

MEDIA RELEASE



NEW EXHIBITION: Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia

This exhibition unpacks the notion of memorabilia and memorialisation of Cook – what has been kept of Cook, recorded, photographed, souvenired, named and remembered in Australia in the 250 years since his landing and examines how contemporary and First Nations artists have responded to the symbol of Cook and empire to generate change. **Robert Reason, Museum Director, The David Roche Foundation.**

The first of Captain Cook's voyages to the Pacific (1768–1771) was momentous for not only would he chart the east coast of Australia, but also irrevocably change the course of history of this ancient country and its First Nations peoples. Both an extraordinary navigator and harbinger of the colonisation of Australia, Cook was acknowledged as a contested symbol of our Nation during the 250th commemoration of his arrival.

A new exhibition at the David Roche Foundation, *Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia* brings together ninety objects and art from both private and public collections from the period of three voyages, memorabilia related to Cook, and contemporary responses to the man by First Nations artists Christian Thompson, Gordon Bennett, Daniel Boyd and artist Ben Quilty.



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Warwick Thornton of the Kaytej Nation, filmmaker/director said in 2018: 'Art is a way to deconstruct the myth of Cook and grapple with the potency of his story to reframe and reinterpret the first encounter.'

The genesis for *Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia* came from David Roche, founder of the museum. In 2004 he acquired the *HMS Resolution* table, c.1810, a significant piece of English Regency memorabilia so-called because it contains a piece of oak from the ship and an inscription to James Cook set amongst exotic timbers from the lands he visited. Situated across four major exhibition themes, we begin our journey with Cook's recording and charting of the east coast of Australia and Tasmania. Then personal items belonging to Cook and commemorative memorabilia are displayed to consider Cook both as person and an event that has evolved in tandem with Australia's national identity.

Portraits of Cook explore the establishment of a set of character traits that persisted well into the twentieth century. Historical works are situated alongside contemporary responses by Ben Quilty and First Nations artists Gordon Bennett, Christian Thompson and Sandra Saunders to interrogate what Cook means today. The final, fourth intersection with Cook approaches sovereignty that was never ceded by First Nations peoples and is now the site of (re)appropriating the symbols of empire.

Three years in development, *Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia* is curated by The David Roche Foundation. The must see works in this exhibition says Robert Reason are James Cook, *A chart of the Southern Hemisphere: shewing the tracks of some of the most distinguished navigators, 1777*, Richard Goodman, cabinetmaker, *HMS Resolution* table, c.1810, Gordon Bennett, *Message in a bottle*, 1989 and Ali Gumillya Baker, *Sovereign Fleet (black)*, 2013.

The National Library of Australia is a major lender to the exhibition as well as other national institutions, university museum collections, and public and private collections in South Australia. Steven Oliver's documentary, **Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky** is also part of this exhibition.

Details:

Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia

The David Roche Foundation House Museum

241 Melbourne Street, North Adelaide

30 January – 29 May 2021

Exhibition ticket \$15 Adults, \$12 Concession, Children 12 and under free. No booking required.

Or book a guided tour of Fermoy House including entry to the Exhibition \$20 Adult, \$17 Concession, not suitable for Children 12 and under.

For talks and events see rochefoundation.com.au

For further information please contact Susanne Briggs 0412 268320

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Image: Christian Thompson (Bidjara people, Australia born 1978), Museum of Others (Othering the Explorer, James Cook, from the series *Museum of Others*, 2016, Australia, c-type photograph on metallic paper, 120 x 120 cm, Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 5808. © Courtesy of the Artist and Michael Reid Sydney + Berlin 2020

