjira*
Image by Brett Boardman

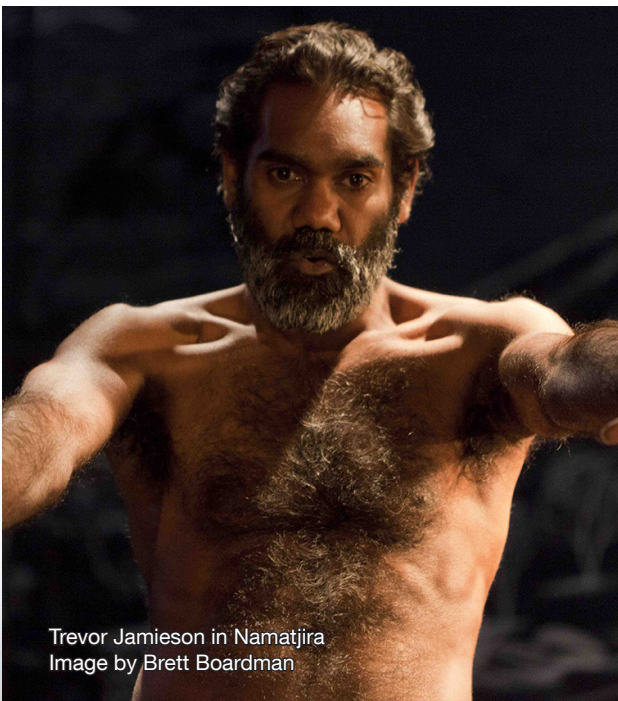
RESPECT

Albert Namatjira and Rex Battarbee's friendship was based on a recognition of each other's talents, a shared passion for country and mutual respect. The spirit of their collaboration continues in Big hART's Namatjira Project, particularly through the stage production. *Namatjira* is a stage play written by Scott Rankin and created with the Namatjira family.

- 'I wonder what they saw, you know what I mean? I wonder what it is in their lives that made a change also. Rex Battarbee introduced him to watercolours, and these two people had an amazing friendship that shaped Australia in another way through this great collaboration.' – Trevor Jamieson

Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira's relationship was not just about their work as landscape painters. Describe the friendship between Rex Battarbee and Namatjira. What reasons are given in *Namatjira Project* to explain the men's friendship?

- Trevor: So Rex takes five of Albert's paintings and hangs them up out of curiosity in his own exhibition. With a financial box, for anyone who wants to help. Derik: Just gorgeous. And to think that primitive minds can see the world as we do. Of course, one can't be expected to hang a picture by an unknown black in their lounge room. But three pence can be handy. Buy themselves some soap perhaps. In a scene from *Namatjira* featured in the documentary, Trevor and Derik dramatise the first exhibition of Albert Namatjira's paintings. What does this scene suggest about the public reception of Namatjira's paintings? What does this scene suggest about the views about Aboriginal people that prevailed during this time in Australia's history?



Trevor Jamieson in *Namatjira*
Image by Brett Boardman



Scott Rankin and Trevor Jamieson rehearsing *Namatjira*
Image by Heidrun Lohr

- 'Albert Namatjira, the famous Aboriginal artist from Central Australia, caused a stir today at Sydney's famous zoo. Note the reaction of the animals to the proximity of a full-blooded native. The lions, tigers, and particularly the apes, sniff the air as they realise that a descendant of the primeval jungle is among them. Mahogany man takes it all in his stride as he smiles for the camera.' – excerpt from a newsreel

This excerpt from a newsreel is featured in *Namatjira*. What does this newsreel of Albert Namatjira's visit to Sydney's Taronga Zoo reveal about the way Aboriginal people were once regarded by non-Indigenous Australians? How do the audience of *Namatjira* at Sydney's Belvoir Theatre react to the newsreel? How did you feel as you watched the newsreel? Can you think of examples that reflect more respectful attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? Can you think of any recent situations when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been denied the respect that they deserve?

