

Our Land is Alive

Hermannsburg

Potters for Kids

Artwork labels

The Hermannsburg Potters

2015 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Hermannsburg Potters at Ntaria (Hermannsburg), formerly a Lutheran mission established in 1877.

Hermannsburg is renowned as the birthplace of Western Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira, leader of the Hermannsburg School of watercolour painting, which has flourished from the late 1930s until today.

In 1963–64 a number of Western Arrernte residents, including Nahasson Ungwanaka, were introduced to clay modelling at the mission by South Australian ceramicist Victor Jaensch. Almost three decades later, Pastor Ungwanaka suggested pottery should be introduced, and Naomi Sharp was contracted to teach pottery.

The Hermannsburg Potters is a collective of Western Arrernte artists who work with ceramics to tell stories of their Country and culture; to represent their natural environment; and to record vital elements of their life experience and incongruous features of their changing world. The potters hand-build spherical pots from terracotta clay, which they cover with underglaze images of plants, animals, pastoral scenes, football matches and mission days, and build modelled forms on the lids expressive of powerful individual stories. The Potters have also produced a number of ceramic murals and more recently have been making large paintings on canvas.

For Kids

Australian Rules Football has taken over the NGV! The Hermannsburg Potters have created twenty pots depicting some of the AFL's best and fairest Indigenous players from all eighteen teams. Who do you barrack for?

Many Indigenous communities all over Australia are passionate about footy. Long ago, a football game named marngrook was played by Victorian Indigenous people, which some say influenced the development of Aussie Rules. In marngrook 50 to 100 players per side fought for a ball made of possum skin by handballing, kicking and marking. Can you imagine a field with that many players on it?

The Hermannsburg Potters belong to a small community 130 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs. They are famous for their colourful terracotta pots which tell stories about their culture and where they live; their Country, the mission days, bush tucker and, of course, football! During footy season the Hermannsburg community get together to watch AFL on TV, and on weekends many make the trip to Alice Springs to support local teams.

The pots on display here depict important moments across many years of the game. Spend time looking at the pots, reading about the moments and watching the footage on screen.

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Western Arrernte born 1970

I'm black (Nicky Winmar), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

This Collingwood versus St Kilda game made history. During previous matches, spectators had been booing Indigenous players Nicky Winmar and Gilbert McAdam, who decided they had had enough! When the game finished, Nicky raised his jumper, pointed to his stomach and said, 'I'm black and I'm proud to be black!'

The next day Nicky's photograph appeared in newspapers across Australia and people began to talk about the issue of racism both on and off the field. His courage to stand up for himself and his people started conversations on TV, radio and at school about the issue of racism in football.

'I remember when Nicky Winmar lifted his shirt to show that he is black. We will always support Nicky Winmar.'

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Western Arrernte born 1970

Scooting around the boundary (Maurice Rioli), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Maurice Rioli played for the Richmond Tigers and was known for his lightning reflexes and ball-handling skills. Over his footy career, Rioli played 118 games and kicked 80 goals! This pot shows when Richmond made it to the Grand Final against Carlton in 1982. Although the Tigers did not win, Rioli won Richmond's best and fairest and the Norm Smith Medal for best player in the Grand Final – a first for an Indigenous player!

'I remember Maurice Rioli from a long time ago: he was a black player from before. He was on a big run, around the boundary, to kick this big goal.'

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Western Arrernte born 1970

The Crow (Andrew McLeod), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Andrew McLeod played a whopping 340 games and scored 275 goals during his footy career. He won three best and fairest awards at Adelaide. His great claim to fame is winning the Norm Smith Medal two years back-to-back in 1997 and 1998.

The Norm Smith medal, awarded to the best player in the Grand Final, is named after a former Melbourne player and coach. It was named in his honour because he coached six Melbourne to premiership in eight appearances in Grand Finals.

'Andrew McLeod! The Adelaide Crows are my favourite team. I have a few favourites, I love Fremantle and St Kilda but Adelaide the most. Andrew McLeod is my favourite player in the AFL. He was a great player.'

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Western Arrernte born 1970

Seven Blackfellas kick the highest score, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

More than 90,000 Indigenous Australians play Aussie Rules across the country. This year, there are seventy-one Indigenous players in the AFL.

In 2003, Fremantle's team included seven Indigenous players. They were nicknamed the 'Fremantle seven' and they all played in Freo's highest scoring game in 2003 against the North Melbourne Kangaroos. Their team scored 167 to the North Melbourne Roos' 122. An exciting match!

