

JUST NOT AUSTRALIAN

CULTURAL MEDIATION TRAINING



Liam Benson, *Black Flag*, 2016, sequins, seed beads, cotton thread, cotton poplin, 30 x 59 cm. Courtesy the artist and Arterreal Gallery, Sydney. Photos: Zan Wimberley

Just Not Australian brings together 20 artists across generations and diverse cultural backgrounds to deal broadly with the origins and implications of contemporary Australian nationhood.

The show engages with the moral and ethical undertones of the loaded rejoinder 'un- Australian' – a pejorative now embedded in our national vocabulary that continues to be used to further political agendas and to spread nationalistic ideals of what it means to be Australian.

This training pack outlines how the practice of Cultural Mediation can be engaged to translate the broad themes and manage the difficult conversations that this exhibition may ignite, as well as provide a vocabulary and further reading to encourage an inclusive and culturally safe space.

Just Not Australian was curated by Artspace and developed in partnership with Sydney Festival and Museums & Galleries of NSW. The exhibition is touring nationally with Museums & Galleries of NSW.

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ABOUT THIS TRAINING PACK

This training pack presents a package of resources collated and developed by Museums & Galleries of NSW, with contributions from Aneshka Mora, to assist tour venues, front-of-house staff, educators and volunteers navigate the themes, ideas and issues in the

touring exhibition *Just Not Australian*. UQ Art Museum in Brisbane and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris have been fundamental in assisting with the research, data and protocols for the Cultural Mediation practices outlined in this document.



Installation view, *Just Not Australian*, Artspace, Sydney, 2019. Pictured: Tony Albert, *exotic OTHER*, 2009, found vintage ephemera and vinyl, variable, courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore. Collection of Tom Snow, courtesy of Anette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney; and Eric Bridgeman, *I Was 'Ere (with Heath Ledger)*, 2012, type-c prints on metallic paper mounted to aluminium, 9 panels, 83 x 64cm each, courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane. Photo: Zan Wimberley

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Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) has been researching and providing training on the practices of Cultural Mediation with the aim to equip gallery and museum staff with the tools to implement this engagement strategy across the sector. Cultural Mediation is about deepening the engagement of audiences at a peer-to-peer level through personal opinions being shared, knowledge being discussed and visitors being given the freedom to arrive at their own interpretations.

Volunteer and front-of-house staff are often the first people confronted with a wide range of questions from audiences. Outreach staff and educators engage their communities through public programming, enabling safe spaces for discussion, creativity and enquiry for all visitors.

Through this handbook, M&G NSW aims to help gallery staff develop an inclusive and culturally sensitive vocabulary to talk about the themes and ideas in *Just Not Australian* to the local community, to simply provide fodder for conversation, and allow meaningful connections, stories, experiences and ideas to lead interactions between the exhibition, the gallery, and its public. Your staff may already be practicing aspects of Cultural Mediation organically – this handbook aims to provide a formal framework to support this type of engagement.

This handbook is designed to be used as a reference point throughout the exhibition of *Just Not Australian* at your venue; it contains information on practicing Cultural Mediation as practiced and informed by UQ Art Museum in Brisbane and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, as well as information and further research materials about the exhibition itself.

ABOUT ANESHKA MORA

Aneshka Mora is queer, scholar of colour living on Cameraygal Country in the Eora Nation, who is broadly interested in contemporary art strategies of decoloniality within the limits of institutions and settler-colonialism. She is currently working on a PhD at UNSW where she also teaches.

THIS RESOURCE OFFERS

- an introduction to Cultural Mediation
- Cultural Mediation in practice strategies
- insight into the conception of *Just Not Australian*
- a vocabulary of important themes and ideas integral to communicating the exhibition
- detailed information on the practice of the participating artists
- useful links and further reading



Jon Campbell, *Made In China*, 2009, acrylic and enamel paint on plywood, 60 x 40cm, courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Zan Wimberley

INTRODUCTION



Cultural Mediation in Practice workshop featuring Mel O'Callaghan's exhibition Centre of the Centre, 2019. Photograph by Document Photography.

ABOUT CULTURAL MEDIATION

The term Cultural Mediation was first developed in the 1980s in Europe and North America. Initially associated with the transfer or transmission of knowledge, it has since become known more as an act of forming relationships of mutual exchange between the visiting public, artists, works, objects and the institutions charged with the collection, preservation, interpretation or presentation of cultural objects and material. Today Cultural Mediation is widespread across continental Europe. France has incorporated it into their tertiary studies and mediators are used in large institutions like Palais de Tokyo and the Pompidou Centre.

In Australia, institutions such as The Science Gallery, Melbourne and UQ Art Museum, Brisbane have been implementing Cultural Mediation as part of their exhibition programs. We have been partnering with these institutions in our investigations into Cultural Mediation and have based some of this guide on principles and material they have developed to train their staff. UQ Art Museum define the Cultural Mediation model of engagement as:

'encouraging visitor inquiry through conversations that promote critical thinking about art and enrich the visitor's experience...'

'Cultural Mediation is not about changing people's opinions, or making visitors love contemporary art - it is about creating a moment'

- Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm, Head of Cultural Mediation, Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

WHY CULTURAL MEDIATION?

Traditionally, Western museums and galleries functioned as revered resources of encyclopaedic knowledge and high culture; a place where the public could passively and quietly contemplate the information presented to them by curators.

In the 21st century, museums and galleries face the challenge of remaining relevant to a society that is saturated with choices about how we access and consume information, gain knowledge and spend our free time. Globalisation, the internet, technology, and contemporary politics has resulted in information, research and multiple perspectives being more

accessible than ever before; furthermore, we now have abundant choices in how we spend our leisure time. This multitude of choice means that museums and galleries face the challenge of engaging visitors in new, active, compelling and meaningful ways to win visitors' attention. Cultural Mediation is one of the methods museums and galleries are using to tackle this.

ABOUT MUSEUMS & GALLERIES OF NSW

M&G NSW runs the largest touring exhibition program in NSW. Through partnership and ambition, our program focuses on contemporary visual art and the development of audience engagement strategies for galleries in regional and metropolitan areas across the country. Our exhibitions and associated programs promote contemporary art and artists, benefit Australian audiences, balance regional gallery programming needs - supporting staff, sharing skills and professionalism, fostering collaboration and building connections, capacity and networks for artists, curators and arts workers across distance.

Vital to our success are the strong relationships we maintain with the Australian gallery network. Our targeted program is tailored to reflect and enhance the capacity and diversity of the sector.

We present a full spectrum of contemporary practice by leading artists, both emerging and established including Vernon Ah Kee, Justene Williams, Soda Jerk, Richard Bell, Mel O'Callaghan, Tony Albert,

Raquel Ormella, Nell, Abdul Abdullah, Deborah Kelly, Joan Ross and Vincent Namatjira, to name a few. Each of our exhibitions engage with diverse audiences through a range of accompanying programs, interpretative material, digital resources and publications, written by curators, academics and experts in various fields.

In the last three years M&G NSW has reached audiences of half a million through 13 exhibitions of visual art that toured to 88 venues across six states and territories. Our exhibitions presented 294 works by 96 Australian artists. 900 public programs were delivered, and 12,589 students engaged with M&G NSW's exhibitions through educational workshops.

As a key service organisation, M&G NSW is committed to providing resources, tools, professional development workshops, and training to sector professionals to assist with audience participation, community engagement and volunteer learning, among other areas of museological practice.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES OF NSW AND CULTURAL MEDIATION

Through our own research and via direct feedback, we identified a need to work closely with exhibition host venues and regional galleries more broadly to deliver their priorities in engagement – untapped audiences, First Peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Australians and young people – these are essential targets for the strategic vision of galleries across the country, yet they often lack resources to attract and maintain engagement with these groups.

In meeting this demand, we launched the Engaging Art initiative in early 2017, wrapping up in November 2019. Supported by the Australia Council, the pilot initiative focused on developing and engaging new audiences for touring exhibitions of contemporary visual art at regional galleries across Australia. The findings from this program have carried over into a permanent [Engaging Art Program](#), taking lessons learned to create better resources and provide more educated support for regional galleries and museums.

Through the initiative, the importance of quality and depth of engagement with an audience, rather than purely expanding audience numbers, became clear. The desire for more resources for community and volunteer-led audience engagement, as well as training in the facilitation of personalised encounters with contemporary art, also became apparent.

Our strategies further developed during discussions with artist Mel O'Callaghan, who is very experienced

in the Cultural Mediation of her work, particularly at the Palais de Tokyo. In collaboration with O'Callaghan we proposed to roll out mediation alongside our tour of her exhibition *Centre of the Centre*. As a result of this partnership and in response to the outcomes of our Engaging Art initiative, we presented a trial workshop on the practice of [Cultural Mediation](#) last year during the initial presentation of *Centre of the Centre* at Artspace. We are also looking to extend the practice of Cultural Mediation across all of our tours and the sector more broadly.

Speakers on the day included, Head of Cultural Mediation at the Palais de Tokyo - Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm; as well as Science Gallery Melbourne, Kaldor Public Art Projects and Mel O'Callaghan. This day further backed up our research on the types of support galleries need to sustain and grow audiences, as well as sparked inspiration for less didactic ways to improve the quality of audience engagement in galleries and museums.

Partnering with the University of Sydney's Museum and Heritage program and UQ Art Museum we are now delivering a suite of resources and training programs to help staff members and volunteers develop an inclusive and sensitive vocabulary in speaking to visitors, equipping them with the skills necessary to converse on any subject to anybody with confidence.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Cultural Mediation in practice (article): <https://mgns.org.au/articles/cultural-mediation-in-practice/>
2. Cultural Mediation in practice (video): <https://youtu.be/11voVsITxJY>
3. Mel O'Callaghan presentation: Cultural Mediation in action (video): <https://youtu.be/2RYjyla5hrI>
4. Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm presentation: Cultural Mediation at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (video): <https://youtu.be/qQCMv5v4i2U>

5. Emily Sullivan presentations: caretakers, cultivators and Cultural Mediation (video): <https://youtu.be/kNIOM7zQlbk>

What does mediation look like at the Science Gallery:

- A video about Mediators at Science Gallery, Melbourne: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WODCQIFo3kA>
- A day in the life of a mediator at Science Gallery London (blog): <https://london.sciencegallery.com/blog/day-life-mediator-science-gallery-london>

WHAT DOES A CULTURAL MEDIATOR DO?

As theorised by UQ Art Museum, the role of a Cultural Mediator (or mediator for short) diverges from those of an invigilator, a gallery host or an educator yet has similarities with all three roles. Mediators are encouraged to have an **open-minded** approach to art – there is **no right or wrong answer** or any one discourse to follow. To assist, Mediators are given broad resources on artists, themes, and exhibitions which can be used as springboards for a Mediator's research and approach.

MEDIATORS:

- Promote inquiry into an artwork.
- Cultivate a dialogue that is inclusive.
- Actively listen.
- Ask questions.
- Tell stories.
- Facilitate an experience.
- Bridge a connection between audience and artist.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF MEDIATION

ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO HAVE

AGENCY - this means to equip visitors with the freedom to arrive at their own interpretations. We achieve this through inquiry-led conversations that encourage reflection.

ENCOURAGE MEDIATORS TO HAVE

AGENCY - this means that to support Mediators to develop their own style and approach to engaging visitors. We achieve this by encouraging Mediators to experiment with and reflect on their approach.

ENCOURAGE PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

- this means that being willing to listen to and learn from visitors and peers. We achieve this by not presenting our visitors with 'facts', but through conversations.

MAKE VISITORS FEEL HEARD

- this means being an active listeners and value our visitor's input to the conversation. We achieve this by asking questions that encourage visitor reflection, demonstrating the visitor is listened to by acknowledging what the visitor has said, and allowing for silence when needed to give the visitor time to contemplate and respond.

“Art is not a problem we need to find a solution to”

– Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm, Head of Cultural Mediation, Palais de Tokyo

CULTURAL MEDIATION IN PRACTICE

One of the main benefits of Cultural Mediation is that it helps create a welcoming and safe environment for visitors. We all know that art museums can be intimidating for visitors; Cultural Mediation helps break down these barriers.

10 STEPS TO MEDIATION

Adapted from UQ Art Museum

1. Greet all visitors with a smile and a friendly 'hello'. The aim is to make all visitors feel welcome as sometimes museums/galleries can be daunting.
2. Let visitors know you are willing to chat or help if they have any questions about the exhibition. the most important thing is to make visitors aware that you are happy to answer questions or hear from them; this helps set a welcoming and safe environment.
3. You may like to draw on the questions posed in the 'conversation starters' section opposite to start a conversation (or even once you've entered a conversation).
4. Pay attention to body language and verbal cues. Know when visitors want to be left alone.
5. You may like to throw out a strange or wonderful fact about an artwork that a visitor is near.
6. Be culturally aware: for example, it is extremely rude to point in some cultures so remember to use your whole hand when gesturing.
7. Don't assume that a visitor doesn't speak English. Try your best to communicate with them. They will let you know if they don't understand.
8. Be patient and experimental. A Mediator's style will develop over time.
9. If a visitor doesn't seem to want to talk, that's ok; they don't have to! Leave them be, but let them know you're happy to answer their questions if anything comes up.
10. Use the "no touching rule" as a segue into a conversation - a lot of visitors may not know why it is so important not to touch artworks. If appropriate, you could use the opportunity to explain why and also start a conversation. Here are some useful links that might help you explain:
 - <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/this-is-what-actually-happens-if-you-touch-a-priceless-painting-in-a-museum/>
 - <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/researchers-in-museums/2015/08/19/question-of-the-week-why-cant-i-touch-museum-objects/>

Opposite: *Cultural Mediation in Practice* workshop, 2019, held by Museums & Galleries of NSW at Artspace, Sydney featuring Mel O'Callaghan's exhibition *Centre of the Centre*, with Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm (Palais de Tokyo, Paris); Mel O'Callaghan; Lee Casey and Ellie Michaelides (Science Gallery Melbourne); and Emily Sullivan (Kaldor Public Art Projects). Photo by Document Photography. Mel O'Callaghan's *Centre of the Centre* was curated and developed by Artspace and is touring nationally with Museums & Galleries of NSW.

CONVERSATION STARTERS



Some questions you might ask visitors to encourage an inquiry-led conversation around an artwork:

'Where have you seen this imagery/ symbol/pattern/ colour before? How might it relate to this artwork?'

'What's going on in this artwork?'

'What do you see that makes you say that?'

These questions are based on visual thinking strategies that encourage the visitor to look deeper and longer at an artwork to consider what the artworks intension might be.

Once you are more confident in your mediation skills you may like to ask broader questions such as:

'What has brought you here today?'

'What area do you study/work in/are interested in?'

This will allow more conceptual links to be made with the exhibition or introduce your own wider reading about the artwork.

Refrain from doing all the talking; listen to visitors. A mediator understands the importance of listening to the views and opinions of others. Mediation is a personal experience, so each Mediator will take a slightly different approach, and each visitor will have a different response.

DEVELOPING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Your own interest in and knowledge of the work in an exhibition is the starting point for Cultural Mediation. Your enthusiasm for an aspect of an artist's practice or a curatorial theme is the spark that will begin a peer-to-peer exchange with visitors. There is nothing more exciting than doing a deep dive into a subject or theme that you are particularly interested in and the exhibition information below is designed to provide starting points for your own discovery and interest in areas directly (and not so directly) related to the exhibition – once you have gone down your own rabbit hole of interest your skills as a mediator for this exhibition will be unique to you.

