



MEDIA RELEASE

Elizabeth Ngwarraye Bonney wins Vincent Lingiari Art Award

Elizabeth Ngwarraye Bonney of Artists of Ampilatwatja has won the prestigious \$10,000 Vincent Lingiari Art Award celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act for her painting *My grandmother's country*.

For many years the traditional healer painted together with her mother Eileen Bonney, one of the founders of [Artists of Ampilatwatja](#) and the last of the original claimants of the Wakaya Alyawarre land claim that was handed back only last year.

"My mother has been fighting for this land for 40 years, one of the longest standing land claims in the Northern Territory, and now she is passing it over. So we can pass it over to our children," Ms Bonney said.

"My mother had to fight because this was her mother's country. My great-great grandfather's country is Arlenkw," she said. "My grandfather's mother's country is Titjambara. My great-grandmother's country is Arene."

The [winning landscape painting](#) depicts country approximately 325 kilometres northeast of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) that holds stories and memories for the artist.

"When I was young I would go to this country with my mother. I take my daughter and grandchildren to this country. This land holds stories and when we are there, we feel them."

"I paint to keep my country alive, so we can know and teach our young ones, our grandchildren."

This is the fourth time the Central Land Council and Desart have joined forces to present the award and the first time two judges chose the winner among a record 56 entries.

Museum and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory curator Rebekah Raymond and the Strehlow Research Centre's Joel Little had the tough task of deciding which entry best responds to this year's theme *Our country, our culture: 50 years of land rights*.

"We chose the winning work because it so beautifully reflects a deep connection to country, a connection that is timeless and ever present," the judges said.

"We talked about how it felt like we could walk right into the artwork; the artist made it feel so true and that we could be there standing with them in their beautiful desert country."

"We were also moved by the story shared by the artist of how the fight for their land was intergenerational. The artist honoured their elders – their grandmother and their mother who began the fight for their lands, which took 40 long years to succeed. This long-held fight for land, for culture, for our families is one that so many of us know, and so many are still fighting."

"The work we chose is stunning and has depth, and for us is an important work to celebrate this year."

Vincent Lingiari's granddaughter Rosie Smiler travelled to today's opening of the Desert Mob event to announce the award winner.

Last month she joined the elected members of the Central Land Council at Kalkaringi as they voted for the \$2,000 CLC Delegates Choice Award.

The delegates chose [Three Brothers](#) by Tennant Creek's Joseph Williams Jungarrayi, a cultural leader and Warumungu translator who works for the [Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre](#). Mr Williams calls his winning work "a reflection on country, memory and ancestral presence, expressed through the surface of a colonial mine map".

"By working directly onto this map, I reclaim it, transforming a document that once marked extraction and disruption into one that carries culture, story and identity," he said.

"Fifty years on from land rights, this work speaks to reclamation – of land, of narrative and of identity. It honours the enduring presence of ancestors and recognises that our stories are still embedded in country, no matter how it has been mapped, divided or used."

CLC chair Warren Williams congratulated the winners and thanked all the artists from across Central Australia and beyond who entered works.

"Our land rights and our art movements have challenged and changed this country for the better. Your art lifts us up and inspires us to keep fighting for our families. We hope it will reach those in power who might otherwise be out of reach," he said.

Desart chief executive Philip Watkins said:

"Desart warmly congratulates the winners. Elizabeth's work reflects an unbroken relationship with country that stretches back countless generations. It embodies the profound responsibility, belonging and connection to country, which is what land rights are about.

Similarly, *Three Brothers* tells a story of resilience, survival and strength. It is a living expression of the present that also draws on knowledge and traditions that have been handed down for generations.

Art has always been the voice of our people. Always was. Always will be. Just as country and culture are inseparable, so too are land rights and art."

The Vincent Lingiari Art Award exhibition at the Araluen Arts Centre in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) runs until 18 October.

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Images of the winners [HERE](#).

Exhibition hero images [HERE](#).

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