

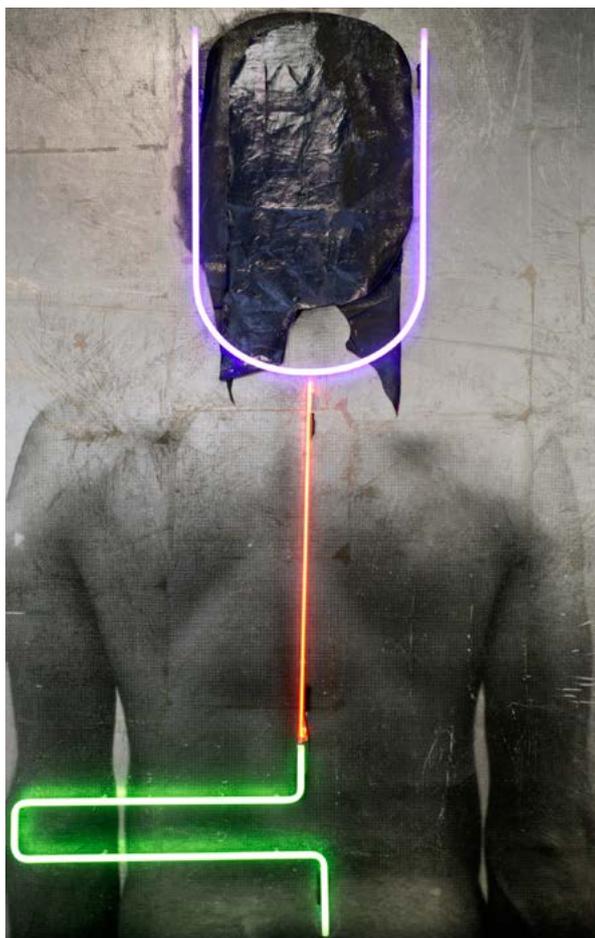
GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

BRUSSELS

BROOK ANDREW

2 February - 1 April 2017

Rue Charles Decoster 8 - 1050 Brussels



Back of Man II, 2016. Linen, ink, acrylic, foil, neon. 260 x 165 x 12 cm (102 3/8 x 65 x 4 3/4 in.)
Courtesy Brook Andrew & Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris/Brussels.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is thrilled to organise *Assemblage*, the first personal exhibition by Australian artist Brook Andrew in Brussels. The exhibition will take place just before the important retrospective show to be held at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne dedicated to his work.¹

Born in Sydney in 1970, Brook Andrew is considered to be one of the most prominent figures of the Asian-Pacific artistic scene and continues to present works and museum interventions internationally including Madrid, Paris and Sydney. Multidisciplinary, he describes himself as being both a conceptual and historical artist.

Brook Andrew's work uses juxtaposition and assemblage as a powerful action to comment on memory, memorialisation to decolonialise history. The artist attempts to re-order histories so we can re-visit them in alternate outcomes. As the artist has said, «I wanted to bind complex histories together. It's an assembly of histories...», also, «Andrew's work takes assembly one step further, however, insofar as it is not only a "form of action ... for acting and living" but also for remembering. That "plural force", silent and still, can be one of remembrance; indeed, in the wake of past and persistent colonialisms, it has to be one of remembrance.»²

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Placing Australia at the centre of a global inquisition, the artist uses this position to reflect on how Western and European understanding of so-called inferior border/frontier cultures are indeed powerful and offer alternate memories and visions of a different world. For example, renowned Australian Aboriginal anthropologist, Professor Marcia Langton, comments on his iconic *Gun-metal Grey* portraits: «[they] are at once ethical portraits and gothic ghost-scapes rescued from the anthropological archives. They are more philosophical and moody in their reach into the human depths of suffering».³

His work interrogates and represents the history of violence and colonisation, to present alternate views of presenting new memories for analysis, without evoking blame or guilt. These alternate interpretations depend on the viewer's ability to see differently. Brook Andrew's work has been described as being 'generous' and creates links between different centuries and cultures and does not shy away from challenging the roles between colonialism, modernism and how we can relook at creating decolonial views, as Nick Aikens explains:

I read Andrew's artistic and political project through a constellation of different positions. First, I start from the premise, introduced by Walter Mignolo, the semiotician and decolonial theorist, that "coloniality is constitutive of modernity. In other words there is no modernity without coloniality".⁴ Mignolo outlines his position as follows: "Modernity" is a complex narrative whose point of origination was Europe; a narrative that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side: "coloniality". Understanding or accepting the inextricable link between modernity and coloniality, their co-dependence and the need to 'dechain' them, as Mignolo calls it, frames my reading of Andrew's work.⁵

Experimenting with forms, techniques and contemporary materials (neon, inflatable structures and video), Brook Andrew also produces work, which can be subliminally loaded with dark humour. This strategy is used for artworks that directly comment on hidden or unknown histories such as the frontier wars in Australia or other international comparative sites. A key artwork that reflects this strategy is *Jumping Castle War Memorial*, a full sized inflatable bouncy castle created as a comment on the lack of physical war memorials to Aboriginal people in Australia and those other sites internationally. *Jumping Castle War Memorial* premiered at David Elliot's 17th Sydney Biennale, 2010. On this day, the bouncy castle offered fun and laughs and an immersive experience for the public who, for many, seemed to overlook the symbolic solemnity behind the monument.