- 'I wanted to work with you because I'd never seen anyone, any storyteller, anywhere, who had the kinetic facility, the capacity to make the story their body, and to tell the story in this way that disarms an audience.' – Scott Rankin

'When we did start to work, got to learn about each other, there were a lot of new things that opened up. You know, coming up with pieces like Ngapartji Ngapartji, you know? Which means I give you something, you give me something. So that really interested me. See, I think that collaboration between you know, black and white.' – Trevor Jamieson

What words and phrases do you think best describe the relationship between Scott Rankin and Trevor Jamieson? Can you make any links between their creative collaboration and the creative collaboration of Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira?



Artwork by Kevin Namatjira
Image Courtesy Iltja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre

KEVIN. NAMATJIRA

What words and phrases do you think best describe the relationship between Big hART and the Namatjira family? Can you make any links between this partnership and Battarbee and Namatjira's partnership?

- Why do you think Kevin Namatjira is on stage during the performances of *Namatjira*?
- Explain the significance of the backdrop to the telling of Namatjira's story.

- **Refer to Clip 5: Performance at Ntaria**
<https://vimeo.com/224001400> (5mins 32secs)

'He's a Pitjantjatjara man. Should've put an Aranda man. Albert's tribe. How will a Pitjantjatjara man act Albert? Some white mans have been see Albert before. They might think, "Hey. Albert was a big bloke. How can be this skinny bloke?" So Trevor, be careful. I'll be watching you like a cat, wherever you go. Every step.' – Mostyn Kentaltja

In developing the stage production *Namatjira*, Big hART met with people who are connected to Albert Namatjira. Scott Rankin and Trevor Jamieson are shown consulting with the Namatjira family and members of the community about telling Namatjira's story.

Watch Clip 5: Performance at Ntaria.
<https://vimeo.com/224001400> (5mins 32secs)

- Why was it necessary for Big hART to consult and seek permissions from individuals and the community? What do Big hART's understanding of protocols and consultations with individuals and the community reveal about respect?
- In *Namatjira Project*, we see *Namatjira* performed in Sydney, Ntaria and London. Did you enjoy watching these scenes? Why? What were you thinking and feeling as you watched the performances? Would you like to see a performance of *Namatjira*? This clip features the performance at Ntaria. How is the performance of *Namatjira* at Ntaria different from the performances in Sydney and London?
- Explain the importance of the performance at Ntaria to the community, to the performers and to the director.
- Write a review of the performances of *Namatjira* featured in *Namatjira Project*.
- How do you think a stage production like *Namatjira* can help heal the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australia?

Remembering Albert Namatjira: Years 5 – 9

- Did you know who Albert Namatjira was before you watched *Namatjira Project*?
- What do you think all Australians should know about Albert Namatjira?
- Why do you think it is important for us to remember Albert Namatjira?

Working as a class, create an exhibition that you might see in an art gallery or museum about Albert Namatjira.

1. Make a mindmap to record the class' ideas about the content of the exhibition.
2. Make another mindmap to record the class' ideas about the layout of the exhibition.
3. Appoint two students to act as the curators of the exhibition.
4. Form teams of students. Each team will be responsible for creating a part of the exhibition.
5. Invite the school community to attend the exhibition.

Extended response: Years 10 – 12

'Namatjira wasn't just a key figure in our history, he changed our history.' – Hetti Perkins

- Who is Hetti Perkins? Use the internet to research Perkins' interest in and connection to Albert Namatjira. Drawing on your research, explain Perkins' view of Albert Namatjira.
- How does the *Namatjira Project* support this view of Albert Namatjira?
- Write an extended response that offers your view of Albert Namatjira's place in Australia's history.

Appendix 1: Art observation

- Complete Observation Sheet 1 on [page 26](#)
- Complete Observation Sheet 2 on [page 27](#) and read the following text on Frameworks:

Formal Framework

The Formal Framework is used to analyse how an artwork's formal elements and principles contribute to its meanings and messages.

- How have the formal elements of line, colour, tone, texture, shape, sound and form including focal point and space been applied by the artist and to what effect?
- How do these qualities contribute to the meanings and messages of the work?
- What materials and techniques have been used?
- How has the use of these shaped or affected the interpretation?
- What are the distinctive stylistic qualities of the artwork and how do they contribute to meaning?
- How does the work relate to other works in a similar style

or from the same historical period or cultural background?