TO GET STARTED YOU CAN:

- Take the time to read all the official gallery information (catalogues, website, didactic panels and exhibition labels).

- Read and refer to this training pack regularly during the exhibition period (not just at the start of an exhibition).
- During your shifts (especially when quiet), take the time to watch the videos and read the additional resources included in this handbook.
- Another great source of information is other mediators or gallery staff working on the exhibition — share your knowledge with each other.
- Aim to know something about everything. However, not all artworks will resonate with you and you don't need to know everything about everything! Get to know your favourite artworks intimately throughout the exhibition period and be prepared to tell visitors why.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS NEGATIVITY OR CONFLICT

There may be times where visitors express unfavourable, biased or discriminatory views. These situations can be challenging and confronting. If you find yourself in this situation, these tips adapted from UQ Art Museum may help:

- Remain calm and don't mimic their behaviour. Arguing back will escalate the situation.
- Acknowledge that everyone has different views and perspectives.
- Take the conversation back to what the artist is intending to say/question. If that doesn't work, move the conversation to another artwork or non-conceptual element of the artwork (e.g. what it is made from, how it was made, texture, etc.)
- Agree to disagree and move on.
- For those who argue a different perspective: "I

appreciate your perspective. In [artist's name] case, she/he/they were approaching the topic from [this] perspective. I think it's great that art can be used as a vehicle for us to have conversations about the different ways we all view the world."

- If someone asks for your personal opinion on something: give it, but only if you feel safe to do so and can do so without controversy. If not, you could simply say, "I'm not sure what I think about it at the moment" and guide the conversation back to the artwork.
- If a visitor finds something confronting: you could say "sometimes art does makes us feel uncomfortable. But it encourages us consider the world from a different perspective"
- If you feel uncomfortable with the conversation: leave the conversation. You could say "well, thanks for chatting. I'll give you some time to explore the exhibition on your own."

Working in a public-facing role can be rewarding but challenging, and sometimes just plain difficult. You may have times where visitors share personal information, ask personal information, or make statements that are against your personal beliefs. This can be exhausting, so self-care at work and at home is important.

Here's some tips to help out:

- Don't share or talk about anything you're not comfortable with.

- Debrief with your supervisor or peers if you've had a difficult conversation with a visitor and need to chat. This is an important part of a safe working environment.
- If feel uncomfortable or need a moment to collect your thoughts, leave the space and ask your fellow mediators or a staff member to relieve you.

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES THAT EXAMINE VISITOR EXPERIENCES

1. Kids in Museums: <https://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/>
2. Know your own bone: Colleen Dilenschneider: <https://www.colleendilen.com/>
3. M&G NSW resource - How to engage with young people: <https://mgsw.org.au/sector/resources/online-resources/exhibition/how-engage-young-people/>
4. Museum 2.0: <https://museumtwo.blogspot.com/>
5. Museum Hack: Redefining the Museum Experience: <https://vimeo.com/366902006>
6. Museum Hack: What is a Museum Hack Tour: <https://www.facebook.com/MuseumHack/videos/304361927009776/>
7. Museum Hack: Storytelling (video): <https://www.facebook.com/MuseumHack/videos/2110136089297152/>
8. Museum Hack: Use of language (video): <https://www.facebook.com/MuseumHack/videos/279589469341413/>
9. Museum Hack: Giving agency and scaffolding experiences (video): <https://www.facebook.com/MuseumHack/videos/281092502547857/>

“Aim to know something about everything. However, not all artworks will resonate with you and you don't need to know everything about everything! Get to know your favourite artworks intimately...”

- Quote from UQ Art Museum Cultural Mediation handbook

ABOUT THE TOUR

Just Not Australian brings together 20 artists across generations and diverse cultural backgrounds to deal broadly with the origins and implications of contemporary Australian nationhood. Showcasing the common sensibilities of satire, larrikinism and resistance so as to present a broad exploration of race, place and belonging, *Just Not Australian* interrogates what it means to be Australian at this challenging point in time.

Just Not Australian engages with the moral and ethical undertones of the loaded rejoinder 'un- Australian' – a pejorative now embedded in our national vocabulary

that continues to be used to further political agendas and to spread nationalistic ideals of what it means to be Australian. Far from a simple comparison, a consideration of what's not Australian ultimately leads to questions of what is, and the artists in *Just Not Australian* consider this in detail.

This exhibition begins its national tour from 2020 which marks the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's first voyage to Australia, a timely moment to interrogate Australia's colonial history and the complexities of presenting and representing national identity.

ARTISTS

Abdul Abdullah

Hoda Afshar

Tony Albert

Cigdem Aydemir

Liam Benson

Eric Bridgeman

Jon Campbell

Karla Dickens

Fiona Foley

Gordon Hookey

Richard Lewer

Archie Moore

Vincent Namatjira

Nell

Raquel Ormella

Ryan Presley

Joan Ross

Tony Schwensen

Soda Jerk

TOUR SCHEDULE

M&G NSW will tour *Just Not Australian* nationally from 2020 – 2022. The national tour will travel to venues in NSW, QLD and SA.

Find out more here: <https://mgnsww.org.au/sector/exhibitions/coming-soon/just-not-australian/>



Joan Ross, *I Give You a Mountain*, 2018, installation view, *Just Not Australian*, Artspace, Sydney, 2019, courtesy the artist, Michael Reid, Sydney and Bett Gallery, Hobart. Photo: Zan Wimberley

BUILDING A VOCABULARY

SOME IMPORTANT PHRASES AND WORDS TO KNOW FOR *JUST NOT AUSTRALIAN*

UNAUSTRALIAN

The impetus for this exhibition has come from the public discourse around its title, of what it means to be ‘unAustralian’.

‘UnAustralian’ is an increasingly pejorative term used in Australia. In modern usage, it has similar connotations to the United States term un-American, however the Australian term is somewhat older, being used as early as 1855 to describe an aspect of the landscape that was similar to that of Britain. Its modern usage was popularised during the 1990s by Prime Minister John Howard and One Nation Party founder Pauline Hanson; however, Stanley Bruce used it in reference to striking workers in 1925 and Joseph Lyons during the 1930s to decry communists and migrants from non-British backgrounds.

In recent times, the word has been overused to the point of being a particular favourite of humourists and satirists. It is used in a humorous TV advertising campaign by Meat and Livestock Australia, in which ex-AFL footballer Sam Kekovich declares that not including lamb in one’s diet is “un-Australian”.*

A term explicitly used by conservative rhetoric to describe a universal ‘Australian’, the term ‘unAustralian’ was quite enthusiastically taken up by Australian art discourse in the 1990s as a response to ongoing critiques of ‘Australian-ness’ as an increasingly exclusive identity (e.g. Rex Butler, Ian Burns, Terry Smith).

The term ‘unAustralian’ also points to another major theme running through this exhibition – the prevalent use of slogans and catchy phrases within the political lexicon as a key strategy

of popularising particular ideology. This was particularly prominent in the Howard era, which was famous for criticising ‘black armband’ histories of Australia while literally taking Indigenous histories (and grammar!) out of the primary and secondary school syllabi.

On the eve of its premiere at ACMI, when the Ian Potter Cultural Trust pulled support from Soda Jerk’s *TERROR NULLIUS* (which they spent \$100,000 on), Soda Jerk announced on their Facebook page, that part of the reason they gave for their denunciation was because the Board thought the film was ‘unAustralian’. The Ian Potter Cultural Trust did not confirm or deny this claim.

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Un-Australian>

POST COLONIAL

Postcolonialism is a school of thought dedicated to the critique of colonialism and its subsequent nation-building strategies (e.g. defining what is Australian and ‘unAustralian’).

It is important to note, however, that while postcolonial critiques come out of nations that have achieved decolonisation, and are in a process of trying to rebuild their nations, cultures and identities, settler-colonial nations (such as Australia, the U.S. and Canada) cannot use reconciliation as a starting point because there has not been any conciliation in the first place and settlers came to stay.* This is why some people, such as Quandamookan scholar, Aileen Moreton Robinson, prefer to think of Australia (as well as any cultural or scholarly production concerning colonisation in Australia) as ‘post-colonising’ – showing that Australia is still in the process of decolonisation. As we are still post-colonising,

this means that Australia remains a colony both constitutionally and ideologically (this is perhaps best visually represented by Union Jack in our flag) – a symbol that appears throughout this exhibition. As such, Patrick Wolfe argues that settler colonialism is a structure not an event. In other words, our society is built by colonisation and for colonialism. Another name for this structure comes from Anibal Quijano, who calls it ‘coloniality’.

Colonisation always has two sides – the physical and the ideological (which both justified colonisation and the systems we live in that came out of the colonising country e.g. Britain). Though the physical violence is not as obvious anymore (though a big indicator is that [Indigenous women remain the most incarcerated demographic in Australia](#)) the cultural and ideological aspects of colonisation define our daily ways of being and thinking which are governed by specific systems brought over by colonisation e.g. white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, agism, settler-colonialism, anthropocentrism, the patriarchy, capitalism etc. Evidence of this can be found everywhere – our economy, the fact that we speak English, the history we are taught in schools and that is celebrated by public memorials, national icons and heroes, tourism ads, celebrities, the people and stories who appear on the news and on talk shows, the documents in our archives, the art in our galleries and pretty much anything else you can think of!

* <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14623520601056240>

DECOLONIAL

Decolonial critiques seek to unravel the ideological, or, epistemic legacy of colonial ways of thinking and ways of doing.

One strategy of decolonial critique is to try to break down binaries and binary ways of thinking (e.g. East/West, Global North/Global South, Bla(c)k/White, Right/Wrong, Straight/Homosexual, Male/Female, Trans/Cis etc) as well as the way in which certain binaries are implied in each other (e.g. a man is usually automatically imagined as a white, straight, and cis-gendered). Another strategy might involve, using visual, literary and performative strategies to challenge

‘zero-point’ grand narratives– e.g. the landing of Captain Cook – as a means of challenging the settler-nation’s epistemic foundations – myths, legends, archetypes. This work is geared toward pluriversality, which seeks greater inclusion and heterogeneity of Australian narratives – inclusive of various waves of migration, First Nations peoples, Queers, people of colour, diverse abilities both neurological and physical.

A singular view of Australia and what it is to be Australian renders people who aren’t cis, white, heterosexual, able-bodied and more often than not, male at best ‘unAustralian’ and at worst invisible and sub-human. Decolonial work tries to go to the source of this assumption in a specific context (e.g. colonisation in Australia) and investigate how it has morphed into contemporary social inequalities.

TERRA NULLIUS

One moment that thinkers have identified as a constitutionally sanctioned marker for the construction and maintenance of Australia as a settler state is the notion of *terra nullius*.

In essence the state’s insistence on the truth of *terra nullius* (thereby allowing them to avoid making treaties with First Nations peoples – Australia is the only settler-state in the world that has refused to sign treaties), maintains that the whole of Australia was uninhabited. This denies the existence of 500+ Nations of Indigenous peoples, not only at the time of colonisation, but to this day, despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary. Using *terra nullius* was a way of occupying Australia as a means of avoiding international law and gaining access to the raw materials of the land – inclusive of its peoples.

‘[decolonial] work is geared toward pluriversality, which seeks greater inclusion and heterogeneity of Australian narratives...’

-Aneshka Mora

COLONISATION

Colonisation, then, can be thought of as, first and foremost, a capitalism venture.

As Lauren Carroll Harris writes: “Art historian Robert Hughes, in his still-brilliant 1970s TV series *Landscape with Figures*, contended that Australia began not as a nation but as a colony for purposes of economics, not penal punishment. Sydney was to be the halfway supply port for the major trading arteries to China and north-west America. Captain Cook found great groves of flax (for navy sails) and pine (for masts and spars) on Norfolk Island, with which to maintain the colonial navy in India. Convicts would supply the labour.”*

Further, just as Marxist feminist scholars have explained how free domestic labour is essential to the patriarchy, the free labour of Indigenous peoples was essential to upholding the settler-colony. Australia as a nation-state was birthed through incarceration, punishment, genocide and slavery.

* <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/culture/art/2019/02/23/just-not-australian/15508404007501>

AUSTRALIAN MYTHOLOGY

Colonisation, in realty, is an ugly history, and not a very attractive story to hold the foundations of a country. It is hard to be patriotic about genocide. As such, the newly founded federation of Australia established the Immigration Act of 1901, which restricted migrants of non-white backgrounds to emigrate to Australia. This was just the first of what is colloquially known as the White Australia Policies (See: Ghassan Hage, *White Nation*), upon which we can see the restriction of refugees arriving by boat as the latest manifestation of this policy. Advertising campaigns were instigated across Europe, both at the time of Federation and again in the aftermath of the World Wars that specifically promoted the country as a fresh start and a blank slate. In more contemporary eras, subsequent Australian governments notably the Howard Government, which was faced with an increasing body of Indigenous scholars and scholars influenced by the emancipatory movements of the late 1960s and 1970s coinciding with the Whitlam's government's funding of tertiary education, made a concerted effort to reinforce national stories that would encourage patriotism and invalidate histories that would 'denigrate' the purity of the nation state. Some notable histories include those of the diggers, larrikins, battlers, pioneers as well as the establishment of Australia Day in 1994.

A good way of encompassing the project of Australia's myth-making, is the promotion of Australia as 'the lucky country'. Interestingly, the phrase derives from Donald Horne's 1964 book *The Lucky Country* that used the phrase in irony – the book itself strongly criticised the foundations of the country and the way in which the nation's identity was built on poorly constructed falsehoods – colonisation certainly wasn't a 'stroke of luck' for the 500+ First Nations cohabiting the continent prior to 1788.

CONTEXT IS KEY

All of the works in *Just Not Australian* are based within the context of these histories, which are often unpleasant and still being uncovered. However, it's also important to remember (and remind visitors) that these are visual commentaries situated within an art gallery and subsequently the art industry (which is, nonetheless, also founded on settler-colonisation).

Art does not speak from a vacuum nor seek to represent universal truths. Rather, often it draws from society to make critiques on various institutional levels, one being the art industry itself. Art does not assume that the gallery it exhibits in is innocent to the social and political commentary the work might be making. Neither does the gallery claim innocence by making space for their critique. Rather what is important is the broader acknowledgement of complicity and the opening of conversations – this is what art and galleries seek to do.

‘Works that are critiquing Australian nationalism are trying to provoke a response – if that response is upset or anger, then it is just as valid as any other response. What matters is that by having any sort of response, you have now entered into dialogue with the work. The work has been successful if it has made you think/feel in any way.’

- Aneshka Mora

CRITIQUE

Similarly, critique is not meant to denigrate, nor is it by proxy, “negative”. It is observational, dialogical and investigative. For instance, you don't have to defend the works in the show. If someone has a problem with a work, you might agree with them, or treat it as an alternative critique to the one that the work brings up. Viewing any comment in this light means that you have a pathway to trying to unpack the source of their critique (whether it's pleasure, distaste, interest etc). Works that are critiquing Australian nationalism are trying to provoke a response – if that response is upset or anger, then it is just as valid as any other response. What matters is that by having any sort of response, you have now entered into dialogue with the work. The work has been successful if it has made you think/feel in any way.

A FEW STRATEGIES OF CRITIQUE PROMINENT IN JUST NOT AUSTRALIAN

Appropriation / Re-tooling / Disidentification:

Many of the artists in this exhibition employ strategies of appropriation in obvious or subtle ways. Appropriation broadly describes the recontextualization of existing images (or objects) to critically engage in their existing meanings and/or bring new meanings to them. There is a broad swathe of literature on appropriation in Australian art discourse. Much of it situates itself in ‘postmodernism’, a concept that emerged in the late 20th century characterised by a general mistrust of grand narratives and ‘truth’. This manifested in a variety of ways exploring concepts such as “[difference](#), [repetition](#), [the trace](#), [the simulacrum](#), and [hyperreality](#)”.