'I love watching Fremantle; they have lots of Indigenous players. They are black. In this game there are seven Indigenous players playing for Fremantle. They kicked the highest score.'

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Hayley Panangka Coulthard

Western Arrernte born 1967

Taking Rioli for a big run (Lewis Jetta), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Hayley Coulthard is renowned for her AFL pots. On this one Hayley has painted a game she saw on TV that was really exciting to watch. It shows two of her favourite players playing great football in the 2013 Grand Final. Sydney Swans' Lewis Jetta dashes past Hawthorn Hawks' Cyril Rioli on the wing and sprints towards the goal, thrilling the crowd and inspiring the Sydney Swans to go on to win the game.

'This is a work about my two favourite players. Here Jetta, number 32 of the Sydney Swans, takes Rioli, number 33 of the Hawks for a big run.'

Hayley Panangka Coulthard

Hayley Panangka Coulthard

Western Arrernte born 1967

A deadly mark (Cyril Rioli), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

For many people, footy is in the blood! Hawthorn player Cyril Rioli comes from a family of great players. His father played footy and his uncles, Maurice Rioli and Michael Long, are both regarded as great footy players. When Cyril was fourteen, he moved from Darwin to Melbourne to attend school on a football scholarship. The artist has captured a great mark he made during the 2014 Grand Final. And the mighty Hawks won!

Did you watch the game?

'I wanted to show the great mark the Hawks' Cyril Rioli took, number 33, against the Sydney Swans in the 2014 Grand Final. We watched the Grand Final on TV in Hermannsburg.'

Hayley Panangka Coulthard

Lindy Panangka Rontji

Western Arrernte born 1962

The tackle (Curtly Hampton), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Many people in Hermannsburg travel to Alice Springs to watch the footy on weekends. These two towns are located in Arrernte Country. Arrernte is one of more than 250 Aboriginal language groups in Australia. On this pot Lindy has depicted Curtly Hampton who is also from Arrernte Country. Lindy and the people of Hermannsburg are proud to watch Curly play footy on TV. It is like watching a brother who is now famous!

'We used to see Curtly Hampton play at Traeger Park in Alice Springs for the Pioneers. He is an Arrernte man. I used to go into Alice Springs to watch the AFL finals, but now I watch AFL on TV in Hermannsburg.'

Lindy Panangka Rontji

Lindy Panangka Rontji

Western Arrernte born 1962

After the siren (Peter Burgoyne), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Have you heard the expression 'A close game is a good game'? In 2000, Port Adelaide was losing by only one point to Carlton in the final quarter. It was a nail-biting last few minutes. Port Adelaide player Peter Burgoyne marked the ball straight in front of the goals – right on the siren. He then went on to kick a goal to win the game by five points. It was a home game for Port Adelaide and the Port fans went wild!

'Peter Burgoyne kicks the winning goal after the siren.'
Lindy Panangka Rontji

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Western Arrernte born 1948

Goal of the year (Michael Long), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The Phil Manassa Medal is awarded to the player who kicks the best goal of the season. In the 1993 Grand Final, Essendon Bombers' Michael Long kicked a goal from fifty metres out. A Carlton player touched the ball, but it is hard to tell if it was before or after it went through the goal posts. This goal still causes arguments among diehard fans; some say it should have been a point while others say it was definitely a goal.

**'We have known Michael Long for a long time.
We watched him play this game and kick this goal on
the internet.'**

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Western Arrernte born 1948

1948 VFL Grand Final, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Have you wondered why most of the AFL teams are from Victoria? It's because the game began in this state in the mid 1800s. The first Australian Rules footy team was the Melbourne Football Club.

Eddie Jackson played for the Melbourne Footy Club from 1947 to 1952. He was the first Indigenous player to join the team. In 1948 Eddie played against Essendon in the Grand Final. The game was tied 69–69. When they replayed, the Melbourne Football Club went on to win – what a triumph!

'Long time.'

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Western Arrernte born 1948

Imanka (Mission days), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

'This work is about the Lutheran missionaries from Adelaide who used to come to Hermannsburg to teach our young fellas about football. They are playing where the oval is now, but now there are lots of fences. I remember all these players by name: they used to wear blue and the Adelaide mob wore red. This was *imanka* [mission times]. Everyone was here, working, some lived in different parts of Hermannsburg, but it was before the outstations: we were all together working, together, for a long time.'

