

# FORT GANSEVOORT



## Vincent Namatjira brings the bush to the big smoke

Celebrated artist Vincent Namatjira is preparing to take over the frontage of the Art Gallery of South Australia with a giant animation as part of Illuminate Adelaide, in what he says is a significant career milestone.

By Farrin Foster – July 5, 2022



Vincent Namatjira: 'To me, putting the artwork on the [Art] Gallery of South Australia is a pretty big thing.' Photo: Rhett Hammerton, courtesy Iwantja Arts

From his remote base of Indulkana in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, Vincent Namatjira has been devising a way to disrupt the Colonial vistas of Adelaide's North Terrace.

This month, the Archibald and Ramsay prize winner will present a new work – a giant projection on the façade of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) – as part of Illuminate Adelaide and Tarnanthi.

"The thing that I'm working on right now for Adelaide, that's like a turning point for my career – something new that I've brought to the table that I've never tried before," Namatjira says.

Entitled *Going Out Bush*, the animation is a leap for the artist both in scale and form.

Having worked sparingly with moving image previously, Namatjira says he was initially "a bit nervous" about taking over the North Terrace institution, but quickly settled into the idea once he started creating mock-ups.

"You'll see pretty much the Aboriginal flag depicted on the top of the building, and also you'll see a message from me saying 'Bringing the bush to the big smoke'.

"It's me, an Indigenous person, living out in the bush in a remote community and coming to the big smoke, for thousands of people to see.

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“The green Toyota that I put in this presentation is a symbol of my great-grandfather Albert Namatjira... [it] symbolises us with freedom, going out bush, having culture, coming back, and also just getting out and having a break.”



*Studio Self Portrait*, 2018, acrylic on linen (courtesy of the artist and Iwantja Arts) – one of Vincent Namatjira's paintings used as a reference for the *Going Out Bush* animation.

The animation combines landscape elements from Namatjira's adopted home of Indulkana and from his famous watercolourist great-grandfather's Country around Ntaria (Hermannsburg).

It also incorporates Namatjira's trademark biting sense of humour. The artist continues his tradition of questioning Australia's historical narratives by painting himself interacting with, and occasionally morphing into, figures like the Queen and James Cook.

“For me, the start and the finish are a serious kind of thing,” says Namatjira. “In between is sort of like a five-minute part where it's sort of like a comedy, it's a little bit funny also.

“Two Toyotas on both sides will collide, and the heads will come off – that kind of thing.”

While the projection illuminates the exterior of AGSA at night, the touring Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize will showcase Namatjira's 2020 Archibald-winning portrait during the day. *Stand Strong For Who You Are* portrays Namatjira alongside former AFL footballer Adam Goodes, and depicts some of Goodes' most iconic moments.

For Namatjira, becoming the first Indigenous artist to win the Archibald in 2020 was another opportunity to cheerfully upend entrenched norms.

“Albert Namatjira, he was a sitter for the Archibald, whereas I was the artist for the Archibald,” he says. “I see it as a reversal of history – turning the tables and bringing it into the present. Where he is the sitter, I am the artist.”

With an exhibition of paintings also opening at Fort Gansevoort in New York this July, Namatjira is preparing for a month of intense activity and exposure.

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But the prospect of seeing his animations projected full scale across AGSA has still acutely captured his imagination – in large part because of the potential for this public artwork to have a broad-reaching effect.

“It does mean a lot of things to me,” he says. “I am a South Australian bloke now and I have a South Australian partner. To me, putting the artwork on the [Art] Gallery of South Australia is a pretty big thing.

“It’s me opening up doors for others, also. Other young, emerging artists – Indigenous mainly.”

‘Going Out Bush’ will be projected on the façade of the Art Gallery of South Australia every night from 6pm to 11pm between July 15 and 31 as part of Tarnanthi and Illuminate Adelaide’s City Lights program. City Lights comprises a series of projections, immersive installations and other artworks across three precincts in the city (east, west and north), with full details and a map available on the Illuminate Adelaide website. Illuminate runs throughout July.