- What physical aspects or presentation of the artwork contain symbolic meaning and use of metaphor? (This may include the use of formal art elements, the compositional arrangement of figures or objects, the medium or the technique used by the artist, the style in which it is created.)

Personal Framework

The Personal Framework is used to interpret how an artist's experiences, feelings, thinking and/or personal philosophy can be reflected in an artwork. It can also be used to gain awareness of the effect of the viewer's cultural background and experience on the interpretation of the artwork.

- What relationship does the artwork have to the artist's life and experiences? What visual evidence supports this reading?
- Has the artist used a specific process or practice in creating the artwork that may reflect their personal philosophy and ideas?
- How is the artwork linked to people, places or experiences of personal significance to the artist such as the artist's personal feelings, thinking, aspirations, beliefs, desires, preoccupations, memories, dreams etc.?
- How does the experience and background of the viewer affect the interpretation of the artwork?
- What are the symbols or metaphors explored or utilised in the artwork?

Cultural Framework

The Cultural Framework is used to identify the influences on an artwork of the time, place, purpose, cultural and political settings in which it was made. These influences may include historical, political, social, socio-economic, religious contexts as well as aspects of ethnicity and gender.

- How do the social, political, cultural or religious contexts of the artwork contribute to its meaning?
- How have historical or contemporary events shaped the intention of the artist or our understanding of the artwork's meaning?
- How might the cultural background of the viewer influence the interpretation of an artwork?

Contemporary Framework

The Contemporary Framework is used to examine an artwork, irrespective of when it was created, in the context of contemporary art ideas and issues. For the purpose of this study contemporary art ideas and issues are those originating in the late twentieth century onwards.

- How does the choice or presentation of subject matter or medium, materials and techniques reflect or challenge artistic or social traditions?
- How might artworks of the past take on new or different meanings, in the context of contemporary ideas and issues?

OBSERVATION SHEET 1

+ I SEE..., I THINK..., I WONDER..., I FEEL...

YEARS 7 – 9

Use this observation sheet to take notes about Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg School artworks.

Artist Name:

Title and Date of Artwork:

I see....

(Describe what you see when you look at the artwork.)

I think....

(Describe what you think the artist is trying to say.)

I wonder....

(Describe how you think the artist created the artwork.)

I feel...

(Describe what you feel when you look at the artwork.)

OBSERVATION SHEET 2

+ ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

YEARS 10 – 12

Use this observation sheet to take notes about Albert Namatjira and the Hermannsburg School artworks.

Artist Name:

Title and Date of Artwork:

Formal Framework

Personal Framework

Cultural Framework

Contemporary Framework

Additional Links and Resources

- Media segments on the project:
- Namatjira's descendents meet the Queen – SBS News, 28/11/17 <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/11/28/namatjiras-descendents-meet-queen>
- 'The fight for copyright of Albert Namatjira's artwork' – ABC News, 2/3/17 www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2016/s4629543.htm
- 'Artistic inheritance: Albert Namatjira's family battles for his work', The Australian, 25/2/17 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/artistic-inheritance-albert-namatjiras-family-battles-for-his-work/news-story/d4a83fd7b7ebba652a21f45fc24459b>
- Namatjira vimeo channel – short films created by the broader Namatjira project, including films made by Ntaria school students about their community in Hermannsburg <https://vimeo.com/channels/namatjirafilms>
- Watercolours of Namatjira app for iPhone/iPad – Try creating your own beautiful watercolour painting! <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/>
- [watercolours-of-namatjira/id511590761?mt=8](http://www.watercolours-of-namatjira.com.au/watercolours-of-namatjira/id511590761?mt=8)
- Theatre script – Currency Press published the full Namatjira theatre script, available here: http://www.currency.com.au/product_detail.aspx?productid=2516
- Namatjira Project websites:
- Namatjira Legacy Trust – www.namatjiratrust.org
- Documentary – www.namatjiradocumentary.org
- Project – www.namatjira.bighart.org
- Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning www.reconciliation.org.au/Narragunnawali
- Big hART Inc – Discover some of the other many and varied projects Big hART runs around Australia www.bighart.org
- Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning www.reconciliation.org.au/Narragunnawali



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