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala

Anita Mbitjana Ratara

Western Arrernte born 1943

Part of the game (Chris Lewis), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The aim of footy is for a team to score as many goals as it can and stop the other team by tackling. A nasty tactic called sledging is used by some players when they are frustrated. They say mean things to a player to distract them; it's bad sportsmanship! To help put an end to this, the AFL has introduced rules that remind players not to make hurtful comments about another player based on their race, religion or colour of their skin.

'This was West Coast's first Grand Final. Chris Lewis was like Nicky Winmar, he spoke up about racism – he didn't get shame. In this game there was a fight with Dermott Brereton, who later said sorry on TV for racially abusing Chris Lewis. He said he thought it was part of the game.'

Anita Mbitjana Ratara

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Western Arrernte born 1943

Graham 'Polly' Farmer, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Graham 'Polly' Farmer is described as a footy legend and gentle giant. He has won many awards, including one from the Queen! In his early career he won footy's best and fairest seven times. Famous Geelong player Sam Newman says Graham taught him everything he knows. In 2005, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first VFL game played by an Indigenous player, the Indigenous Team of the Century was formed and Graham was the captain.

'Graham Farmer grew up in a home for Aboriginal kids. He then went on to be a great football player, winning awards.'

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Western Arrernte born 1943

Syd Jackson, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The outstanding Indigenous footballer Syd Jackson played for the Carlton Blues in the 1970s. He was quick and known for his great marking ability. In the 1970 VFL Grand Final, when Carlton defeated their arch rivals the Collingwood Magpies, Jackson played a vital role in setting up many goals and even scored one himself. The game is known as one of the greatest ever Grand Final comebacks in the history of Aussie Rules.

'We want to remember Syd Jackson, from a long time. He grew up on a mission and was a great star on the field.'

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Western Arrernte born 1943

Leon Davis and the Dream Team, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

On 10 May 2008 the AFL Hall of Fame Tribute Match was played at the MCG to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the AFL. The Big V (Victoria) defeated the Dream Team by seventeen points. Eight Indigenous players were in the Dream Team, including Leon Davis who kicked three goals, and Andrew McLeod who was captain of the team. Adam Goodes represented the Big V.

‘Leon Davis played for Collingwood and he played for the Dream Team. There were lots of Indigenous players in this game, including Adam Goodes for the Big V.’
Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Caroline Kamaarra Forbes

Western Arrernte born 1981

The Krakouer brothers, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The Krakouer brothers, Jimmy and Phil, played for the North Melbourne Kangaroos during the 1980s. Jimmy was renowned for his quick moves, courageous play and ability to pass to his brother from almost any position on the field. Phil Krakouer also showed great talent. Their teamwork led them both to win the leading goal kicker award for the Roos three years in a row (1985–88).

‘The Krakouer brothers were always running together, because they were brother boys, they understood each other.’

Caroline Kamaarra Forbes

Dawn Ngala Wheeler

Luritja / Western Arrernte born 1953

All fired up (Harley Bennell), covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The Gold Coast Suns are one of the newest teams to join the AFL. The artist shows one of Gold Coast's original and best players, Harley Bennell. He takes heaps of marks and kicks lots of goals. In 2014, in one of the most exciting games of his career so far, Harley kicked six goals against Geelong.

'In this work Harley Bennell is all fired up. He kicks six goals in Geelong, and under the night sky.'

Dawn Ngala Wheeler

Dawn Ngala Wheeler

Luritja / Western Arrernte born 1953

Brotherhood, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Hermannsburg's local footy team the Western Aranda Bulldogs are a well-respected team in the Central Australian Football League. Footy has been played in Hermannsburg for a long time and the teams love their football. The players say they can feel the old people are with them on the field, and when they show their talents the mountain sings.

'My grandson plays in the local Ntaria Western Bulldogs Under 17s and every year they win the Grand Final. I wanted to make this work about my grandson and his team. They were all huddled around at the start of the 2012 Grand Final against Westies at Traeger Park. We went into Alice Springs to watch. We love to watch the football, all our young fellas play.'

