

Great black artist meets big white Queen

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Clifford Possum emerged from Buckingham Palace hot and tired but satisfied.

Yes, he had met the Queen, confirmed his London gallery contact Rebecca Hos-sack. And yes, he had had quite a chat with her too. So, what was the verdict? "She's good," said

the Aboriginal artist of few words as he took off his bowler hat and undid the tie of his morning suit.

It wasn't not much fun dressing up in formal gear in yesterday's 30-degree heat. But as a concession to comfort, Clifford was allowed to wear his white sneakers, hand-painted with possum symbols. "I know it's not exactly protocol but we

couldn't get him anything else in time because it was too hot and he has very big feet," Ms Hos-sack said.

It had been a long day in heatwave conditions, 19,000km from his home in Alice Springs. But Clifford had been a man with a mission: to deliver a painting of his Dreamtime ancestors to the Queen. Clifford, who is regarded as one of the

finest Aboriginal artists from the Western Desert, became the first Aboriginal to meet the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

Royal protocol and security men, stopped him from personally handing over the painting. But after a word in the royal ear from Lord Harwood, one of Clifford's English fans, he was entertained in the royal chambers by the Queen's pri-

vate secretary Sir William Heseltine and her ladies in waiting.

Then, as the Queen appeared before 8000 people attending her annual garden party, Clifford was placed first in line to speak with her. "And Princess Anne was just dying to meet him," said a breathless Ms Hos-sack, who is showing Clifford's paintings at her London gallery.



Clifford Possum meets the Queen at the garden party.