



SEEING THE CENTRE

The art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959

7 MARCH – 4 MAY 2003

ALBERT NAMATJIRA WAS THE MOST FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN ARTIST OF HIS DAY.

His landscape paintings have become iconic images synonymous with the Australian outback; they are expressions of his personal relationship with The Centre, and in particular with the Western Aranda (Arrernte) country to which he was spiritually bound.

Namatjira's distinctive deep blue and purple shadows of Mount Hermannsburg, the iron red of Standley Chasm and Glen Helen Gorge, the gnarled white trunks of ghost gums and river red gums have etched their way into the Australian psyche. His images show a powerful and potent land created in the Dreaming, that transcends the influence of European settlement. The exhibition and its catalogue seeks to redress previous misconceptions about the art and life of Namatjira. **It is the most significant retrospective of Albert Namatjira's work and the first ever to be seen in Adelaide.**

ROGER BUTLER (Senior Curator of Australian Prints, Drawings & Illustrated Books; National Gallery of Australia), the coordinating curator responsible for this exhibition, and **ALISON FRENCH** (from the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research; Australian National University), researcher and author of the exhibition catalogue have drawn from public and private collections some of the finest watercolours by Namatjira. Contextual works will also be on display from his early years in Hermannsburg situated west of Alice Springs, where he learned to paint from artist, Rex Battarbee. The exhibition includes works that show responses from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives, including watercolours by other members of his family and Sir William Dargie's portrait of Namatjira that won the 1956 Archibald Prize. There are more than 100 works in total.

In 1939 the Art Gallery of South Australia became the first public institution in Australia to acquire a painting by Albert Namatjira: *Illum-baura (Haasts Bluff), Central Australia*, which will, of course, be included in this exhibition. In 2003, the Gallery is proud to host this National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition, timed to coincide with the centenary of Namatjira's birth on 28 July 1902. The exhibition is supported with a range of guided tours, public lectures, children's activities, films and special events, many of which are free.

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at the Art Gallery of South Australia

A National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition.
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