

**The Hermannsburg School of Art (Namatjira)**  
**Weekly Times Column**  
**By Warren Joel**

byjoel

One of the most popular and prolific schools of Australian painting that remains highly collectable and sought after is this style of painting.

In the early 1940's artist Rex Batterbee founded the Aranda Art group in Hermannsburg, west of Alice Springs. From this simple beginning grew one of the most easily recognizable and sought after style of Aboriginal painting. The local artists of the day painted the Western Macdonnell Range ghost gums and rock formations of the local area. Even in these early times the Aboriginal spiritual connection to the land was stylized in these works of art.

By far the most valuable and one of the most prolific was Albert Namatjira. It is perhaps his work that set the standard for this group of artists. This unique style of painting and the Aboriginal representation of the Australian landscape quickly caught on amongst family and friends. Artists included Walter Epatarinja, Otto Pareroultja, Herbert Rabeeraba and Albert's sons including Enos, Oscar, Ewald, Maurice and Keith, just to name a few.

The value of these works, especially Albert's, has increased with the interest in the Aboriginal art movement with Albert's works selling for tens of thousands of dollars. None of the other artists in the group have reached this commercial level but can still bring thousands of dollars. As with any form of art collecting not only must it be by the "right" member of the family it also needs to be in good condition, with strong colours and interesting subject matter.

Now before you go running off and sell your Albert Namatjira for thousands of dollars, be warned. Because of the popularity of his work there are tens of thousands of low value commercial prints. A great place to start on your road to selling will be your local regional gallery; they will not value the work of art but they can tell you if it is a print or an original watercolour.

*Next week: Cast Iron Furniture.*

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**Warren Joel**

Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 35 different areas of collectables.

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