Dawn Ngala Wheeler

Caroline Kamaarra Forbes

Western Arrernte born 1981

Fitzroy Lions 1886–1996, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

In 1897 the Fitzroy Lions was one of the first teams in the newly formed Victorian Football League (VFL). Fitzroy was also the first club to win a VFL Grand Final. In 1997 the team merged with the Brisbane Bears. On this pot the artist shows Chris Johnson in the last game he played for Fitzroy. He was one of eight players to transfer to the Brisbane team and by the time he retired was the last Fitzroy player to play for the AFL.

'We remember Fitzroy Lions from a long time. Then they were taken over, like a big boss. We want to remember Fitzroy, like it was before. This is Chris Johnson saying goodbye to the fans at the last game at the MCG.'

Caroline Kamaarra Forbes

Beth Mbitjana Inkamala

Western Arrernte born 1977

Footscray Bulldogs in Footscray, covered vase

2015 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Did you know the Western Bulldogs used to be called the Footscray Bulldogs?

In 2005 the AFL introduced Dreamtime at the G. In this game played between Richmond and Essendon the teams' combined colours of red, yellow and black match those of the Aboriginal flag. It is always played during NAIDOC Week, a week celebrating Indigenous culture in Australia nationwide. In 2014 all of the AFL clubs designed special Indigenous guernseys that are worn in matches played during the Indigenous Round.

'St Kilda was the traditional rival team. I wanted to show the city skyline – the homeland of the Footscray Bulldogs. Charlie Stewart is one of the eighteen Indigenous players featured on the Western Bulldogs Indigenous guernsey.'

Beth Mbitjana Inkamala

Irene Mbitjana Entata

Western Arrente 1946–2014

Bombers' Michael Long vs Hawthorn, covered vase

2002 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased with funds donated by
Supporters and Patrons of Aboriginal Art, 2003

2003.80.a-b

Irene Entata recreates the drama of a football match in progress, complete with goal umpires wearing white coats and hats umpires dressed all in white, watched by masses of fans, mostly relatives. She remembers the exciting days of the 1980s and 1990s when the games between Bombers and Hawks were always great. The lid of this pot, made for the Michael Long Testimonial Art Award, 2002, shows the brilliant Indigenous player Michael Long kicking a football.

'I remember in the olden days I used to see my cousin Gwendolen milking cows at missionary time. The ladies used to milk them – only a fence of petrol drums, no yard. They carried milk in buckets to tearooms. I remember the old church and that school, that little white one. The new church used to be chook yard ... They used to have the sheep north side, Lollypop Street, where the coloured houses are now. The big supermarket and petrol station used to be horse corral. The Ironwood tree is still there from when we were small ... My father used to dress up like that and ride the camel.'

Irene Mbitjana Entata

Irene Mbitjana Entata

Western Arrente 1946–2014

Imanka (Mission days)

2000 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased with funds donated by
Supporters and Patrons of Aboriginal Art, 2001

2001.569.a-b

Irene Mbitjana Enatata

Western Arrente 1946–2015

Albert and Rex painting together

2003 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Purchased 2003. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation

2003.150

Albert Namatjira was the first Indigenous artist of the desert to paint watercolour landscapes. He was taught to paint with watercolour by Melbourne artist Rex Battarbee. The artist remembers seeing them paint together when she was a little girl. Namatjira taught his family and his people watercolour painting. He continued to paint for the rest of his life, and by 1955 was internationally famous. Namatjira was the most famous man known throughout Indigenous communities in his time.

Irene Mbitjana Enatata

Western Arrente 1946–2014

Mission days

2002 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
synthetic polymer paint on linen

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Purchased 2003 with funds from Margaret Mittelheuser AM,
through and with the assistance of the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation

2003.067

Irene Mbitjana Entata

Western Arrernte 1946–2014

Judith Inkamala

Western Arrernte born 1948

Dawn Ngala Wheeler

Luritja / Western Arrernte born 1953

Rahel Kngwarria Ungwanaka

Western Arrernte born 1943

Rona Panangka Rubuntja

Western Arrernte born 1970

Mission model

2014–15 Hermannsburg, Northern Territory
earthenware

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

The Hermannsburg Potters created this model of the old mission church. The original church was built more than 100 years ago, in 1896, by European settlers. It is thought that it was built on a traditional gathering place for Aboriginal people who had been living in the area for a very long time.

The church means a lot to the Hermannsburg Potters. Many of the artists grew up on the Lutheran mission and went to church every week. Some of the artists are members of the Ntaria Ladies Choir, whose heavenly Gospel harmonies have been heard around the world.