In the context of the broader critiques of settler-colonialism in this exhibition, however, it is also useful to think about appropriation as a mode of what la paperson describes as retooling, which he casts as a decolonial and decolonizing practice within ‘[colonial machines](#)’. He describes retooling as based on a scavenging of colonial parts (e.g. the films that Soda Jerk splices) for the purpose of building new tools (e.g. *TERROR NULLIUS*). This mode allows for the fact that sometimes we only have colonial tools, especially for settlers and in settler-colonies, to work with toward futures outside of coloniality.

la paperson's idea is also similar to how Jose Estaban Muñoz theorises ‘[disidentification](#)’. Looking at the work of queer performers of colour (and drawing from

his own experiences of these works as a queer person of colour), Muñoz notes a simultaneous rejection and embrace of dominant culture despite it being often toxic or exclusionary to the performer's subjectivities. Rather, what he observes the way in which cultures are reinvented and transformed to be affirmatively and empowering (much like Tony Albert's use of Aboriginalia or Eric Bridgeman's re-creation of sports idols). This is an important form of cultural survival and activism that can exist in and transform a wide range of cultural contexts.

IRONY

As Edward Scheer writes, “irony is a way through, a way to communicate difficult ideas without causing undue offence... As Linda Hutcheon (1994) notes in her study of this concept, there is no purely conservative or purely radical irony; it depends on how it is used. While irony can work as an exclusive in-joke among a clique, it can also denote, as Terry Eagleton admits, ‘the necessarily unfinished, processual, contradictory nature of historical affairs’ (Eagleton cited in Hutcheon 1994: 28). We might argue that the inclusion/exclusion dialectic is a necessary component of irony since its basic function is organized around the same unstable binary. Hutcheon writes that ‘the “scene” of irony is a social and political scene’ (1994: 4) but is essentially ‘transideological’ since it depends on how it is used as to whether the irony is affirming or deconstructive, conservative or progressive” [[p39 Scheer](#)].

Artists such as Cigdem Aydemir, Tony Schwensen, Jon Campbell, Hoda Afshar and Abdul Abdullah use irony, as a universally acknowledged middle ground, to create “an opening in the frame” without which “the dominant position and discourse of the mainstream White Australians [would] not be able to negotiate [their] representation. This is an important part of the work of these artists since it is about engaging with that position, of the untroubled unproblematic White spectator, and playing back its own image repertoire of unacknowledged stereotypical Muslims [for example], hence the need for irony” [[p39 Scheer](#)].

While Scheer's analysis relates artists, as a strategy for dialogue, it can also be identified in the work of white Australian artists in the exhibition, as a way of both engaging in dialogues of nationalism and self-reflexively critiquing the culture to which they also belong. This provides an invitation to laugh with and at ourselves, as a means of acknowledging our positions in the hierarchies of Australian coloniality, and collectively trying to do something about it, in good humour and faith.

CAMP

There is certainly a campiness in the dramaticism of Cigdem Aydemir's veil and Harley, in the lustrousness of Liam Benson's embroidery, in the didacticism of Soda Jerk's narrative, and the gaudiness of Eric Bridgeman's sports star. It is campy, though, because it is passionate. There is a genuine desire to embrace the veil, Australian flag, kitsch object, Australian film to accept it because its violent implications are no longer relevant and they can be gazed upon with the sentimentality and distance/detachment of time.

Camp is a similar strategy to irony in that it invites dialogue through humour. In the case of Camp, it adds an extra flare of frivolity to this invitation. If Camp sees everything as performative and constructed (as [Susan Sontag points out](#)), then this includes positioning nationhood as a specifically post-1990s/Howard era theatrical construction. However, the works that engage Camp in this exhibition try to reveal the seams and parts that make up the construction, they do not do so maliciously, but rather, in a way that tries to see and embrace the flaws in everything and everyone. There is a generosity to the queer the practice of 'roasting' an opponent in a drag show or in the Ballroom scene, that comes from the desire to help build a thick skin, bringing (socially construed) "flaws" to the light and out of the dark corners of shame. Camp is genuinely invested in its imitation and performance, which makes it an incisive tool for investigating Australian nationalism.

Further, because Camp takes everything in jest, it protects the critic from the dangerous extremes of nationalism. Being able to not take things too seriously on account of being able to see everything as a construct and performance, takes away the violent investment in symbols while still encouraging earnestness and passion.

Some additional extracts from Susan Sontag's Notes on Camp:*

The essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration

Any sensibility (e.g. Camp) which can be crammed into the mold of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea.

Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way,

the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylisation

Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a "lamp"; not a woman, but a "woman". To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-role. It is the farthest extension, insensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre.

The Camp sensibility is one that is alive to a double sense in which some things can be taken.

The hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance

Camp is art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is too much

Without passion, one gets pseudo-Camp – what is merely decorative, safe, in a word, chic.

Camp is the attempt to do something extraordinary. But extraordinary in the sense, often, of being special, glamorous... not... merely in the sense of effort

Things are campy, not when they become old – but when we become less involved in them, and can enjoy, instead of be frustrated by, the failure of the attempt.

Camp taste turns its back on the good-bad axis of ordinary aesthetic judgement. Camp doesn't reverse things. It doesn't argue that the good is bad, or the bad is good, what it does is to offer for art (and life) a different – a supplementary – set of standards.

Camp refuses both the harmonies of seriousness, and the risks of fully identifying with extreme states of feeling.

One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious.

Camp proposes a comic vision of the world... of detachment.

Camp taste is, above all, a mode of enjoyment, of appreciation – not judgement. Camp is generous. It wants to enjoy.

Camp taste is a kind of love, love for human nature... Camp is a tender feeling.

Camp taste nourishes itself on the love that has gone into certain objects and personal styles.

* https://monoskop.org/images/5/59/Sontag_Susan_1964_Notes_on_Camp.pdf



Eric Bridgeman, *Wilma Jr (Blacky)*, 2009, inkjet print on photo rag, 95 x 115cm, courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

SODA JERK

FORMED 2002, SYDNEY
LIVE AND WORK IN NEW YORK, UNITED STATES



TERROR NULLIUS, 2018, (still), HD video, 54 mins. Commissioned by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne. Courtesy the artists

IN THE SHOW

TERROR NULLIUS, 2018
Digital video, 54 minutes
Commissioned by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne. Courtesy of the artists

TERROR NULLIUS is an hour-long film that is designed to be played either as a one-off event or periodically throughout the exhibition in a theatre/ seminar space or local cinema.

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://www.sodajerk.com.au/>

READ

- 12 films to see before viewing *TERROR NULLIUS*: Go on a road trip through Australian cinema in preparation for Soda Jerk's bold, satirical mashup film <https://www.acmi.net.au/ideas/read/soda-jerk-picnic-hanging-rock-wake-fright/>
- 'Freeze Frame: Q & A with Soda Jerk' discussing their inspiration for *TERROR NULLIUS*, published by Lightbox Film Centre, Philadelphia https://lightboxfilmcenter.org/spotlight/freeze-frame-q-a-with-soda-jerk?fbclid=IwAR2SFw2htUFm0XGfDPFIeSW9U2WzhDG5IX3l_cdseseOYmSHQAHMHPuzJal

WATCH

- Jack Halberstam - *Trans**: Representing the Transgender Body on Screen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1-XADQ594U&ab_channel=NorthumbriaUniversity

'... from the beginning of *TERROR NULLIUS* we were guided by a strong sense of the film as a political revenge fable that would upend the usual structures of power and privilege in Australian national mythology. What emerged was a rogue documentary where the dystopian desert camps of *Mad Max 2* become the site of refugee detention, flesh-eating sheep are recast as anti-colonial insurgents and a feminist bike gang goes vigilante on Mel Gibson.'

– Soda Jerk, *Freeze Frame: Q&A with Soda Jerk*, University of the Arts Lightbox Film Centre, 2018

The key word to understand in Soda Jerk's description of their film here is 'fable'. While the film is explicitly violent at times, sometimes with the images and voices of 'real' people (e.g. Pauline Hanson and Tony Abbott) as opposed to characters (although this is often blurred, e.g. Mel Gibson's character in *TERROR NULLIUS* stands in for the actor in real life), the important thing to note is that representation is where it ends. In other words, [Mel Gibson's abuse of his then partner](#) exists in the real world and stems from a historical and ongoing reality of violence against women, where [1 in 3 Australian women \(34.2%\)](#) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by a man since the age of 15 and [one woman is killed every week in Australia](#). On the other hand, Soda Jerk's revenge fantasy exists solely in the world of fiction and does not put Mel Gibson's life in real threat.

It for this reason that the violence in *TERROR NULLIUS* also differs from depictions of violence against women, queer and/or trans people, people of colour and other minoritized groups in film, even in films that intend to expose the reality of violence and promote awareness/ empathy. This is because, again, it does not imitate life. Race-based violence and violence against queer and trans folk is a very serious reality especially for people with intersecting identities. The ABC found that "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) trans women were more likely to suffer sexual harassment and assault at the hands of

strangers compared to other women. They were also more likely than other women to experience instances of sexual harassment or assault in public spaces."* There is a long history of demonising and/or victimising queer and trans people and people of colour in film and in real life [see notes on 'gay panic defence' below]. Whereas, such a history does not exist for cis, white, straight, men. Though this demographic has certainly been cast as villains and/or victims, they have also, equally been cast as heroes, normal people, comedians, romantic interests, and wide diversity of roles. This normalises a conception of this demographic as diverse and multifaceted, whereas for minoritized people, their roles are always symbolically loaded, they cannot be cast as neutral actors or 'normal' people. By casting traditionally 'victimised' archetypes in empowered, vigilante-type roles, Soda Jerk reverses the filmic and real narrative of minoritized peoples as only victims of violence.

The juxtaposition contained in the title's pun is between the fictionalised terror of the victims in Soda Jerk's fable, the real terror, felt by minoritized people in Australia as explored by the various artists in *Just Not Australian* and the original terror of colonisation, as justified by the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. We can think of Soda Jerk's film as a mode of culture-jamming or cultural-activism as performed through a subversive larrikinism - it is deliberately irreverent as a specific mode of and homage to Australian humour.

Rather than completely upending all the storylines of the films, Soda Jerk splices them to continue and expand on already suggested critique. We can think about this as a way of 'disidentifying' after the theorist Muñoz or decolonial 'retooling' after la paperson (see 'Appropriation / Re-tooling / Disidentification' in the Building a Vocabulary section of this resource)

* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-26/study-finds-high-sexual-assault-rates-for-trans-women-of-colour/12395226>

NOTES ON GAY PANIC DEFENCE

- By Ben Winsor for SBS News online: <https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/pride/agenda/article/2016/08/12/sordid-history-gay-panic-defence-australia>
- Ben Nielsen and staff for ABC News online: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-03/proposal-to-abolish-gay-panic-defence-in-sa/12311350>

ABDUL ABDULLAH

BORN 1986, PERTH, WA
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY



FUCK OFF WE'RE FULL, 2011/2019, (rendering), lightbox, 106 x 111 cm. Courtesy the artist and Yavuz Gallery, Sydney and Singapore

IN THE SHOW

Fuck off we're full, 2011/2019
light box, 106 x 111 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery, Sydney and Singapore

USEFUL LINKS

- Artist website: <https://abdulabdullah.com/home.html>
- *eleven* is a collective of contemporary Muslim Australian artists, curators and writers: <https://eleven-collective.com/contact/about/>

LISTEN

- Art Gallery of South Australia – Monster Theatres Artist Talk – Abdul Abdullah <https://soundcloud.com/artgalleryofsa/monster-theatres-artist-talk-abdul-abdullah#t=0:00>

READ

- In this Guardian article, Abdul Abdullah discusses controversy, misinterpretations, hate mail, alternative narratives and provoking critical thinking: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jan/16/portrait-of-the-artist-in-the-firing-line-abdul-abdullah-on-controversy-threats-and-rightwing-hate-mail>

WATCH

- *Combating Prejudice with Art* | Abdul Abdullah | TEDxYouth, 2015 <https://abdulabdullah.com/artwork/3842144-Combating-Prejudice-with-Art-Abdul-Abdullah-TEDxYouth-Sydney.html>

It's important to note, with all of Abdullah's work, that he is critiquing the mentality of binarized difference, between white, colonial Australia and Islamic Australia, from a subjectivity that is an amalgamation of these apparent/naturalised opposites. Abdullah, on his mother's side, is Malaysian. On his father's side, he is a 7th generation white-Australian descendant from a British convict who arrived in Australia in 1815 for stealing two stamps and a watch chain in London. His father converted to Islam in 1972, adopting an Arabic name and raising Abdullah and his brothers within the Islamic faith.* These biographical details are not a way of invalidating critiques of Islamophobia and racism in Australia from "the outside". Rather, they are important because they tell us that Abdullah's use of autobiographical themes and strategies in his work, is precisely because he is (and wants to show that he is) living proof of how fictional racial, cultural and religious binaries really are.

Having been raised Muslim in Western Australia, Abdullah can recall the dramatic shift in attitudes toward people of Islamic faith after 11 September 2001 and the reactive and aggressive dogma that arose to justify war on the geographically symbolic heart of the Islamic faith, the Middle East. Abdullah was 15 at the time, old enough to remember life before 9/11 and young enough for the majority of his life to be severely affected by the social and political aftermath of it:

'Our Muslim identities became politicised. As kids we all felt it. On the news and in the paper, people with names like ours, and who looked like us, were called terrorists and straight evil.'*

The image in this work is one that was circulated as a slogan by white supremacists in the aftermath of 9/11 directed at refugees who were cast by politicians, social commentators and media outlets as undercover terrorists. Of course, there is an immediate irony to this image carried in the fact that Australia, after Mongolia and Namibia, has the [lowest population density in the world](#) (here, we should also bear in mind that the desert regions of Australia that are now seen as 'uninhabitable' once supported hundreds of thriving nations prior to colonisation - see Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu*). What is contained in this slogan, then, is not factual but entirely ideological. This objective discrepancy is even more disturbing when considering how it circulated society and politics in various (less blatant but more

violent) manifestations - in Australia's participation in the war in the Middle East, Australia's border policies - especially toward Islamic refugees and migrants, in the Cronulla Riots in 2005, the burqa debate (inclusive of #illridewithyou), in parliamentary speeches and the airing of hate speech on popular media platforms, and the [alteration of the Racial Vilification Act](#) to allow hate speech.

