

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2010

For immediate release

Rod Bunter & Jonathan McBurnie

***Burn The Town Where I Was Born***

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June - Thurs 17<sup>th</sup> July

Supersized superheroes set to burn town down

*You thought Iron Man 2 was epic? Avatar? Bah!*

*Two years in the making!!*

*McBurnie vs. Bunter!*

*The painting they swore they would never do!! The painting you swore they would never finish! The painting that destroyed five relationships!!!! The epic 'McBunter' hybrid monster is finally being shown, unleashed on an unsuspecting audience at Woolloongabba Art Gallery from this Friday 4th June.*

Inspired by a line from a Stones Roses song, iconoclastic consumerism and a slew of comic-book heroes - *Burn The Town Where I Was Born* - an epic painting with a seemingly never-ending deadline will finally be revealed at Woolloongabba Art Gallery this Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June, open to the viewing public until Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July.

*Burn The Town Where I Was Born* began in 2008 when illustrator/painter, Jonathan McBurnie approached bad-boy Brisbane artist, Rod Bunter as part of the Youth Arts Queensland mentorship program.

The two-years-in-the-making project, too large to be completed in the initially prescribed 10-month mentorship timeframe now stands as a massive 16-metre, eight-panel painting. If the epic work was not enough, an additional three stand-alone collaborative paintings and individual works by the two artists will also form part of the same exhibition.

Out of McBurnie's initial plans, he explains that the collaborative process started with some basic principles such as experimenting with the overlap of each of the artists own brand of renown, their stylistic concerns and techniques.

"Eventually the collaborative works became very reactive seeing us both work on separate panels, swapping and changing as the work dictated, sometimes together in the studio and sometimes in shifts," said McBurnie.

Ideas and images bounced back and forth, constantly being negotiated, altered or even painted over completely. Eventually these layers began to give the work its own dimension, taking on a landscape heavily populated by ciphers and icons from McBurnie and Bunter's respective worlds – apocalypse meets consumerism, violence meets sex, romanticism meets pop.

Two years in its creation, Bunter points out that the work has absorbed both artists' chaotic energies while they have traversed their own changes of employment, relationships, politics and studio locations.

"Interestingly, this chaos has remained a constant, an anchor to which we have looked to for focus and counterpoint to the events of everyday life," said Bunter.

"Reality reflected in fantasy," he said.

-ENDS

**MEDIA NOTE ::**

For further information, images and interview opportunities please contact:

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**WHAT:**

**Burn The Town Where I Was Born**

**Rod Bunter & Jonathan McBurnie**

**EXHIBITION DATES:**

**WED 4 June – SAT 17 July**

**OFFICIAL OPENING:**

**FRI 4 NOVEMBER @ 6.30PM**

**ENQUIRIES:**

**07 + 3891 5551 | [www.wag.com.au](http://www.wag.com.au)**

**GALLERY HOURS: Wed-Sat, 11am-6pm**

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **ABOUT THE YOUTH ARTS MENTORING PROGRAM + 'BURN THE TOWN WHERE I WAS BORN'**

Youth Arts Queensland's YAMP (Youth Arts Mentoring Program) 2008 participant Jonathan McBurnie gained both a strong mentor and a number of key collaborators from his YAMP experience.

*My mentor was Rod Bunter: an established painter, an established larrikin and an all-round maverick. A mutual artist friend suggested him, so we met and got along well and went for it.*

*Rod and I have a lot of threads that relate to our work, but lots of differences also. Our eight panel painting, 'Burn The Town Where I Was Born', is testament to such a collaboration, which is great.*

– Jonathan McBurnie, Artist and YAMP participant

*It has been a rollercoaster ride with Jonathan. Scary, but a lot of fun.*

- Rod Bunter, Artist and Mentor

## **THE ARTISTS - IN SNAPSHOT**

### **Roderick BUNTER (b.1970)**

Roderick Bunter graduated from QCA with a Bachelor of Visual Arts, Majoring in Painting, in 1990. Throughout the 1990s, Bunter was heavily involved in art galleries, running ISNT Gallery from 1992-96.

In high demand, his (often notorious) 'playground' of work is widely represented in a number of public collections including Queensland Art Gallery, several university and regional collections and a number of private collections such as the Kerry Stokes' Collection.

Having painted since the age of 12, Bunter's devotion to the slickness of advertising and the proliferation of signs have inhabited his line of sight since childhood. Encircled by brash ads and waking to Pegasus billboards at his parent's Dalby gas station in his early years, Bunter maintains an indecisive relationship with the logic of mass culture yet his work is always playful, well-crafted, topical and more-often precocious.

Bunter has staged solo exhibitions at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (1998, 2000 and 2003) and was featured in Primavera 2002 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Currently barred from The Norman Hotel and The Casino for the foreseeable future, he lives and works in Brisbane and is completing his Masters Degree in Visual Art at QCA.

