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The Design Files

Iwantja Arts Take To New York City, With A ‘Rock N Roll’ Exhibition!

By Bea Taylor – Aug 25, 2022



From left to right: Yankunytjatjara man Tiger Yaltangki, Yankunytjatjara woman Kaylene Whiskey and Western Aranda man Vincent Namatjira. Photo: Rhett Hammerton.

We're not in Indulkana anymore!'

This is what artists Vincent Namatjira and Kaylene Whiskey couldn't help repeating to each other during their recent trip to New York City.

For one week, the artists swapped the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, for bustling Manhattan life to open their new (and first ever) exhibition in New York, *'Iwantja Rock n Roll'*, with Yankunytjatjara man Tiger Yaltangki at Fort Gansevoort gallery.

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The exhibition, which wrapped up last week, proved to be a truly memorable experience for the artists, who ticked off many 'firsts' during their trip!

'At the start we were nervous,' explains Vincent. 'The long flight was really tough, and then the city was huge and a bit overwhelming. But we had a lot of fun.'

In between meeting curators from The Metropolitan Museum of Art and critics from the New York Times, Vincent, Kaylene and their friend Johnny Doolan visited the Statue of Liberty, rode the Staten Island ferry, saw Times Square via bus tour, went bowling and tried all the 'different – and always massive – food'!



From left: Kaylene, Johnny and Vincent outside the iconic Katz's Deli! Photos – Courtesy of Iwantja Arts.

And, whilst the sights – and food – were unforgettable, it's the recognition and exhibition of their work together that will remain their most special memory; 'At our art centre, we all support each other, so we're really proud to have had this special exhibition together,' says Vincent.

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'Iwantja Rock N Roll' shared a glimpse into the lives of Vincent, Kaylene and Tiger in Central Australia – not only showcasing culture and Country, but also demonstrating that Indigenous artists from remote communities are creating beautiful and bold contemporary work, too.

We respect the traditions of our Elders, but we're also looking for new directions with our art,' Vincent says.



"Elizabeth and Vincent (On Country)" by Vincent Namatjira.

The title of the exhibition references the influence music has on all three artists' works. Vincent explains, 'I'm rocking the AC/DC t-shirt while meeting the Queen; Kaylene has painted her hero Dolly Parton; and Tiger's mamu are playing electric guitars! We all have different styles, but our love of music is something that ties us together.'