Lightboxes are used for examination, advertising, tracing/reproduction, making designs, making multiple layers and options visible and enabling work to be done on top of existing designs. In this work, Abdullah examines this particular image and slogan as a product, vehicle and container of certain ideologies that continue to cause pain and a rift in Australia's society. He blurs the edges of the image, making it impossible to reproduce the image (ideology) exactly as it is. The blurriness of this image may also imply faulty vision and a lack of clarity - the need for examination. Indeed, even recent crises (COVID-19; Black Lives Matter) have revealed the prevalence of white-supremacist attitudes and their support by state institutions:

- *Australia should support, not hinder, scrutiny of racism and police violence at the UN, in the US and at home*, June 2020 <https://www.hrlc.org.au/news/2020/6/18/australia-should-support-scrutiny-of-racism-police-violence-un-us-and-at-home>
- *Mapping COVID-19: Cases, fines and anti-Asian racism in NSW*, by Lara Sonnenschein and Angad Roy for Honi Soit online, April 2020 <https://honisoit.com/2020/04/mapping-covid-19-cases-fines-and-anti-asian-racism-in-nsw/>
- *Report reveals racist abuse experienced by Asian Australians during coronavirus pandemic*, by Jason Om for ABC News online, July 2020 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-24/coronavirus-racism-report-reveals-asian-australians-abuse/12485734>

* <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/06/abdul-abdullah-australian-artist-marginalised-racism-ara-201462572052118236.html>

HODA AFSHAR

BORN 1983, TEHRAN, IRAN
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE



Dog's Breakfast, 2011, archival inkjet print, 60.9 x 88.9 cm. Courtesy the artist

IN THE SHOW

Dog's Breakfast - 2011
Archival inkjet print
57 x 83.5 x 3.7cm framed

If You Don't Love It, Live It -
2011 Archival inkjet print
57 x 83.5 x 3.7cm framed

Courtesy of the artist

USEFUL LINKS

- Artist website: <https://www.hodaafshar.com/>
- eleven* is a collective of contemporary Muslim Australian artists, curators and writers: <https://eleven-collective.com/contact/about/>

READ

- Interview between Hoda Afshar and Nur Shkembi <https://www.artistprofile.com.au/hoda-afshar/>

LISTEN

- APHIDS LISTENS podcast episode: Hoda Afshar in conversation with artist Eugenia Lim: <https://soundcloud.com/aphids/aphids-listens-episode-4-hoda-afshar>
- The Rap podcast episode: Thinking Through Covid, Hoda Afshar on photography and Sampa in the mix: <https://www.rrr.org.au/explore/podcasts/the-rap/episodes/4270-thinking-through-covid-hoda-afshar-on-photography-and-sampa-in-the-mix>

Coming from a background as a documentary photographer, Afshar says “I always found the ambiguity of staged images to be closer to reality than (apparently) objective documentary images.”* This statement contains the important reminder to consider the camera as a tool, one that is always wielded by a specific subject with their own ways of thinking and seeing as influenced by the culture and subcultures in which they exist amongst other, more pragmatic and/or philosophical influences. The images in this diptych, borrow from the dramatic formal qualities of classic Western baroque painting – the dark background, dramatic lighting, vivid colours, golden-ratio/rule-of-thirds compositions. We can read these stylistic choices as a deliberate gesture that situates the photographic subjects with the context of the West and its visual histories/traditions. Within these traditions, the subjects look bizarre and out of place, as do the garish ‘Australian’ costumes and paraphernalia on and around the subjects; both the Islamic-coded people and symbols of Australian nationalism do not fit into the elegance of European tradition.

The exaggerated othering of the subjects in these images points out the inherent fallacy in Australia's demands for migrants to ‘fit in’. The title *If you don't love it then live it* is a play on a popular assimilationist slogan ‘if you don't love it, leave it’. This statement forecloses the possibility for not only critique but improvement and requires a stagnancy that is averse to any kind of change. Ironically, this demand made on ‘others’ stands in stark contrast to a classically ‘Australian’ sentiment that embraces a love-hate attitude toward Australian-ness. For example, using the term ‘bastard’ as a term of endearment and/or the term ‘mate’ in both an affectionate and spiteful way. ‘Others’, then, are required to be more Australian than Australians, and have more (uncritical) love for the country than white Australians. Migrant Australians are not allowed the Australian love-hate relationship to Australia, which locks them out of an inherently Australian characteristic and a sense of belonging to Australia simultaneously. White Australians, on the other hand, are allowed to critique and complain about Australia, because their love for the nation-state is never questioned and their critique of it does not jeopardise their belonging. This obligatory caricature of Australian patriotism that is required of migrants in order to ‘fit in’ is what Afshar is playing with. It is funny because it's true.

So, it seems that the problem then is not about migrants ‘fitting in’ so much as changing the definition of who/ what is Australian to something more adequate. When something is a ‘dog's breakfast’, it is a mess, something

unattractive, out of order. We can read this as a critique of the way in which Australia has dealt with its various immigration policies ... or as a literal critique of vegemite! There is a desperation to the man's gaze as he offers the woman in the image the toast; he seems to be saying ‘we have to do this, we have to fit in. it's a matter of life and death’.

Another reading, this work, following her series *Under western eyes*, reveals a critique of the (Western-dominated) contemporary art market's fetishized expectations of Islamic work:

“When I looked at the sort of artworks produced by Iranian or Middle Eastern artists that typically gained visibility here, and in the West generally, I noticed here too that often they reflected the same stereotypes I mentioned above. So often in these works the theme is basically identical, having to do with the struggle of Iranian women, being caught between the forces of tradition and modernity, their sexual lives and identity. And in each case, this ‘identical struggle’ is so often communicated using a single trope: the veil.

...My ‘Iranian-ness’ was not something I considered much until I discovered that, in the mind of the new society, there existed an image of me that seemed to overshadow my entire personal history and being. I had to confront all those stereotypes that so many migrants from Islamic countries routinely experience.

... Realising this led me to engage in a deeper reflection on the intersections between postmodern exoticism and the commodification of culturally different artworks and artists. ‘Under Western Eyes’ was born out of these reflections, and this explains the Warhol-esque aesthetic. But there is a more serious side to this work too, and this concerns the way in which the constant production of images of the female Islamic subject (as at once suppressed and secretly fashion-loving or sexually free: an object of fear and fascination) is bound up with a cleverly disguised form of cultural imperialism.”

* <https://www.artistprofile.com.au/hoda-afshar/>

TONY ALBERT

**BORN 1981, TOWNSVILLE, QLD
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE AND SYDNEY
GIRRAMAY, YIDINJI AND KUKU-YALANJI**



Installation view of 'Tony Albert: Visible' at the Queensland Art Gallery, 2019 featuring *exotic OTHER* 2009/2018. Photo: Natasha Harth, QAGOMA. Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore. Collection of Tom Snow, courtesy of Annette Larkin Fine Art, Sydney.

IN THE SHOW

exotic OTHER, 2009
found vintage ephemera and vinyl
3.3 x 5.8 m

Courtesy the Artist and Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney and Singapore. Collection of Tom Snow, courtesy Annette Larkin Fine Arts, Sydney

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://tonyalbert.com.au/>

WATCH:

- Tony Albert discusses his work *exotic OTHER* at Artspace <https://vimeo.com/330403676>

READ:

- A response to 'Aboriginalia and the politics of Aboriginal kitsch'*, 2018 <https://aiatsis.gov.au/news-and-events/blog/response-aboriginalia-and-politics-aboriginal-kitsch>
- Tony Albert's politically charged kitsch collection confronts our racist past*, by Chari Larsson: <https://theconversation.com/tony-alberts-politically-charged-kitsch-collection-confronts-our-racist-past-97696>
- Edward Said's defining text *Orientalism* https://monoskop.org/images/4/4e/Said_Edward_Orientalism_1979.pdf

LISTEN:

- Invisible Heroes podcast episode – *Reclaiming Aboriginal Identity: Tony Albert* <https://podtail.com/podcast/invisible-heroes/reclaiming-aboriginal-identity-tony-albert/>

In one reading, the text in Albert's work references Edward Said's theorisation of the West's 'Other'. * Riffing off Lacan, Said proposes the 'oriental Other' as necessary to the West for being able to form an image of itself. You can think of this like negative space – in order for us to see something and/or define it, it must be visible against something. While Said used this to explain Orientalism, a movement of painting popular in the West during the peak of colonisation and in 19th century academic art, it has been expanded in postcolonial theory generally to try and understand racism and the continual 'othering' of people of colour.

Another branch of Oriental painting, typified by the work of Paul Gauguin and Henri Rousseau, for example, focused on peoples from Pacific nations. This 'orientalising' of brown, 'exotic', bodies, extended to early colonial paintings of Indigenous people in Australia, which then found their way into households and galleries, which then created a demand for similar representations (i.e. of decorative paintings of Indigenous peoples) in more affordable forms such as household objects. This happened during a time (the inter- and post war period) when Australia was trying to visualise its unique nationhood. As Indigenous peoples were still considered non-human by law they were not able to make or have a say in the representations being produced of their own images.

In a lecture given in artist Richard Bell's Embassy in Venice during the 2019 Venice Biennale, Aileen Moreton Robinson explained what she calls the 'white possessive' logic behind Aboriginalia (as Albert calls it). Borrowing from [Gayatri Spivak's thinking about representation](https://monoskop.org/images/4/4e/Said_Edward_Orientalism_1979.pdf), Moreton-Robinson argues that by possessing, infantilising, Romanticising or performing a specific action onto an image (for example stubbing out a cigarette on an ashtray decorated with Indigenous bodies/faces – see Albert's work *Ash On Me*), one is essentially doing and normalising the same action to the people represented. The correlation is clear when she notes that at the same time that these objects were commonplace in households, Aboriginal people were still being kept as servants, and workers for little to no pay, and Aboriginal children were systematically being taken from their parents and given to white families – they were possessions.

Tony's use of these images, then, follows in the footsteps of radical re-possessing of toxic images by people of colour, reclaiming and re-empowering them, and by proxy, the people they represent. The critical reconsideration of 'representation' focuses on the disconnect between: the thing being represented; the

thing that is the representation; the person who created the representation; and the contexts in which the person, representation and thing represented exist.

Albert's impetus for collecting these objects was not born from a place of malice (he was a kid when he started his collection!) but rather because these were the only representations of people like him and his fore-bearers. That fascinated him because he could identify with them. There is a love to this re-imaging that comes from a place of respect and care. While these images were previously used to stub a cigarette or hang on a wall, in Albert's work they are delicately handled by professional art workers and almost quite literally put on a pedestal in an art gallery setting to be valued. Not only is Tony reclaiming these images, then, he is imbuing them with value channelled from the genealogies and capital of Western art history, inclusive of its complicity in colonialism.

* https://monoskop.org/images/4/4e/Said_Edward_Orientalism_1979.pdf

CIGDEM AYDEMIR

**BORN 1983, SYDNEY
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY**



Cigdem Aydemir, *The Ride*, 2017, HD video, 10–13 mins. Installation view, *Just Not Australian*, Artspace, Sydney, 2019. Commissioned by Proximity Festival, Perth. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Zan Wimberley

IN THE SHOW

The Ride, 2017
12mins approx. each
Courtesy of the artist.
Commissioned by Proximity Festival, Perth.
This artwork was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body

USEFUL LINKS:

- Artist website: <http://cigdemaydemir.com/>

READ:

- *Up in the Sky | Landing Points at Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest* <http://cigdemaydemir.com/Landing%20Points%20Catalogue-Penrith%20Regional.pdf>
- Barnaby Smith, *Cigdem Aydemir on race relations and cultural identity*, 2017 <https://artguide.com.au/cigdem-aydemir-on-race-relations-and-cultural-identity>
- Edward Scheer, *Bombshells and Balaclavas, Ironies of inclusion in the work of young Islamic artists in Australia*, March 2020 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13528165.2019.1718427>

“The Ride transforms a church hall into a movie set. Industrial fans are arranged in front of a motorcycle which is ‘posed’ for a camera that sits before a screen with an image of the Australian outback. As I don a jacket and sunglasses, Cigdem Aydemir briskly puts on a black hijab, tucking excess cloth into her black leather jacket that co-ordinates with her form-hugging black trousers. An extra, I wait for rescue by the main character. After a brief practice run, we record. With slow graceful movement, Aydemir steps lightly onto her bike. I follow, ungainly in comparison, mounting the pillion seat. She starts the bike and we move along the road, the fans blasting as we accelerate and the scenery rolls past. The calm hero, Aydemir, is in control, as the wind unfurls her hijab and its magnificent length trails us across the desert. She points as we pass something and we turn our gaze before the ride ends and she leaves without a word.

“... The screen replays Aydemir rescuing another extra, the glamorous star creating an iconic image of machine in the vast red landscape framed by the fluttering hijab flying free,

a breathtaking rebuttal to white masculinity’s likely attempts to monopolise a heroic narrative like this one.”*

Inspired by the hashtag, #illridewithyou, this work is the video documentation of a performance piece made for the Proximity Festival in Perth, 2017. It is important to remember in Cigdem’s camp and humorous critique of the hashtag and its adjoining campaign, that the hashtag came about with good intentions, but was not actually instigated by the woman who made the original kind gesture, nor did it stay purely in the realm of (unconditional) solidarity.** Rather, it was a product of a social media trend which, facilitated by the nature of hashtags as inherently public and for public validation, venerated and celebrated non-Muslim people “protecting” Muslim women by, hashtag, riding with them on public transport. As a hashtag, the gesture of solidarity became conditional, and, a way of performing solidarity not for the sake of women who lived with the threat of being harassed for their expression of faith, but for the sake of gaining social kudos and ‘virtue signalling’.

Seeing the roots of this protectionism in the colonial foundations of Australia, Aydemir’s work aims to humorously subvert the power dynamic between the protected and protector. Borrowing from the symbols and contexts of figures classically cast as protectors and heroes in Australian culture, Aydemir set about performatively reclaiming her autonomy as a veiled woman as well as the right to be and identify as a protector. Importantly, Aydemir does so within a filmic landscape that traditionally excludes Islamic subjectivities altogether (*Wake in Fright*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Max Max*, *Pricilla Queen of the Desert*) and with props and costumes that are not usually associated with Muslim women (Harley Davidsons are usually associated with all white biker gangs and tight pants and leather jacket with pop cultural icons such as Olivia Newton John and Madonna). As a performance piece within the art industry, she does this with a degree of self-reflexivity, folding the works of straight white male artists who claim the Australian landscape as a field exclusively for their use (e.g. Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, John Brack, Sean Gladwell, Ben Quilty). Instead, with the help of a high-powered fan, Aydemir adds another symbol of freedom to the combination of a motorbike on the long open road in the Australian desert – a long, black, flowing, veil.

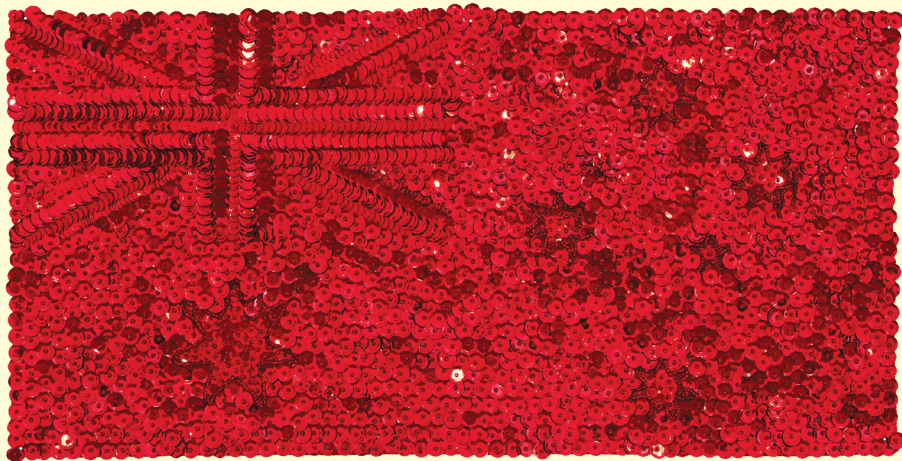
As the one in charge, Aydemir rejects the empathy and sympathy that renders her a vulnerable woman. By proxy, she turns the lens toward the perpetrator and not the victim; she positions herself as normal, autonomous, liberated and powerful, and questions the people who seek to undermine that.