### **Jonathan McBURNIE (b.1983)**

Jonathan McBurnie sharpened his drawing skills as a childhood escape in Townsville, his place of birth, where he lived for seventeen years. During this time, he self-published over twenty comic books, selling them at school and at the local comic shop in order to support his fiendish and all-encompassing obsession with comic books.

In 2001, McBurnie began a degree in animation at the Queensland College of Art. He honed his drawing further in and out of hospital during his nine months of chemotherapy in 2003, filling 50 journals with cathartic abandon. During this nine months, McBurnie held his first art exhibition, which featured highlights from the many journal drawings, and has exhibited regularly in group and solo shows ever since. McBurnie graduated from QCA, with a Bachelor of Fine Art, Majoring in Painting and Art Theory, followed by first class Honours in 2007 and taking out the excellence in Painting award.

McBurnie's subject matter ranges from the personal to the political. Different characters, ciphers for interpretation, inhabit the barren landscapes and mindscapes of the post-industrial western world. Heroes and Villains of different worlds attract and repel each other, searching for meaning and truth. Picasso's Minotaur and Nolan's Kelly are locked in a Kirby-esque never-ending battle for the truth behind their creation, their purpose and their existence.

McBurnie has staged solo exhibitions nationally and is represented in collections nationally and overseas as well as several regional gallery collections. He lives and works in Brisbane.

## Q&A WITH JONATHAN MCBURNIE AND ROD BUNTER

### What makes this project interesting to audiences?

**JMcB:** I think in terms of the size and intensity of the project, people will be drawn to it quite naturally. People have an unconscious desire to understand things, to break them down and figure them out. Rod and I are creating such a dense text here that the possibilities for interpretation are almost endless. People bring their own stories to different images, depending upon their history and relationship with those images, or what those images represent on both an emotional and physical level.

**RB:** Full frontal nudity.

### 2. Your favourite superhero/comicbook hero and why?

**JMcB:** My favourite comic heroes would be Superman and Batman. They have both been subjects of obsession for me since I can remember. I like how they work together as characters and symbols. Superman is such a fantastic, god-like character who can do almost anything, and yet it is his humanity that often gets him into trouble, his emotions. His Clark Kent side, which allows him to connect with the world in a way he can't as the God-like Superman. He chases after Lois, he writes for a newspaper (which I am sure would be a 'Guardian' type of newspaper, very objective and factual) those kinds of things. Human things. Superman is lead by his heart, and maybe his cock. Superman is Kryptonian, so he is thousands of years more evolved than humans, and has a much more evolved sense of self and sense of morality than a human could - he is more humane than any human. Superman operates with a need to use his great powers to help people in any way he can. Batman is almost the reverse. He wallows in science, mathematics, logic, ignoring the 'humane' side of his personality. Batman's problems usually stem from him losing his human side, losing that connection. He operates out of a need for revenge, a need for retribution - which is, ironically, very, very human. Plus Batman is possibly the best-designed superhero of all-time. I cannot think of a better design off the top of my head for a costume in any media.

**RB:** Charlie Brown. He is an anti-hero – an archetypal loser.

### 3. Describe your style?

**JMcB:** Dark, melodramatic, literate, cinematic, gothic, apocalyptic, heroic, biblical, emotive, sexy, funny, romantic, intense and incendiary.

**RB:** Colonial.

### 4. What inspires you? (ie music, sounds, film, people, locations, moments, textures, time of day etc).

**JMcB:** Music, images, relationships, books, comic books, art. I am sure that it all goes into my brain and swirls around a while and at some point comes out in my art work.

**RB:** Naked ambition ... and money.

### 5. Travel stories?

**JMcB:** Japan was particularly inspiring to my work. Japan seems to be a place of extremes, whether it be high and low culture, simplicity and complexity or tradition and progress. Besides being an incredibly visual culture in terms the physical designs and structures of both traditional and contemporary spaces, as a culture there is a respect, or even a reverence, for the graphic arts, including comics and animation.

I found Prague very intense. The drawings and writings I made there had a sense of doom in them, something I had not felt anywhere else so strongly. It has such a bloody history, you can't help but feel it everywhere you go. Prague has ghosts.

**RB:** One time, at band camp...

**6. Are you studying / working? If so, what is it that you are doing aside from studio time?**

**JMcB:** I am working at the Queensland College of Art as the secretary of Fine Art. I occasionally teach drawing there also.

**RB:** I am currently enrolled in a Masters Degree in Visual Art at Queensland College of Art.

**7. Jonathan, what was collaborating with Rod Bunter like?**

**JMcB:** I've really enjoyed it. A lot of people were saying how difficult he can be, but I have not found that at all. Rod is really easy to work with. And he knows all of the painting tricks. And he is a larrikin, which I enjoy. I call him Bunter S. Thompson. I suppose he is quite used to collaboration after that work he did with Ben Frost a few years ago. And it looks great - our styles work strangely well together.

