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Vincent Namatjira paints bold portraits of Australia's seven most recent prime ministers

By Kylie Northover – August 19, 2016



Vincent Namatjira, the great-grandson of renowned Aboriginal painter Albert Namatjira, has painted a series of portraits of the seven most recent prime ministers for the TarraWarra Biennial

Vincent Namatjira, the great-grandson of pioneering Indigenous artist Albert Namatjira, paints in a bold, naive style, often making sly references to our colonial past.

Yet the subjects of his latest series of paintings have a much more contemporary flavour.

On Friday he unveiled his portraits of the seven most recent Australian prime ministers at the TarraWarra Museum of Art's 2016 Biennial.

The artist, from Indulkana in South Australia's APY lands, painted each of the prime ministers who have been in power throughout his lifetime for the biennale, which centres on the theme of "Endless Circulation".

"These leaders' decisions shape the way Indigenous Australians live and how remote communities continue to operate. I've seen changes happen as time changes," Namatjira says.

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The series, which he painted at the Iwantja studio in Indulkana, reference Australia's dark past, but also feature Namatjira's trademark sly wit. (Queen Elizabeth II is another who features regularly in his works: his painting *The Queen and Prince Philip Attend the Exhibition* was a finalist in the recent National Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.)

"Everyone had fun watching me paint them, chuckling at the portraits. Having a sense of humour and a paint brush is a powerful thing," says Namatjira.

His style is poles apart from the landscapes for which his great-grandfather was famed.