Memory (Triptyque), 2016. Linen, acrylic ink, white and black foil. 240 × 410 × 4 cm (94 1/2 × 161 3/8 × 1 5/8 in.).
Courtesy Brook Andrew & Galerie Nathalie Obadia Paris/Brussels.

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The spectator's involvement is important for the artist and brings the work to life, making it a physical and mental reflexive space. The juxtaposition between life and death, a dramatic and comical situation with laughter and terror being part of the circus and carnival universe, has captivated Brook Andrew since his childhood.

After *Jumping Castle War Memorial* and *The Cell* (inflatable prison or asylum) in 2011, other works by the artist were created with the same geometrical black and white motives. Traditional carving from his mother Wiradjuri nation in Australia inspires the black and white pattern the artist uses in these and other works. The aim here is for the artist to create an op-art affect, one that is seductive but also disorienting.

Two recent paintings shown at Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Brussels are covered with this print: *The Forest and Memory*, which group Indigenous and colonial figures. Their unusual juxtapositions highlight the artists' interest in stereotypes and the bizarre practices of physical anthropology of comparing so-called civilised with uncivilised peoples – which he and many others believe is useless and destructive. The black and white design acts as a visual marker to revive collective memories of the past. Like the genre of European history paintings (which Brook Andrew considers to be a false interpretation of reality), the artist presents an alternative yet honest vision of colonial history. His own paintings are a similar size to the 19th century history genre paintings. He uses this technique to correct the public's view that he believes were previously misled. As the artist expresses:

*...historical paintings that tell religious and human stories around change, trauma and drama are usually either imagined or the stories of the victors of war. The absence of historical paintings of Aboriginal or other Indigenous histories is an oversight of equality.*⁶

A series of portraits made in 2013 also sparked interest. The portraits come from 19th and early 20th Century post cards which Brook Andrew has collected over many decades as part of his ambitious personal archive. The post cards show male and female Indigenous and border cultures picturing 'exotic' ethnicities photographed by Western photographers, anthropologists and tourists. The unknown faces from various countries including, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Congo, Madagascar, Algeria, Canada, Martinique, Japan and Australia, have one thing in common, their anonymity. As Judith Ryan, curator at the National Gallery of Victoria, explains:

*52 Portraits also drew upon the artist's deep fascination for art history, in particular the conceptual uniformity and formalism of Gerhard Richter's 48 Portraits, 1971. Richter's monochrome and homogeneous depiction of white central European and American men prominent in fields of science, literature, music and philosophy is turned on its head by Andrew's inclusion of their antithesis: anonymous First Nations men and women of different ethnicities. The series brings to the surface a central preoccupation of Andrew's humanist practice – the legacy of instances of historical trauma in the present, particularly those caused by the brutal treatment of colonised peoples in Australia and in other colonial territories.*⁷

Brook Andrew considers himself to be an archaeologist of memories. The narrative behind each face with its forgotten history fascinates him, and each portrait is brought back to life through his work.

In 2016, Brook Andrew was invited to work in residence in the renown creative and scientific residency Récollets couvent in Paris and at the same time was awarded «Photography Residencies» at the Musée du Quai Branly, which authorises him to use the immense photographic archives of the Parisian institution. The end result is a new series of photographs and an ongoing relationship with the Quai Branly like his relationships with both Oxford and Cambridge university museums.

Through his research work, he uses press clippings, photography, post cards and engravings which he used for example to produce the *Sunset* series, part of which is on show at Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Brussels. Archived documents are often associated with local objects. The Sapelli exotic wood Brook Andrew uses for his sculptured frames are decorated with coloured neon which has been chosen to capture attention just like a corporate advertisement or pure beauty of colour. In order to reach his target audience, the artist plays upon the differences between the content and the container, the message and the form.

Over the past few years, Brook Andrew has been invited to prestigious art and ethnographical museums. He is inspired by their historical archive documents and reactivates their ability to touch the public. The artist also has a large archive collection that he mixes and juxtaposes with important museum collections and in his artworks. He brings back the past in order to better understand the present through alternate narratives.

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Interested by this idea, the Smithsonian Institute of Washington (United States); the Van Abbemuseum of Eindhoven (The Netherlands); Le Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève (Switzerland), and the Asia Art Archive of Hong-Kong (China) will open up their respective collections this year to the artist. He will therefore continue to question, with both depth and frivolity, the state of our post-colonial society in order to offer new ways of art expression.