* <https://www.realtime.org.au/proximity-festival-2017-one-on-one-adventures/>

** <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-15/illridewithyou-hashtag-takes-off-following-siege/5969102>

LIAM BENSON

BORN 1980, SYDNEY
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY



Red Flag, 2016, sequins, seed beads, cotton thread, cotton poplin, 30 x 59 cm. Courtesy the artist and Arterreal Gallery, Sydney. Photos: Zan Wimberley

IN THE SHOW

White Australia, 2016
sequins, seed beads, polycotton thread and organza
80 x 100cm

Red Flag, 2017
sequins, seed beads, cotton thread, cotton poplin
30 x 59cm (pictured)

Black Flag, 2016
sequins, seed beads, cotton thread, cotton poplin
30 x 59cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arterreal Gallery, Sydney

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://www.liambenson.net/>

LISTEN

- The Guardian Full Story podcast: *The fight over the Aboriginal flag*: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/audio/2020/aug/31/the-fight-over-the-aboriginal-flag>

WATCH:

- Artist interview produced by Arterreal, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvUdAZvnXFM>
- Community participatory embroidery project - facilitated by Liam Benson: <https://vimeo.com/235472590>

READ

- S. Sontag, *Notes on Camp*, London, Penguin Modern Classics, 2008 [1964], p.6. https://monoskop.org/images/5/59/Sontag_Susan_1964_Notes_on_Camp.pdf

Liam is invested in unpacking nationhood and the politics of his own genealogies, experiences, and privileges in the context of Australia's very specific colonial present. His practice is about acknowledging complicity in white supremacy and seeks ways of undoing the structures and histories that allow him the privileges he has. This emerges from both a genuine concern with systemic injustice and from his own experiences of discrimination. Conscious of the way in which coloniality depends on not only racial hierarchies but also gender hierarchies and the necessity of naturalised heteronormativity to enforce them, Benson attempts to gather data from diverse communities through conversation and crafters' meetings as a means of investigating the roots of oppression and how we might collectively unpick them.

Benson's use of embroidery, specifically using seed and bugle beads, sequins and organza refers to not only the feminist revival of 'women's work' but also to the histories of queer performers. As a drag performer, himself, Benson understands, in an embodied way, the radical care required for not only costume making (beadwork takes a lot of time, patience and often pain!) but also for community-building and survival in queer communities, both historically and today. Following the tradition of queer performance, Benson uses a 'Camp' aesthetic (look) and methodology (way of thinking and making) to poke fun at Australian masculinity and false constructions of self, constructed according to the gendered and racialized standards/expectations of society.

Benson's sequined flags continue his work of queering symbols of nationality. When we think of the Australian flag, images that come to mind are diggers, beach revellers, Australia day, Cronulla rioters, all predominantly white and hyper-masculine. A sequined flag, on the other hand, is deliberately effeminate. Sequins are often associated with the gaudiness of the entertainment industry – musicals, high-femme performers, drag shows – all of which stands in stark contrast to the rough and ready image of 'Australian-ness'. Read in context with Benson's other works such as *You and Me*, a community embroidery piece mapping the First Nations of Australia in sequins and beads, there is also an implicit understanding of high-production queerness as contingent on colonial occupation. Cultural relics such as Pricilla, while wonderful in their attempt to insert queerness into the Australian psyche, often gloss over queer histories prior to colonisation.

Benson's use of Camp, then, can be seen as a critical of Australian nationality in both its heteronormative and queer forms. As Susan Sontag writes, though Camp "converts the serious into the frivolous – these are grave matters". As she goes on to write, the frivolity and silliness of Camp is necessary to avoid the rigidity of 'truths' and 'ideas' which have ossified within certain ways of thinking and doing. Camp's frivolity gives it the radical ability to suggest, speculate and plant seeds in an accessible and 'fun' way – that is, under the guise of play and irreverence (one can think here of the court jester). "Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a "lamp"; not a woman, but a "woman". To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-role. It is the farthest extension, insensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre".* If life, as Sontag suggests here, is theatre, then all clothing is costume, all behaviour is performative, a flag is a "flag", a prop, and nothing is political. As Camp renders everything as "apolitical", it makes it a perfect tool for addressing the political.

Benson has explored the flag previously in his work *Untitled (Flag)* where sixteen people were tasked with changing one thing about the flag of Australia. This was then embroidered into a new flag with sequins and beads onto organza. The collaborative effort to create this flag, stands in stark contrast to the history of the current Australian flag as a colonial insignia, this new flag of Australia has been made by a process of collaboration and communication.

* https://monoskop.org/images/5/59/Sontag_Susan_1964_Notes_on_Camp.pdf

ERIC BRIDGEMAN

**BORN 1986, REDCLIFFE
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE AND WAHGI VALLEY,
JIWAKA PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA
YURI CLAN OF CHIMBU PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA**



I Waz 'Ere (with Heath Ledger), 2012, type-c prints on metallic paper mounted on aluminium, 9 panels, each 83 x 64 cm. Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

IN THE SHOW

I Waz 'Ere (with Heath Ledger), 2012
9 composite photographs in
grid formation
type-c prints on metallic paper
83 x 64 cm each (pictured)

Wilma Jr (Blacky), 2009
Archival print on Photo Rag framed
113.5 x 94 cm (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

WATCH

- Artist interview by Carriageworks: <https://vimeo.com/330943530>

READ

- Eric Bridgeman: *The Indefinable Artist*, by Monster Children, 2017 <https://www.monsterchildren.com/eric-bridgeman-indefinable-artist/>
- Pedro de Almeida for Broadsheet Journal <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53edfadbe4b0b26ce6e1171a/t/56e336fc27d4bdfdac79f775/1457731355344/2016+Pedro+de+Almeida+BROADSHEET+Vol45.1.pdf>
- GallerySmith project page, 2013 <https://gallerysmith.com.au/exhibition/in-the-project-eric-bridgeman/>

We can read Bridgeman's work as using a strategy of 'over-identification'. Over-identification in common lexicon, tends to imply a negative psychological process of identifying with something or someone in a particular situation in a way that is either dangerous to a sense of self or the other, or clouds 'objective' judgement. In *Cultural Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification*, the authors propose over-identification as a strategy for artists to deny the expectations of artists. As they write:

"Contemporary art seems to be caught in the blackmail typical for this self-acclaimed age of the End of History [this is a reference to Fukuyama who claimed that, since 'the West' won World War II, Capitalism would dominate forever and could/ would be the only global system in place – hence 'the end of history']. On the one hand, the artist is elevated into 'the One' who relentlessly confronts society with its shortcomings and uses his creative intelligence to dream up new ideals. At the same time however, s/he is constantly reminded that this critical and utopian activity should remain 'constructive' – a coded way of saying that it should not fundamentally question the triumphant onward march of representative democracy and the free market...

...Instead of succumbing to society's pathetic demand for small creative acts, artists should over-identify with the ruling, post-historical order and take the latter's immanent laws to their most extreme, dystopian consequences. By ruthlessly closing off any space for creative, utopian thinking – which today is nothing but a farce anyway – it should confront society with its own closure."*

While the authors address all artists in their manifesto, for artists coming from minoritized standpoints, such as Bridgeman, the act of over-identifying takes on a different meaning. This is because, historically, Indigenous people and people of colour have been exploited for (global) colonial extraction and have continued to be identified as such (objects for extraction). The image of the Golliwog, which Bridgeman embodies in *I Waz 'Ere (with Heath Ledger)*, 2012, is a classic example of a racist symbol that, despite being inspired by blackfacing minstrels stemming from the 1820s onward who imitated Black performers and servant figures for the entertainment of white audiences, has been exclusively produced and reproduced by white artists and craftspeople for their own profit to this day. Dressing up as a Golliwog, as a Bla(c)k person, is a blatant act of performing the history

that informs how Bridgeman is viewed and is expected to be (and make art) in white supremacist societies and institutions. That is, he brings the undercurrent of how we still see people of colour and their cultural production (art, music, fashion, theatre, language, performativity, food etc.) to the fore – as things to be consumed. This doubles as a radical rejection of that consumption in its blatant, self-relexive embrace of it. It is deliberately uncomfortable to look at.

* https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Matthias-Pauwels2/publication/328346683_Cultural_Activism_Today_The_Art_of_Over-Identification/links/5c74e0c2299bf1618f680c9b/Cultural-Activism-Today-The-Art-of-Over-Identification.pdf

NOTES ON BLACKFACE

- Wesley Morris for The New York Times Magazine: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/music-black-culture-appropriation.html>
- Philip S. S. Howard for The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/the-problem-with-blackface-97987>
- Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University: <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/golliwog/>
- By SBS News: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/golliwog-harmless-doll-or-symbol-of-racist-past>

JON CAMPBELL

**BORN 1961, BELFAST, IRELAND
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE**



Fuck it, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150cm, courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Simon Hewnson

IN THE SHOW

I'm Stranded, 2004
oil on cotton shirt on board
48.5 x 50 cm

*Hitchy, Beaky, Marty, Morry,
Wayneboy and Me, 2001*
acrylic paint on plywood
68.5 x 45.2 cm

Fuck it, 2015
acrylic on canvas
100 x 150 cm

Pure Bewdy (Black), 2011
acrylic and enamel paint on
plywood
40 x 30 cm

It's a world full of lying bastards, 2018
acrylic paint, watercolour
and pencil on paper
64 x 84 cm

Are you fucking kidding me, 2012
acrylic and enamel paint on cotton
duck
102 x 61.5 cm

People are Stupid, 2014
enamel paint on cotton
duck
150 x 80 cm

Yeah flag / backyard, 2006
acrylic and enamel on cotton duck
52 x 67 cm

Underdogs, 2010
neon, mdf, acrylic and enamel paint
14 x 100 x 7.5 cm

Dunno, 2011
acrylic and enamel paint on mdf
board
40 x 30 cm

Made in China, 2011
acrylic and enamel paint on plywood
60 x 40 cm

Weak as piss, 2009
hand-stitched and screenprinted,
double-sided banner
200 x 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Darren
Knight Gallery, Sydney

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <http://www.joncampbell.info/art>

'My art has been mainly text based for the last 20 years. It's an ongoing exploration of the visual potential of words through the use of vernacular language and popular culture. In recent paintings, snippets of conversation, argument and dialogue are transformed using the conventions of formal abstraction and graphic design to both confuse the original function of the words and phrases and elevate them to a pictorial object. The negative spaces around the letters become positive. The viewer becomes part of the work as they unravel the text and say the phrase.'

- Jon Campbell, <http://www.joncampbell.info/about>



Pure Bewdy (Black), 2011, acrylic and enamel paint on plywood 40 x 30 cm. Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Campbell's work is quite a literal mirror to the specific lexicon of dominant Australian culture. Following in the footsteps of conceptual, post-conceptual and pop art, Campbell's work plays with the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture, blurring the boundaries between what we might consider to be art (in terms of content and form) and what we might consider as mundane and inconsequential.

In a contemporary context, we might also read his work as a critique of art as a sanitised space. That is, not in the sense that lo-fi and pop art are excluded from the art industry, rather, perhaps, that the art industry has become a container for critique rather than a launching pad for it. If a gallery displays vulgar language on its walls, it does not need to participate in the cultures it comes from. Although, given that Campbell's work has remained consistent throughout the past three to four decades and takes inspiration from the post-punk music scene of the late 80s and early 90s, this might be a retrospective reading.*

It is important to note that Campbell speaks from within the dominant culture he paints. This culture is rooted in Australian nationalism and whiteness. It is Anglo-centric, using the English language, and is specific to certain cultures of Australia that have come to signify a stereotypical notion of what is Australian culture. In this way it is not an inclusive work. It excludes the multiplicity of other cultures' phrases, idioms, slang and vernacular developed in Australia by Indigenous and non-Anglo communities over generations.

In another reading, Campbell's use of text disempowers the specific meanings contained in the words by transforming them into purely visual forms. Letters become containers for colour, simply lines and curves that facilitate a study of block pastels, or contrasting soft and salient tones. This careful treatment of abrasive language is almost a balm to the violence contained in the meaning behind the words. Once you get past the initial push-back of the text, you can immerse yourself in the careful attention to medium – the words fall away – like water off a duck's back.

* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b3272807eaa05bec4e460c/t/5f4dddf18efa7cf4ad817c15a/1598938906903/Gone_Dead_Screen.pdf

KARLA DICKENS

**BORN 1967, SYDNEY
LIVES AND WORKS IN LISMORE, NSW
WIRADJURI**



The Queens Road, 2017, (still), single-channel video, 8 mins. Commissioned by Transport for NSW for Wynscreen, produced by Cultural Capital. Courtesy the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

IN THE SHOW

The Queens Road, 2017
single-channel video on
monitor, 8 mins

Commissioned by Transport for NSW for Wynscreen,
produced by Cultural Capital Courtesy the artist and
Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://www.karladickens.com.au/artwork-collections/>

READ

- Interview with Karla Dickens, Artist Profile: <https://www.artistprofile.com.au/karla-dickens/>
- Essay by Djon Mundine OAM: <http://www.karladickens.com.au/media/conversations-with-a-crow/>
- Charlotte Wood for The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/12/world/australia/aboriginal-artist-australia-karla-dickens.html>
- Conversation between Penelope Benton and Karla Dickens for the National Association for the Visual Arts: https://visualarts.net.au/media/uploads/files/Episode_38.pdf

Karla Dickens' work is at once soft and harsh. Working predominantly with found materials inclusive of everything between feathers, dolls, birdcages, nails, straightjackets, bones, sculptures and more, Dickens' use of materiality is both political and poetic all at once. This is because Dickens uses various materials not only for their visual effects but also for their symbolic meanings. Via this, she is able to weave multilayered narratives and incisive critiques on Australian society.

The Queens Road was commissioned by Wynscreen – Transport NSW's 20 x 3m screen positioned in the walkway of the new Wynyard Station. As a public artwork, it is not as raw as some of Dickens' other works, for example the sculptural works shown in *Just Not Australian* at Artspace. As Dickens narrates, the work "came about because an elder had given me incredible vintage dresses from the '50s. They were really sexy. And I got asked to do this project".* As she goes on to explain, the materials in her practice often come first, then she figures out what kind of narrative and story can be explored through them. For this work, the history of the dresses was the launching pad. The 1950s in Australia marked an era where Australia was simultaneously still very loyal to the crown and trying to break free to form its own cultural identity. In this art historical era you have works from artists such as Margaret Preston, Grace Cossington-Smith, Arthur Boyd, Sidney Nolan, all producing imagery that took direct inspiration from the Australian environment in a bid to form some sort of Australian visual vocabulary.

