

*Dredging up the Past* was the most recent body of paintings by leading Australian artist Richard Bell and continued his ongoing campaign of focusing attention upon the disempowerment of Indigenous Australian peoples. Employing the visual tropes of canonical painting of the twentieth century, Bell appropriates all that is familiar within the modern Western tradition of art, yet subverts the vernacular to raise crucial issues around unceded Aboriginal sovereignty.

Many of the works within *Dredging up the Past* are imbued with the same irreverent humour Bell is renowned for, yet there is also evident a more direct sense of political urgency disentangled from his typical subversive wit. The exhibition could potentially be interpreted as more mature, indeed, more serious in its narrative delivery than other works, unhinged from satire, yet still with the same anger that is the pervasive thrust of his work both as an activist and artist. At times totemic in scale, the paintings demanded our attention, and conveyed, in no uncertain terms, some strategies toward a more equitable cultural realignment.

Selected solo exhibitions include *Richard Bell: Imagining Victory*, Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo (2015); *Embassy*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth (2014); *Imagining Victory*, Artspace, Sydney (2013); *Lessons on Etiquette and Manners*, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne (2013); and *Uz vs Them*, Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington (2013); Victoria H. Myhren Gallery, University of Denver, Colorado (2012), University of Kentucky, Lexington; and Tufts University Art Gallery, Boston (2011); and *Positivity*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2006). Selected group exhibitions include *See You at the Barricades*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2015); *Action at a Distance: The Life and Legacy of John Stewart Bell*, Naughton Gallery, Belfast, Northern Ireland (2014); *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2013); *Asian Art Biennial*, Taiwan (2013); *Fifth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, Moscow (2013); *Half-Light: Portraits from Black Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2008); *Culture Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (2007); *Biennale of Sydney* (2008 and 1992); *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians*, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf (1993); *Australian Perspecta*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1993); and *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Unfamiliar Territory*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (1991).

*Richard Bell: Dredging up the Past* is presented in association with Milani Gallery, Brisbane, where it was first shown in 2017.

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