1. Brook Andrew: *The Right to Offend is Sacred*. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. 3 March – 4 June 2017, art curator Judith Ryan.
2. Anthony Gardner, «Assemble/Assembly/Assemblage», in Brook Andrew: *The Right to Offend is Sacred*, exh. cat. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. 3 March – 4 June 2017, p. 89.
3. Marcia Langton, « Brook Andrew : Ethical portraits and ghost-shapes », Art Bulletin of Victoria 48, 2008, ed. National Gallery of Victoria Press, Melbourne, Australia, online at <<http://www.ng.vic.gov.au/essay/brook-andrew-ethical-portraits-and-ghost-scapes/>>.
4. Walter D. Mignolo, in «The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options», ed. Duke University Press, 2011, Durham, United States and London, United Kingdom.
5. Nick Aikens, « Collage/Constellations », in Brook Andrew: *The Right to Offend is Sacred*, exh. cat. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. 3 March – 4 June 2017, p. 25.
6. Quote of the Artist.
7. Judith Ryan, « Aesthetics/Medium/Process», in Brook Andrew: *The Right to Offend is Sacred...*, exh. cat. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. 3 March – 4 June 2017, p.1.

Brook Andrew was born in Sydney in 1970, he lives and works in Melbourne.

A multidisciplinary artist, Brook Andrew is considered to be one of the most prominent figures of his generation from the Australian art scene and from the Asian-Pacific region. His participation in major exhibitions around the world over the past twenty years is symbolic of his growing recognition on the international scene.

In 2016, the Australian Research Council awarded Brook Andrew the prestigious bursary for his project, «Representation, Remembrance and the Monument».

There is a lot going on for Brook Andrew between 2017 and 2018.

From 3rd March to 4th June 2017, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne (Australia) will organise his first retrospective exhibition entitled, «Brook Andrew: The Right To Offend Is Sacred».

In Spring 2017, Brook Andrew will take part in the «Defying Empire» at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra (26th May– 10th September 2017).

During the Spring, Brook Andrew will also collaborate with the MEG - Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève (Switzerland), and work on the collections during the temporary exhibition «L'effet Boomerang. Les arts aborigènes d'Australie» (19th May 2017 – 7th January 2018).

2017 will be marked by several important collaborations by Brook Andrew with prestigious institution collections such as the Smithsonian Institute in Washington (United States), after obtaining a bursary from the famous institution; the collection of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven (The Netherlands) for the «Deviant Practice. Research Programme» project.

From July 2017, Brook Andrew will begin his artist residence at the well known, Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin (Germany).

Brook Andrew has had several international exhibitions over the past years including, «Les Trophées Oubliés» at the Musée d'Aquitaine in Bordeaux (2013) in France, «Jumping Castle War Memorial» at the Felix Art Museum in Dragenbos (2013) in Belgium; «EVIDENCE» at the Museum of Applied Art and Sciences (MAAS) in Sydney (2015), «Sanctuary: The Tombs of the Outcasts» at the Ian Potter Museum of Art of Sydney (2015), «Intervening Time» at the Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art – QAGOMA in Brisbane (for the 8th Edition of the Asia-Pacific Triennial (2015)), « Witness » at the Lyon House Museum in Melbourne (2014), «De Anima» at the Bendigo Regional Gallery and at the RMIT Design Hub in Melbourne (2014), «Warang» at the Museum of Contemporary Art de Sydney (2012) in Australia; and in Japan, «Earth House», for the Echigo-Tsumari Triennial where he represented his country (2012).

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Brook Andrew has also taken part in numerous significant group shows including, in Asia, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (Taiwan, 2015), at the National Museum of China in Beijing (China, 2013), at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul (South Korea, 2011), at the Iberia Centre of Contemporary Art in Beijing (China, 2010), at the Ishibashi Foundation in Tokyo (Japan, 2007); in Australia, at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts - PICA (2015), at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne (2015), at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Sydney (2012), at the 17th Sydney Biennale (2010) ; in the United States at the Spertus Institute of Chicago (2008), at the Smithsonian Institute - National Museum of Art History in Washington (2007) ; in the United Kingdom at the Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge (2016), at the TATE Britain in London (2015) ; in Spain at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofia in Madrid (2014) ; and in Austria at the Künstlerhaus in Vienna (2013) ;

Works by Brook Andrew have been acquired by Australian public and private collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in Sydney; the National Gallery of Victoria, the Vizard Foundation Collection and the BHP Billiton Collection, in Melbourne; the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra; the Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane; the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide; and also the ARTBANK collections. The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Seoul (South Korea) also acquired works by Brook Andrews for its collection.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia in Paris and in Brussels has represented Brook Andrew since 2013.

For further information, please contact Constance Dumas.

constance@nathalieobadia.com — + 32 (0)2 648 14 05

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Brussels

Brook Andrew
Assemblage
2 February - 1 April 2017

Brenna Youngblood
18 April - 20 May 2017

Summer Exhibition
1 June - 22 July 2017

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Cloître Saint-Merri

Sophie Kuijken
7 January - 11 March 2017

Group Show
March - May 2017

Jean Dubuffet and Fabrice Hyber
20 May - July 2017

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Paris
Bourg-Tibourg

Ricardo Brey
All that is could be otherwise
7 January - 25 February 2017

Shahpour Pouyan
9 March - 6 May 2017

Jean Dubuffet and Fabrice Hyber
20 May - July 2017