On the other hand, Australia still saw itself as part of Britain. The Queen's visit in 1954 caused a huge stir throughout the country. Though this is general knowledge, however, more sinister stories are contained in the folds of this seemingly innocuous event. As Dickens narrates: "there's more about the Queen visiting Lismore [where Dickens grew up and currently lives and works] and staying at the Gollan Hotel. [At] first she was supposed to stay with the mayor. Then the mayor's wife had a meltdown 'cause the Queen was coming and hung herself". While this is an extreme example of the cause and effect of the hype around the Queen's visit, as Dickens explains, "in country towns, the Queen coming was such a huge [event] - all those women were out in there ... you know, there would have been... Their best frocks, cooking ... getting their best recipes out and, you know, cutting every hair on Tommy's head and .. all that kind of stuff", all of which indentured Aboriginal women would have been responsible for as well.* As Dickens relays, her grandmother was enslaved as a domestic worker and abused by her owners. She died without connection

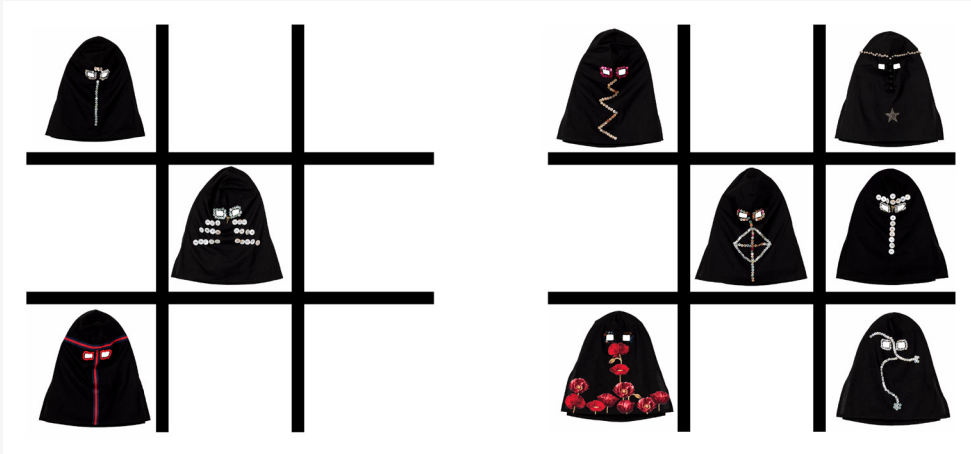
to Country or family. This is a story common to many Indigenous mothers and grandmothers of many Indigenous people.*

Highlighting the Queen as the pinnacle of colonial authority and speaking from the standpoint of a woman whose community was severely effected by the systemic kidnapping of Aboriginal children from their families, then, Dickens draws a comparison between the stress of domesticised women in light of the Queen's arrival and the stress of Indigenous mothers in the face of colonial authorities. Cindy Paden, who stars as the protagonist of this film, represents a fleeing and liberation from not only colonial ideals of womanhood but also the colonial incarceration of Aboriginal children.

* https://visualarts.net.au/media/uploads/files/Episode_38.pdf

FIONA FOLEY

**BORN 1964, MARYBOROUGH, QLD
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE
BADTJALA**



Hunted II, 2019, (rendering), calico, pearl shell buttons, mixed media and vinyl, 9 parts. Courtesy the artist, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne. Photo: Mick Richards

IN THE SHOW

Hunted II, 2019
dyed calico and mixed media, vinyl
175 x 175 each (9 pieces)

Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Baker Art Dealer,
Brisbane and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <http://fionafoley.com.au/>

LISTEN

- Art Smitten podcast episode: Interview with Fiona Foley on her artwork Who Are The Strangers And Where Are They Going? <http://syn.org.au/interview-fiona-foley-art-smitten/>

READ

- Museum of Contemporary Art Australia artist profile: <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/works/2009.16/>
- Informations on the Protection Acts; legislation to regulate the lives of many Indigenous people: https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/senate/legal_and_constitutional_affairs/completed_inquiries/2004-07/stolen_wages/report/c02

CHECK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

- Tess Allas, *History is a weapon: Fiona Foley history teacher*, Artlink, Vol. 30, No. 1, Mar 2010: 58-63. <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3363/history-is-a-weapon-fiona-foley-history-teacher/>
- Fiona Foley, *The art of politics / the politics of art*: https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/The_Art_of_Politics_the_Politics_of_Art/

The hoods featured in this series extends on Foley's *HHH* series. Produced while on residency in New York, Foley claims to have uncovered a secret society called the 'Hedonistic Honky Haters', that was founded in North America in 1965 ('honky' is African-American slang for 'white person'). She photographed seven of their members, who's portraits and costumes make up the series.

Hunted II, extends on the aesthetics of *HHH*, combining them with her ongoing research into slavery in the opium and other industries in Australia as well as the intricacies and injustices of criminalisation and capital punishment in Australia. As Foley narrates, these hoods specifically reference an existing hood that was used in the hanging of Ronald Ryan, who, in 1967 was the last person to officially die by capital punishment.* Sources say that he was in fact innocent of the crime he was hung for. Further, the public took to the streets to protest the death sentence, however the Premier at the time was determined to go ahead with the execution.**

Centred around the specific histories of Queensland but related to the rest of the continent, the hoods also reference the abduction of Indigenous peoples by colonial traders to be used as slaves for various industries. The red poppy flowers on of the hoods reference the history of opium and its production while the mother-of-pearl shell buttons reference the history of pearl diving and oyster shell farming. When opium was still legal, prior to the late 1800s in Australia, Indigenous labourers (who were often stolen and taken far away from their home Countries) were often paid with the ashes and dregs of opium consumed by their 'employers'. The years of this practice had dire effects on the health and communities of Indigenous peoples. In 1897, the Queensland government introduced the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*, which criminalised the supply of opium to Aboriginal people (the principal purveyors of which were considered to be Chinese traders), and to 'protect' Aboriginal people from substance addiction by forcing them onto reserves under the guardianship of government-appointed Protectors of Aborigines. The Act controlled the lives of Aboriginal people by significantly restricting their autonomy and freedom to live, work and marry as they chose, (in 1901, Indigenous marriage restriction became inclusive of people of Asian backgrounds to reduce the risk of solidarity relations between non-white, minoritized peoples).

The red poppy, of course, is also embedded into Australia's cultural mythologising of ANZAC Day, which celebrates the forging of the nation state in war.

The exclusion of not only Indigenous war veterans in ANZAC memorial services but further the Frontier Wars in Australia's history of warfare, may be an alternative way to read this specific part of the work

Like the opium industry, the pearling industry was similarly steeped in the blood of Indigenous peoples. Aboriginal people were kidnapped from their communities to work as slaves in the pearling industry (this practice was also known as 'blackbirding'). Though slavery had been illegalised in most parts of the world in the late 1800s it was the driving force behind the pearling industry in Australia. Divers were not equipped with any gear and were forced to live on the ships and to work as cooks, cleaners and general labourers for their kidnappers.

Read in this light, the history of the hoods - of innocent people sentenced to death, of capital punishment and of law and order in Australia - paints a very different, quite disturbing view of Australia and its unacknowledged histories. It seems that the way in which Foley has placed the hoods in a game of naughts and crosses, implies power as simply a game of history and law.

* <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/art-and-design/portraits-of-the-artists-in-isolation-20200514-p54svk.html>

** <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-05/ronald-ryan-australias-last-man-hanged-victoria-murder/11751244>

NOTES ON THE SALE OF OPIUM ACT

- Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (Qld): <https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-sdid-54.html>
- Fiona Foley discussing the Sale of Opium Act: <https://nga.gov.au/exhibition/undisclosed/default.cfm?MnuID=ARTISTS&GALID=15417&viewID=3>

NOTES ON THE PEARLING INDUSTRY

- Broome Historical Society Museum website: <https://broomemuseum.org.au/race-rights-rivalries/aboriginal-pearlers/#:~:text=In%20the%20early%20days%20of,across%20the%20north%20west%20region,:%20https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-18/aboriginal-kidnap-and-slavery-in-wa-pearling-industry/12349474>
- Ben Collins for ABC News: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-09-09/slavery-in-australian-pearling/10217488>
- Susan Standen for ABC News: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-18/aboriginal-kidnap-and-slavery-in-wa-pearling-industry/12349474>

GORDON HOOKEY

**BORN 1961, CLONCURRY
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE
WAANYI**



Outside the square, Inside the circle, 2003, oil on canvas, 213 x 198 cm. Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane. Photo: Charlie Hillhouse

IN THE SHOW

First Stolen Then Stolen Land, 1998
Oil on masonite with timber frame
134.5 x 196cm

University of Wollongong Art Collection; Donated
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts
Program by Tess Allas

Outside the square, inside the circle, 2003
oil on canvas
213 x 198 cm

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

READ

- *How to Write Painting: A Conversation about History Painting, Language, and Colonialism* with Gordon Hookey, Hendrik Folkerts, and Vivian Ziherl: https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/894_how_to_write_painting_a_conversation_about_history_painting_language_and_colonialism_with_gordon_hookey_hendrik_folkerts_and_vivian_ziherl
- The Sorry Books - a powerful record of the personal responses of Australians to the unfolding history of the Stolen Generations: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/explore-sorry-books#:~:text=The%20Sorry%20Books%20are%20a,history%20of%20the%20Stolen%20Generations.&text=The%20Sorry%20Books%20were%20a,released%20its%20findings%20in%201997>

WATCH

- Artist Gordon Hookey interviewed by Bruce McLean: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IrePDwesA&ab_channel=statelibraryqld

Gordon Hookey's paintings serve as contemporary history paintings. In western art discourse, history paintings were regarded as the highest form of art. Often done on grand scales, in intricate, exquisite detail and in a naturalistic but dramatic style, history paintings were defined by their stories/subject matter but influenced by those with the means to pay for it. As such, prior to the 18th century, most history paintings were sponsored by the church, royalty and the aristocracy and as such, often depicted Christian religious stories, allegories, and mythological scenes.

After Enlightenment, history paintings became largely secular and the dominant mode of academic painting. The subjects of these works were often propagandic in the favour of royalty and the state, but after the French Revolutions, turned toward more revolutionary ideas depicting heroic suffering by ordinary people. Though the various movements of Modernism displaced the reign of history painting, arguably the progression of Modernism can be seen as various waves of reaction against and revival of history paintings. Contemporary art has seen artists appropriate, adopt and subvert history painting. Hookey both subverts and adopts history painting – his works, too, are intricately detailed,

figurative, and depict stories contained in both the obvious narrative of the work and the symbolically loaded details woven through the main narratives. As Tess Allas, points out in her chapter on Gordon Hookey in *Untitled: Portraits of Australian Artists* by Sonia Payes, his works can be read like a book.

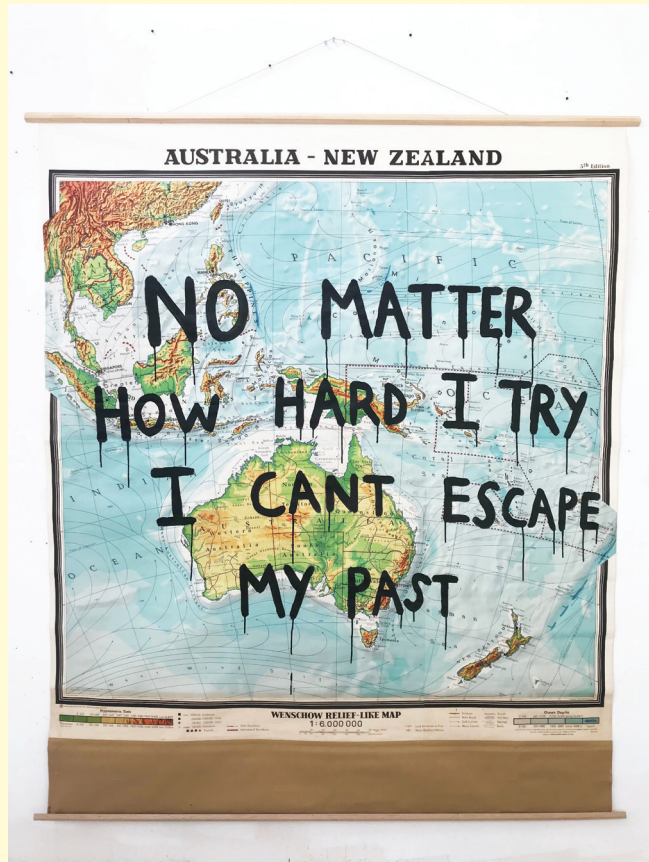
There is a specific significance to Hookey's history paintings in the context of Australia. As per the well-known axiom "history is written by the victors", we know that history, art included, has largely favoured cultural production that matched the dominant version of it. Hookey's work contributes to and revises the archive from the perspective of those who were and still are excluded from it, in ways that plays on the techniques historically used to narrate certain histories. For example, his zoomorphic depictions of police and politicians, mimics the way in which Indigenous peoples (globally) were similarly depicted as animal-like either through exaggerated physical features, contextual implication e.g. by blending Indigenous figures with the landscape, and/or actions. The zoomorphism of his figures (iconically, Indigenous people represented as burly kangaroos or ominous xanthorrhoea trees) is also inspired by Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

The narratives contained in his paintings, on the other hand, are not subversive but quite literally spell out facts, tying more contemporary histories and politics to their origins in the ideologies, histories and politics of colonisation. This connection, made through easily recognisable icons such as the Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge, ensure that these symbols are not falsely apolitical but hold the significance of the land and histories upon which they are built. Hookey ruptures the reproduction of the settler-state (as embodied by certain symbols and figures) as neutral and ahistorical, as well as the history visualising the state as noble (as started in history paintings and as continues in the media) and rewrites them as heavily loaded with violent histories and questionable politics.

Hookey's ongoing work "*MURRILAND!*" series (2015 -), which was included in *Just Not Australian* at Artspace, is his most ambitious historical painting yet - telling the history of present-day Queensland through a contrast between the colonial narrative we all know and the oral histories of Murri peoples.

RICHARD LEWER

**BORN 1970, HAMILTON, NEW ZEALAND
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE**



No Matter how hard I try I can't escape my past, 2019, acrylic on found map, 195 x 160 cm, courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney and Singapore. Photo: Andrew Curtis

IN THE SHOW

No matter how hard I try I can't escape my past, 2019
acrylic on found map
195 x 160cm

Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney and Singapore

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://richardlewer.com/>

READ

- Five Questions with Richard Lewer*, Sullivan & Strumpf: <https://www.sullivanstrumpf.com/httpswwww-sullivanstrumpf-comenglishnew-news-list-news/five-questions-with-richard-lewer/?year=2020>
- Richard Lewer exhibition catalogue: <https://richardlewer.com/files/publications/9dayswing.pdf>
- Shamit Sagar for The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/australia-needs-to-confront-its-history-of-white-privilege-to-provide-a-level-playing-field-for-all-139755>
- Myriam François for ABC Religion and Ethics: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/white-guilt-will-not-change-anything/12628630>

WATCH

- Emil McAvoy and artist Richard Lewer chat via Zoom about Lewer's exhibition at Suite, Auckland: <https://artcollector.net.au/video-at-home-with-richard-lewer/>

Richard Lewer's general practice consists of painting eerie vignettes of life in the Antipodes. Originally from New Zealand and now living in Australia, Lewer is known for his brazen gaze into the cultures and subcultures he finds himself in. Somewhat of a contemporary anthropologist or ethnographer, Lewer's paintings are documentations of the everyday – from sport matches, to funerals, confessions to mundane statements, portraits to landscapes – looking at the series of images on his website reveals a fascination with the fragments that make society a whole.

Lewer's work in this exhibition continues a sporadically ongoing series of interventions on found maps and flags. For his work *History of Australia*, 2018, he writes "I must Learn to like myself" in dripping white paint over a full-sized Australian flag; the titular phrase "Fit in or Fuck off" is inscribed over a green and gold map of Australia; "I wish I was as Lucky As you" appears over another map, as does a collage of cut out eyes over a blacked out Australian continent in *Stop*, 2012; in *God Loves us All*, 2012, the words of the title are painted over a map and a further layer of a painted fence topped with barbed wire – the word "all" is painted in rainbow colours. In the context of Lewer's anthropological practice, these works critically look at how the nation

defines itself – via its borders – a land girt by sea – paired with distinct, ideologically-justified, practices of policing these borders.

