

Daniel Boyd

Language: Kudjla / Gangalu

Questioning the romantic notions that surround the birth of Australia is primarily what influenced me to create this body of work. With our history being dominated by Eurocentric views it's very important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to create dialogue from their own perspective to challenge the subjective history that has been created

The spectre of the English seafarer Captain James Cook is central to the colonial history of the South Pacific Ocean. In the Arnhem Land mining town of Nhulunbuy near Yirrkala, the home of modern-day Aboriginal land rights, the town's central park is defiantly named "Endeavour Square" although Captain Cook didn't come within 500 kilometres of the place. Even more amazing is that the town's new shopping complex was named the "Captain Cook Shopping Centre" in the late 1980s.

Daniel Boyd was born in 1982 in the north Queensland tourist city of Cairns, a place overlain as is nearby Cooktown with homages to the single visit of Captain James Cook in 1770. Although a number of contemporary art surges took place in Cairns in the 1980s, it remains a regional art site, and the 1990s found Boyd at the National Art School in Canberra. There he experimented with a number of art forms and painting styles before focusing on the subtle, ironic political reworking of colonial icons and history, with notions of Captain Cook centrally placed.

Many Aboriginal contemporary artists have worked on an alternative "real" interpretation of Australia's colonial past, but none is more creatively detailed and researched than Boyd's. His reading of this history depicts the "colonial heroes" as the "buccaneers" of Elizabethan times pirates with eye patches, parrots and necklaces of skulls and sees them as the thieves and killers they in fact were no matter what European royal sanction they acted under. Daniel uses the re-interpretation of classical colonial paintings to force open a dialogue concerning the largely conservative "official" understanding of the Australian history we are taught.

His 2007 solo exhibition *Fatal Impact Invasion of the South Pacific*, at the Mori Gallery in Sydney, sold out and was critically well received. He is now a respected and acknowledged contemporary Australian artist, ranked as one of the fifty most collectable by *Art Collector* magazine. He lives and works in Sydney.

(Author: Djon Mundine, OAM)