

woolloongabba art gallery



SILENCE

Henri van Noordenburg & Eryn Begley

image ©

Left: Eryn Begley, *The Empress* 2011, found old book, etched aluminum, old photograph, enamel
Right: Henri van Noordenburg, *Composition VII* 2011 60 x 100cm hand carved archival matt print

Silence

Where does one truly belong? In the place they live, in the place/s their forebears lived? In the lead-up to our most recent federal election, when once again a near-hysteria campaign targeting asylum-seekers was run, former PM Bob Hawke uttered the phrase ‘we are all boat people’. While not entirely true, most Australians’ roots are in other countries. Such is the case with Henri van Noordenburg and Eryn Begley: the former a Dutch migrant and the latter from across the ditch with a mixed heritage that includes Irish, Maori and German bloodlines.

Bloodlines is a very deliberate word choice. Beyond the overtones of Zhang Xiaogang’s famous painting series of the same name with the icon of a painted red thread, in Begley’s work the red thread recurs as a biblical reference –a reference to Mary Magdalene and by inference his own strictly religious upbringing, which directly reflects Begley’s ostracism from much of his family. It was very deliberate act for him to bolt shut bibles and to give these artworks pagan-derived titles.

In van Noordenburg and Begley’s private world, silence exists in many guises. Both artists’ work contains a poetic, beautiful and intrinsic stillness, a (somewhat paradoxical) stillness that implies silence. Then there’s the silence in the tyranny of distance; in the muted response to overlaying of cultures/landscapes/family portraits. But a forced silence hovers over Henri and Eryn: the silence of a governmental denial of the legitimacy of their (and many others’) relationship.

And no, Henri’s nude self-portraits are not photoshopped into the image; they are the starting point from which the image spreads. Drawing inspiration from Bruegel (among others), Henri looks at the improbable yet inevitable and ongoing overlaying of a European aesthetic on the physical and intellectual Australian landscape. And a little Japonism thrown in for good measure.

Gordon Craig 2012

Henri van Noordenburg *Composition XII* 2012 40 x 100cm
hand carved archival matt print



Henri van Noordenburg

Throughout my artistic career the focus has been on the question of belonging, not only our sense of belonging to a place in indigenous terms, but also the effect upon the natural environment of a global shift of living patterns from rural-based to an urban-based human population. Equally is this work about the Diaspora of human kind, whether this is caused by natural disasters or human injustice like oppression related to religion, race, gender or sexuality, the work is in search for a modern Utopia.

The work highlights the emotions of the foreigner and our composure as we attempt to assimilate within the predominant culture. The overall composure of the protagonist is gentle or passive, and at times this mood is contrasted by intense strain, highlighting the condemnation of the foreign. The sombre colouring further reinforces this condemnation, as oppressive monotone greys and blacks are dominant beside the naked body and skin tones.

While the image may translate into a landscape, the essence is about what is added, altered, or removed. By scraping back the layers I hope to highlight not only the foreigner or its composure, but also the concept of memory and cultural belonging.

These etchings pay homage to artists working within the Symbolism genre, as well as early Dutch landscape artists. The photographic element is inspired by allegory themes with strong references to Renaissance painting and sculpture.

The male figure sometimes appears integrated into the landscape, while other times alienated from his surroundings, metaphorically questioning the preconceptions concerning issues of contemporary displacement.

The diversity of the landscape considers the effects of colonisation, challenging a different perspective on our local natural environment and raises the question of belonging. In this case it emphasizes the beauty of cultural diversity, where in an ideal world, all people, flora and fauna can grow equally.



Henri van Noordenburg *Composition IX* 2011
100 x 100cm hand carved archival matt print



Henri van Noordenburg *Composition X* 2012 100 x 100cm
hand carved archival matt print

ERYN BEGLEY

My artistic journey began with an appreciation of the 'Great Masters' paintings and I include the works of Titan, Botticelli, and Caravaggio among the canon that continues to inspire me. Other artwork that I am drawn to is often indigenous to Australia and the Pacific region, especially my native New Zealand.

Incorporating my cultural beliefs and values in an attempt to address 'the interconnectedness of all things' is fundamental when developing the aesthetic of my craft. My strict religious upbringing encourages an approach that holds a long fascination with art that has connection to ritual, to tradition, to the mystical, and to non-dogmatic spirituality. Furthermore, I am influenced by religious traditions and iconography, and humor a soft spot for Catholicism, Buddhism and Gnosticism. This fascination feeds an inquiry into the union of sacred and profane within the everyday, focusing on the importance this union has in the creation of myth.



Eryn Begley *Temperance* 2011,
found book, etched aluminum, titanium.



Eryn Begley *The High Priestess* 2011, 21.5 x 14cm
found old book, etched aluminum, old photograph

The artist Chris Drury is of the persuasion that while working intently on a piece, be it jewellery or otherwise, it 'is being imbued with great spirit', rendering it something more than simply a thing of beauty. With this as my mantra, I employ processes that require much handling, allowing lengthy interaction between myself, as artist, and the piece being worked on.

While craft practices, in particular metalwork techniques, imbue my studio work, I remain open to all forms of creation when investigating a concept. Choosing to use recycled and found objects in my assemblages, I hope to highlight 'green' issues, while making the precious mundane, and the ordinary something valuable.

Artists' website:
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