In *History of Australia* and *No matter how hard I try I can't escape my past*, the ethnographer looks inward. These works examine a certain ironic and specific complicity that is both internalised and externally affirmed. For lack of better terms, he seems to admit to "white guilt". However, this admittance is not a defeat. It is, rather, an act of self-location. He acknowledges settler-colonial privilege – the past that he cannot escape, implied by the continents upon which he paints, is a colonial one. The section of the global map in the image shows the clear geographical connection the Australian continent has with the Asia Pacific, so the 'past' that Lewer refers to is also a white one.

The practice of self location – an acknowledgement of privilege – is not an exercise in disempowerment. Simply put, it acts to better understand how and why we might move through the world and in our societies in a certain way and how others might be able or not, move in similar or vastly different ways. As theorist Sara Ahmed describes, so aptly: "A norm is something that can be inhabited. I think of a norm as rather like a room or a dwelling; as giving residence to bodies... Not to inhabit a norm (or not quite to inhabit a norm) can be experienced as not dwelling so easily where you reside. You might be asked questions; you might be made to feel questionable, so that you come to feel that you do not belong in the places you live, the places you experience as home; you might turn up and not be allowed in or find it too uncomfortable to stay... norms are often maintained through how those who do not quite inhabit norms are treated. Norms can be produced by organizations (as a set of formal rules or arrangements) but are also at work in everyday situations into which bodies are thrown. Indeed, not to inhabit a norm (or not quite to inhabit a norm) is often an experience of being thrown."*

* Sara Ahmed, "Chapter 5: Being In Question" in *Living A Feminist Life*, p115.

ARCHIE MOORE

**BORN 1970, TOOWOOMBA, QLD
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE
KAMILAROI**



Swamped by Asians, 2020, inkjet print on paper (Hansard parliamentary record of maiden speech by Senator Hanson, 10 September 1996, Australian House of Representatives), edition of 10, 5 x 6 x 6 cm. Courtesy the artist and The Commercial, Sydney. Photo: Zan Wimberley

IN THE SHOW

Swamped by Asians, 2020
inkjet print on paper (Hansard parliamentary record
of maiden speech by Senator Hanson, 10 September
1996, Australian House of Representatives)
5 x 6 x 6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://archiemoore.wordpress.com/>

What is most immediately striking about this work, is the visual pun suggesting Senator Pauline Hanson's speech as 'rubbish'. The more sinister undertone is the performative element of scrunching Hanson's speech into a ball or otherwise partially destroying the paper onto which it is printed. On closer inspection, however, it is evident that the performative acts of creating these works were not callous, but rather, carefully calculated. There is a quality of attention and thoughtfulness in the way that certain impactful lines have been left visible.

When politicians such as Pauline Hanson validate fears around non-white immigrants by claiming, for example, that Australia is being metaphorically “swamped by Asians”, it legitimises a metaphorical “dredging” of racial minorities by those who do not identify as such – that is, white Australians. When there is a fictional imbalance of the fictional scale of white people and ‘other’ people in Australia, and numerous politicians suggest that the balance must be restored, this quite literally puts people’s lives at risk.

Considering the violence contained in Hanson's speech, then, Archie Moore's works, though certainly cathartic, are more geared toward meditation and healing rather than retaliation. They are close examinations of an ideological wound that still pains many people both physically (if we think about the refugees incarcerated on Manus and Naru, the Cronulla Riots, the many reported and unreported instances of racial abuse experienced on a daily basis and the shocking amount of Indigenous adults and children in prisons) and psychologically (for example, by casting all 'Asians', some of whom would be descendants from before colonisation, as those doing the 'swamping' and not the belonging to Australia). Considering the age of Hanson's speech and the contemporaneity of Moore's work, there is clearly something that Moore sees in revisiting this speech. It is up to us as audiences to try and think with him about what it is we can learn from this speech and how we might use it to identify patterns in the vernacular and ideologies of current politics that need to be rerouted.

Moore's work pays works in the vein of conceptual art that often saw the use of cheap, plain, printed text exhibited in galleries. The production quality of these works asks us to think about the content and conditions of the work rather than the materiality of them. They do not seek to be vessels of critique, but rather, act as launching pads for it and mirrors to reflect our own contexts and conditions. Following from the line of questioning above, we could use this work to ask – what is it about the present moment that requires a look

into archive of Hanson's speeches? If our politics have progressed since 1996, why is Hanson still a relevant and active voice in the Australian political scene? Have her views changed or just shifted focus? Who has kept her in power in why – who does she represent? What is required to keep her in power – aside from people, and the logistics of politics, can we think about this in terms of systems (political, ideological, institutional, economic)? What other speeches has Hanson made – what was the response to them? How and why is it ok for blatantly racist remarks to be made in the parliament? If an archive exists of these remarks, how and why is a public figure allowed to still navigate public forums? This is just the tip of the iceberg.

VINCENT NAMATJIRA

**BORN 1983, ALICE SPRINGS, NT
LIVES AND WORKS IN INDULKANA, APY LANDS, SA
WESTERN ARRERNTJE**



Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull, 2016 from the series 'The Prime Ministers', acrylic on linen, 91 x 67cm each panel, installation view at THIS IS NO FANTASY. Courtesy the artist, Iwantja Arts & THIS IS NO FANTASY. Photographer: Janelle Low

IN THE SHOW

Bob Hawke; Paul Keating; John Howard, Kevin Rudd; Julia Gillard; Tony Abbott; Malcolm Turnbull; 2016 from the series 'The Prime Ministers' acrylic on linen 91 x 67cm each panel

Courtesy of the artist, Iwantja Arts and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

READ

- Sydney Morning Herald, Vincent Namatjira paints bold portraits of Australia's seven most recent prime ministers: <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/vincent-namatjira-paints-bold-portraits-of-australias-seven-most-recent-prime-ministers-20160818-gqv9.html>

USEFUL LINK

- Parliament House Historic Memorials Collection: https://www.aph.gov.au/Visit_Parliament/Art/Online_Gallery/Portrait_Gallery

WATCH

- Vincent Namatjira Learning Resource, QAGOMA: <https://learning.qagoma.qld.gov.au/artworks/seven-leaders-series-prime-ministers-series-the-richest-series/>

Painted portraits of Australia's Prime Ministers have been commissioned since 1911 archiving the nation's official leaders since Federation. Barring Clifton Ernest Pugh's, dynamic, expressionist-style portrait of Gough Whitlam and June Mendoza's 'realist' portrait of a laid-back, jeans-clad, John Gorton, all portraits are painted in a highly realistic style, often grandiose and stately (or ethereal and virginal - indicated by the glowing blue and white colour scheme classically associated with the Virgin Mary - in the case of Vincent Fantauzzo's portrait of our only female prime minister, Julia Gillard), mimicking the authority of traditional portraits of Royal figures. Unfortunately but unsurprisingly, in the list of 26 parliamentary artists, only one is a person of colour (Jiawei Shen) and one is a woman (Mendoza).

None of the artists are Indigenous. Of course, this could reflect no more than our prime minister's limited knowledge of artists in Australia. However, the ratio seems uncannily familiar and might also reflect whom our government deems appropriate to paint flattering portraits of our Prime Ministers and whom might be deemed dangerous to this tradition's performance and reproduction of authority. Vincent Namatjira's decision to paint a counter-archive of the nation state's Prime Ministers, in his iconic, irreverent painting style, then, works to level out the power traditionally vested in official 'portraits of parliament'.

Further, when read in conjunction with Namatjira's sister portrait series of the seven wealthiest people in Australia and seven significant Elders from the APY Lands, what becomes evident is a clear juxtaposition between society's 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' values and the way in which this plays out in and is maintained through the various systems that govern our lives.

Namatjira's portraits of Australia's wealthiest cheekily nods to the history of portraiture, royalty included, which saw mostly wealthy folk archived in paint due to their prominence and, more importantly, their ability to pay for the artist's services and materials. Embedded in this cheekiness is a material understanding of the implications and origins of wealth and power. It is no secret that our most successful politicians have reached that success by being in cahoots with our wealthiest citizens, many of whom owe their wealth to mining that continues to decimate Countries that Namatjira calls home. Mining in these lands has been facilitated by various governmental policies that have left towns in the Central Desert regions amongst the poorest in the country and often lacking in basic facilities. Access to alternative sources of food and water are cut off by private properties used for agriculture

and mining and/or effected by the environmental damages of fossil fuel industries. The Native Title Act asks for virtually impossible forms of evidence and is attached to numerous conditions that do not allow the recipients to protect land even if they are granted Native Title. Communities are debased by heavy-handed policing (e.g. the Northern Territory Intervention), 'welfare' systems and displacement. These are all contemporary legacies of brutal colonialism that has been proudly continued by our Prime Ministers. So, while Namatjira's works are intentionally humorous as a strategy of leveling out the power vested in the people behind these representations, they represent quite serious repercussions of settler-colonialism and its establishment and enforcement of unsustainable models of power.

'I am really interested in people in positions of power; people who have incredible wealth and influence. When I see politicians, world leaders, royalty, and other power-players on the news, I see this huge disconnect between their world and the day-to-day reality of life in a remote Aboriginal community. A lot of my recent paintings are about the reversal of power structures—displacing powerful figures takes away some of their dominance.'

- Vincent Namatjira

NELL

BORN 1975, MAITLAND, NSW
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY



‘Growing up within the Baptist church in a rural town in Australia, the two predominant forms of “worship” for her generation were Christianity and rock music as embodied by bands such as AC/DC’

- Aneshka Mora

AC/DC Altar Cloth (from Chanting to Amps), 2012, fabric and vintage t-shirts, 138 x 220cm. Courtesy of the artist, STATION, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney

IN THE SHOW

Fly on the Robe (from Chanting to Amps), 2012
Zen robe, vintage AC/DC t-shirt, safety pins
138 x 58 x 15cm

AC/DC Altar Cloth (from Chanting to Amps), 2012
fabric and vintage t-shirts
138 x 220cm

Who Made Who (from Chanting to Amps), 2012
Tasmanian wood, rope, paint
74 x 55cm

Courtesy of the artist, STATION, Melbourne and
Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney

LISTEN

- Nell discussing her art practice and how the rock rituals of AC/DC relate to the rituals of a spiritual life on ABC Radio National, November 2016: https://abcmedia.akamaized.net/rn/podcast/2016/11/rde_20161106.mp3

Nell's work takes spirituality - in its various religious, secular, conventional and unconventional forms - as the subject matter of her work. Growing up within the Baptist church in a rural town in Australia, the two predominant forms of “worship” for her generation were Christianity and rock music as embodied by bands such as AC/DC. The ties between the way in which the imagery of rock bands responded to religious symbols and notions - such as crosses, medieval/gothic font, heavy contrasts between light and dark - by either adopting, subverting or rebelling against them and creating new symbols and practices for worship is what Nell explores.

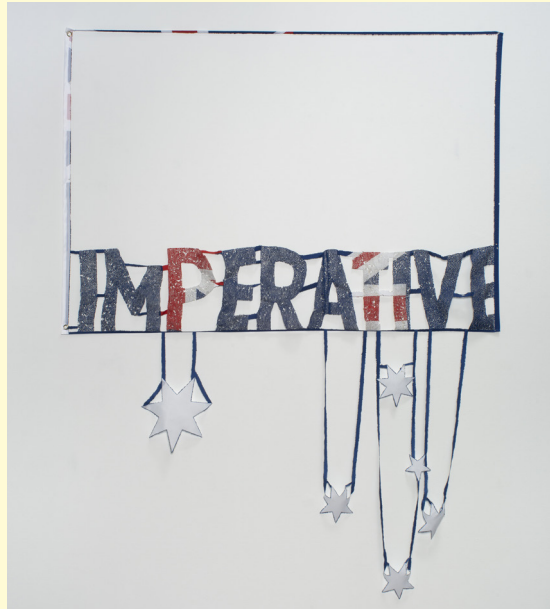
She explores these practices and symbols of worship from place embedded in spirituality, not only from her upbringing but in her chosen spirituality, Buddhism. She makes work from a place that both practices and

interrogates worship, inclusive of her art-making practice. Carefully cutting out old t-shirts and sewing together the pieces for an altar cloth, is a meditative act that requires a patience, dedication and faith common to most religions. While this may be true for most arts and by extension, fandom, Nell highlights this as an essential part of her practice. Tactile materials such as textiles, wood, rope, clothing, carries the history old spiritual art/craft-making practices carried out by, for example paganism, as the earlier form of many Christian denominations.

The juxtaposition between Asian, Christian and blatantly secular spirituality reflects on some of the spiritual geography of Australia. Though we are a proudly secular society, our official holidays still match Christian calendars (to the exclusion of other major religions in Australia) in loyalty to our colonial heritage.

RAQUEL ORMELLA

**BORN 1969, SYDNEY
LIVES AND WORKS IN CANBERRA**



Raquel Ormella, *Imperative*, 2012, nylon, 183 x 240cm, courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane. Photo: Carl Warner

IN THE SHOW

Imperative, 2012
Nylon
183 x 240cm

Settler Economies no.3-5, 2019

acrylic on used work clothes and cotton

This work was made on Gadigal Land with the support of Frontyard Projects. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

USEFUL LINK

- A Q&A with the artists from Artist Profile magazine <https://www.artistprofile.com.au/>

- Rozsika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch* <https://www.frieze.com/article/artificial-divide-between-fine-art-and-textiles-gendered-issue>
- Jane O'Sullivan in conversation with Raquel Ormella for Ocula: <https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/raquel-ormella/>

CHECK YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

- Jane O'Sullivan, *I hope you get this: Raquel Ormella*, Eyeline, Vol. 90, 2019: 89.
- Raquel Ormella, *Backyard and back room conversations*, Art Monthly Australasia, No. 294, Nov 2016: 28-33.
- George Alexander, *Text appeal: Australasian text in images*, ArtAsiaPacific, No. 58, May-June 2008: 130-135.

'...In recent banner work, also addressing ideas of national identity, called *Australian Rising #1* (2007) [Raquel Ormella] created a garish mutilation of the Australian flag, overlaid with the text *Mutual Obligation*, hand-sewn in gold and green. In this work, Ormella takes apart the political cant of former Australian Prime Minister, John Howard – rhetoric that has readily been absorbed by a young generation of flag-toting nationalists. Mutual Obligation was a term introduced by Howard to the welfare system including his Work For the Dole programs. As the system still fails to recognise uncontracted, freelance artists, dancers, actors and directors etc as workers, Ormella offered in return, as part of her personal Mutual Obligation bargain, a nationalistic object of 'dazzling extremity'...

'...Ormella is a kind of critical idealist, who understands not only the effectiveness of lobbying and the power of the individual in bringing about change, but also the slow-burn persistence of such commitment'

- Bec Dean, *Landscape and complexity: Raquel Ormella*. Artlink, Vol. 28, No. 3, Sep 2008: 46-49

Ormella works predominantly with textiles, translating the politics and histories of second-wave feminist dialogues of 'women's work' and its subversive power (in largely male-dominated art industries and societies at large), for Australian contexts. In many of her works, such as *Imperative* and *Settler Economies*, the materiality of the textiles and/or the textual snippets integrated into the works constitute the subject matter. Her use of both material and text is imbued with a political poeticism. In other words, the politics of the works are not blatant, but rather act as a cryptic crossword clue where one has to see the text within the context of not only the materiality of the work and the word itself, but also within the context of the society and time in which it was made.

In *Imperative*, Ormella quite literally depicts the 'empty rhetoric' of the nation state. This work exists within a series of flag explorations all exploring various statements circulated by politicians and reproduced by publics. Isolating snippets of repetitive speech, she dissects the word and the ideologies behind the word – in this case, patriotism. Apart from referring to Kant's upgrade on the moral golden rule, the categorical imperative (whereby one should act according to the

maxim that you would wish all other rational people to follow, as if it were a universal law), the word 'imperative' contains other meanings. The word itself, as an adjective and noun, describes something that is of utmost importance. It has a certain urgency that needs to be acted upon immediately. Similarly in grammar, an 'imperative mood' denotes verbs that are used in commands – they are words used for discipline and instruction. Bearing these meanings in mind, does not necessarily bring clarity but opens up questions. This work is not a deconstruction of the flag but perhaps a reflection of it. Is Ormella pointing to the urgency to heal our nation? Are we, perhaps, hanging off strings, as the stars do in this work? Are we seeing ourselves upside down, as per the stars in this work, too – the Antipodes, the way in which we were conceived in European imaginations before Europeans could confirm the existence of a great southern land (See Helen Hughes "Upside Down/right way up")? Is this a call to right our vision and detach from the anchors we hold so tightly too?

* <https://www.the-national.com.au/essays/upside-downright-way-up-historiography-of-contemporary-australian-art/>

RYAN PRESLEY

BORN 1987, ALICE SPRINGS, NT
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE
MARRI NGARR



Above: *Ten Dollar Note – Oodgeroo Commemorative*, 2010, watercolour on Arches paper, framed 90 x 130 cm
Right: *Ten Dollar Note – Woloa Commemorative*, 2010, watercolour on Arches paper, framed 90 x 130 cm
The University of Queensland Collection, purchased 2011. © Ryan Presley/Copyright Agency, 2020. Photo: Carl Warner

IN THE SHOW

Ten Dollar Note – Oodgeroo Commemorative, 2010

OR

Twenty Dollar Note – Woloa Commemorative, 2010
Watercolour on Arches paper
framed 90 x 130 cm

As these works are sensitive to light, only one work will be shown at each venue.

The University of Queensland
Collection, purchased 2011 © Ryan Presley/
Copyright Agency, 2020.
Photo: Carl Warner

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://ryanpresley.com.au/>

WATCH

- Interview with Artist, Ryan Presley – video by UQ Art Museum: <https://vimeo.com/204292319>



To understand Presley's work, it is important to contextualise the above watercolours in three key ways; firstly in light of its performative element where audience members could exchange Australian dollars for Blood Money dollars; secondly, in the context of the colonisation as primarily a capitalist venture (i.e. through primitive accumulation in Marx's terms), and thirdly in the context of the art industry as enmeshed in economies that depends on ongoing colonisation.*

In various iterations of Presley's work, a mock currency exchange booth would be set up in the gallery and attended by a gallery employee who would exchange audiences' Australian dollars for smaller, printed, Blood Money dollars at the standing exchange rate. The exchange that audiences participated in, however, was not wholly performative or [charitable \(the money earned from the exchange booth was donated to charities to support Indigenous learning\)](#). It is important to remember that the figures who appear on Australian currency are faces that pass through every Australian's lives and through the lives of Australia's visitors. They are, though we may not know their names, venerated by the mundane way in which they occupy our lives. It is important to note, then, that most of the figures on the Australian notes are Anglo-Saxon, and David Unaipon is the only Indigenous person represented. There are no other ethnicities represented by the notes. Further, though

all the coins have various Australian animals on them, the \$2 coin remains imprinted with an anonymous Aboriginal man's face (although inspired by Gwoya Tjungarrayi) – the implication behind this sequence is pretty conspicuous and clearly continues the conflation of Indigenous peoples with flora and fauna (a quite literally dehumanising ideology, which in the law, started with terra nullius and was only rectified in the 1967 referendum).

Currency is the physical manifestation of both the reason why the nation state exists and the foundations on which it still relies. The reason why we hear politicians talk so much about the economy is not because it is essential to being (we could still have access to water, food, shelter, even luxuries without it) but because it has become the defining way in which our being is governed. Prior to colonisation, most Indigenous nations, despite having laws and borders as well as participating in intra- and international economies (see Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu*), did not have currency and did not subscribe to capitalist economies, but rather functioned in sustainable, non-surplus-based economies that took and gave as needed, without accumulation.

* <http://www.acentreforeverything.com/maps-of-gratitude>

JOAN ROSS

BORN 1961, GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY



I Give You a Mountain, 2018, (still), HD video, 6 mins, 30 secs. Animator: Josh Raymond. Courtesy the artist, Michael Reid, Sydney and Bett Gallery, Hobart

IN THE SHOW

I Give You a Mountain, 2018
HD Video
6 mins 30 secs

Courtesy of the artist and Michael Reid, Sydney and
Bett Gallery, Hobart | Warner

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://joanross.com.au/>

VIEW

- A slideshow discussing works from the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW that have influenced and inspired Ross's work <http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au/artsets/cswl4f>

'Ross has formed a visual language, indeed an entire alternative universe, that takes elements from the Australia we have come to accept and reorders them as strange and subversive. I have seen earlier sculptural works of Ross's that totally rethink materials such as kangaroo fur, but rather than situating *I give you a mountain* in the conceptual zone of Australia, Ross now nods to the science-fiction tradition of a dystopian narrative in a no-place. We glide slowly through the archways of a white-walled manor house not unlike that in the final stretch of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is filled with the banal detritus of everyday Australian life – pools of chlorine water, bell jars trapping live fauna, morning television spruiking organic dog food, a kit of grey pigeons burbling tremulously. Through the final arch, we reach a set of peculiar paper-like mountains, constructed in blatant two-dimensionality. It is someone's – a European's – idea of an Australian mountain range; it is a stage. Poking over the blue cloudy sky is a CCTV camera that witnesses two white colonial figures shuffle into frame. The geology crumbles around them, rock by rock, peak by peak and, finally, the colonial duo crumbles to dust, too, on their shifty theatrical stage of Australianness, leaving everyone in darkness.'

- Lauren Carroll Harris <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/culture/art/2019/02/23/just-not-australian/15508404007501>

Like many of the artists in this exhibition, Ross examines colonisation and settler-colonialism both as a national and personal phenomenon. There is a humour to Ross's work that is very self-reflexive – she is having a giggle at herself and the world she comes from, trying to genuinely understand, in good humour, what is going on and how she fits into it all. While Ross often works with colonial landscapes by painters such as John Glover, critiquing colonisation as an ideology and process via the land, this particular work, extends this examination to museums, archival institutions and galleries themselves. Ross, deliberately leaves the 'construction' of her works visible. They are not meant to be naturalised; the clunky movements, layered objects and backdrops are meant to reflect the way in which Australia, its history, archives and art, has also been quite deliberately constructed and staged – a

production in every sense of the word. There is also a speculative element to this work, that asks the old question of how people might view our time in the future. How will this era be archived and historicised? Ross overlays this with the impending possibility of environmental destruction whereby, indeed, our histories might need to be unearthed from the rumble of earth or the depths of the ocean. This is not a nihilistic work, however. It acknowledges the inevitable passing of and continuation of time in a nonchalant, matter-of-fact way; it denies the 'End of History' that Fukuyama declared and revives the possibility for futurity beyond the current limitations of our systems.

TONY SCHWENSEN

BORN 1970, SYDNEY
LIVES JAMAICA PLAINS, UNITED STATES



Border Protection Assistance Proposed Monument for the Torres Strait (Am I ever going to see your face again?), 2002, road barriers, buckets, floaties, water, 113.5 x 350 x 310.5 cm. Installation view, Just Not Australian, Artspace, Sydney, 2019. Courtesy the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Zan Wimberley

IN THE SHOW

Border Protection Assistance Proposed Monument for the Torres Strait (Am I ever going to see your face again?), 2002

road barriers, buckets, floaties, water
113.5 x 350 x 310.5cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery,
Sydney

USEFUL LINK

- Artist website: <https://tonyschwensen.net/>

READ

- A review of the exhibition *Historical Revisionism* in which this work was first exhibited at Sarah Cottier Gallery in 2015 <https://theartlife.com.au/2015/historical-revisionism/>
- Essay by Blair French: https://d3zr9vspdnjxi.cloudfront.net/artistInfo/tonyschw/bio/bio_22.pdf?9193

‘In particular, the work acknowledges opposition to self-reflection, to change, to independent (as opposed to self-interested) action as a default setting within Australian society, Nevertheless, it openly, even fondly, partakes in an Australian vernacular. Speaking from within, it conveys a form of fury with cultural lethargy, with a devaluation of social, political and intellectual capital that is amplified in the microclimate of the art world. As such, it is not afraid of becoming the target of its own critique, Yet crucially the work never pretends to offer the ultimate agency to enact real social or cultural change, it poses questions and picks at scabs, it offers neither solutions nor salve. Schwensen’s practice is a form of cultural resistance that never loses sight of its own probable ineffectiveness. But such a sense of futility provides no reason to cease work.’

- Blair French, *Tony Schwensen: Love it or Leave it, Art & Australia*, p 268, https://d3zr9vspdnjxi.cloudfront.net/artistInfo/tonyschw/bio/bio_22.pdf?9193

Schwensen’s work offers an ironic visualisation of Australia’s border policies as contained in both a multiplicity of physical and ideological manifestations. The physical barriers that constitute the work are usually used as road blocks and/or in construction sites. Like the fluoro colours of Joan Ross’s protagonists and the navy, orange and yellow of work uniforms in Ormella’s *Settler Economies* they symbolise, by proxy of their ubiquity, the literal building of the nation state – structurally and infrastructurally. We can read infrastructures and structures both literally and metaphorically.

Metaphorically, infrastructures are the invisible flows of ideas and beliefs that sustain our societies in ways that we are not aware due to their naturalisation. Like running water, electricity or sewage, however, if these flows are interrupted – suddenly we are made aware of their presence.* Covid-19, for example, has shown us the instability of a casualised workforce, internationally outsourced production and imports, international exports such as tourism and education, even just globalisation and neo-liberalisation in general. We are experiencing barriers, blockages, and ruptures that many of us wouldn’t usually encounter, though they would be experienced by a large majority of people regularly – our blindness to these flows is our privilege.

A major juridical, social and physical barrier to many is the nation state’s borders. The juxtaposition of physical barriers with national barriers – both physical as represented by the water in which the barriers sit,

as well as social/cultural, as embodied by the common catchphrases written on the barriers – attempts to emulate this rupture/blockage that we might not experience as citizens and documented persons. Much like the 1967 referendum that saw Indigenous peoples finally counted as citizens and therefore ‘humans’, Schwensen attempts to point out the continuing conflation of documents with humanity.

While the buckets of water can be read as symbolic of our watery borders, they can also be read as a by-product of leakage – think here of putting a bucket under a leaky water-pipe – a broken infrastructure. The floaties are also similarly precarious. They do not look stable enough to hold the barriers – they are a dodgy job. We could read them as indicative of the ubiquitous lifejackets associated with refugee boats and the disasters that they have faced - notably but not exclusively, Tampa and SIEV-X. These specific events, ruptured the social/ideological flow, and saw more and more people aware of Australia’s treatment of refugees. It also saw the relocation of refugee incarceration offshore and the heavy policing of information coming out of those camps. This is a stark contrast to the children’s floaties occupying ‘the good life’ of suburban backyard pools.

* See Marina Vishmidt referenced in: <https://parsejournal.com/article/artistic-production-in-the-context-of-neoliberalism-autonomy-and-heteronomy-revisited-by-means-of-infrastructurel-critique/>

FURTHER READING

AT ARTSPACE

Interview with Talia Linz, Curator, *Just Not Australian*:
<https://vimeo.com/329967480>

Just Not Australian - Artist Talks as part of Sydney Festival - Participating artists in *Just Not Australian* discuss their works that engage with national mythologies and the complexities around representation, visibility, resistance and belonging. With Soda Jerk, Abdul Abdullah, Tony Albert, Cigdem Aydemir, Liam Benson, Eric Bridgeman, Karla Dickens, Archie Moore, Nell and Joan Ross:
<https://soundcloud.com/artspace-619083596/just-not-australian-artist-talks>

[Just Not Australian](#), Art Almanac, by Talia Smith

[Just Not Australian](#), Art + Australia, by Chloe Jones

[Just Not Australian](#), The Saturday Paper, by Lauren Carroll Harris

[Artists can't help swearing in Just Not Australian](#), Art Guide Australia, by Rebecca Shanahan

[How artists are rethinking nationhood in turbulent times](#), by Gina Fairley, ArtsHub

[Just Not Australian asks how we define and project our identity](#), on ABC RN, presented by Ed Ayres

TERROR NULLIUS

[Terror Nullius review](#), The Guardian by Luke Buckmaster

[Soda Jerk: Terror Nullius](#), Artlink review by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

[Soda Jerk's Terror Nullius on ABC RN](#), The Hub on Screen presented by Jason Di Rosso

[Soda Jerk in conversation](#) on OCULA

OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND TOPICS

People are removing their southern cross tattoos
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-26/trend-of-covering-up-and-removing-southern-cross-tattoos/9360746>

Crisis of identity
<https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/voices/culture/article/2016/11/21/comment-crisis-identity-australia>

'Aussie' poster project
<https://www.peterdrewarts.com/monga-khan-aussie-posters>

How Australian are you buzzfeed quiz
<https://www.buzzfeed.com/bradesposito/how-australian-are-you-actually>

Citizenship practice test
<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship/test-and-interview/prepare-for-test/practice-test>

7am podcast (produced by Shwartz media who do the monthly and the Saturday paper)

- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/the-case-for-moving-cook>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/its-not-about-statues-or-chris-lilley>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/white-terror-part-three-the-itch-at-your-back>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/white-terror-part-two-the-dossier>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/how-coronavirus-feeds-australian-racism>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/suing-over-howards-camps>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/andrew-bolt-vs-dark-emu>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/booing-adam-goodes>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/cancelling-citizens>
- <https://7ampodcast.com.au/episodes/black-witness-white-witness>

READ

- Dark Emu by Bruce Pascoe
- The Secret River by Kate Grenville
- The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith by Thomas Keneally (also a film)
- For the Term of His Natural Life by Marcus Clarke
- Power Without Glory by Frank Hardy
- True History of the Kelly Gang by Peter Carey
- Gould's Book of Fish by Richard Flanagan
- The Timeless Land by Eleanor Dark
- Island Home by Tim Winton
- The Island in the Mind by Rodney Hall
- Looking for Alibrandi by Melina Marchetta (also a film)
- Tomorrow when the war began series by John Marsden
- My Place by Sally Morgan

WATCH

- *Walkabout* 1971
- *Mad Max* 1979
- *Gallipoli* 1981
- *Crocodile Dundee* 1986
- *Pricilla Queen of the Desert* 1994
- *Oscar And Lucinda* 1997
- *Cunnamulla* 2000
- *Rabbit Proof Fence* 2002
- *Molly & Mobarak* 2003
- *Ned Kelly* 2003
- *The Proposition* 2005
- *Australia* 2009
- *The Combination* 2009
- *Samson and Delilah* 2009
- *Oranges and Sunshine* 2010
- *Mad Max Fury Road* 2015
- *Chasing Asylum* 2016
- *Down Under* 2016

LISTEN

Satirical song "I don't like it" by Pauline Pantsdown
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HSxXCwBgog>

"From Little Things Big Things Grow" by Paul Kelly
https://youtube.com/watch?v=6_ndC07C2qw