



## Rew Hanks

“ I usually enjoy solving the intellectual and technical processes and challenges that arise. I seem to have adopted the role of ‘Pictorial Choreographer’ who invents complex narratives that evolve during their execution”

Rew Hanks, 2015<sup>1</sup> <http://imprint.org.au/pca-announcements/qa-with-rew-hanks/>

### Short Biography

Born 1958, Sydney

Lives and works in Sydney.

Renown for his meticulous techniques.

### About the artist

Rew Hanks is a Sydney based printmaker and teacher. He has held solo exhibitions since 1982 in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra and internationally in India. His work has been included in international group exhibitions in Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States. Hanks holds a Master of Fine Arts from the College of Fine Arts, University of Sydney. Internationally, Hanks has been awarded the Triennale Print Prize in the 4th Bangkok Triennale International Print and Drawing, Bangkok, Thailand (2015); First Prize in the 9th Kochi International Triennial Exhibition of Prints, Kochi, Japan (2014); First Prize in the IV International Print Exhibition 2011, Istanbul, Turkey (2011) and Grand Prize in the 8th Bharat Bhavan International Biennial of Print-Art, Bhopal, India (2008). Nationally, Hanks has been awarded First Prize, in the City of Hobart Art Prize (2014), Grand Prize in the Open Section, Silkcut Award for Linocut Prints, Melbourne (2013) and First Prize in the Geelong Print Prize, Geelong, Victoria (2008). Hanks has been a finalist in the Blake Prize (2003, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010) and the Basil Sellers Prize 5 at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne (2016). His work is held in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Art Gallery of South Australia and several significant regional and tertiary collections.

## Artist Practice

### Material Practice

Hanks has developed a precision linocut technique which convincingly replicates the appearance of eighteenth century prints – the prints on which established versions of colonial history rested. Trawling through historical imagery relating to Australia’s colonial beginnings, he selects the dominant narrative about his chosen subject and with his distinctive wily wit, re-casts the image to tell a different tale – a tale which inevitably requires the viewer to question the accepted version. So assuredly does he do this that it takes a moment before it registers that we are looking at a contemporary image. In that fleeting moment we realise how much our acceptance of historical fact rests on our familiarity with the visual style of our knowledge archives. And the stage is set for that acceptance to be upset. *Elin Howe, 2016*

### Conceptual Practice

Hanks interrogates established versions of Australian history – both the official and popular culture versions.

## About the artwork: critical statement

### ***Stop, There’s no need to shoot the natives.* 2012**

The interpretation of significant historical artworks is a potent artistic tool for commentary on Australian history. “Stop! There’s no need to shoot the natives” engages with both the iconic 1902 image of Cook’s arrival by Australian impressionist Emanuel Phillips Fox, “The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770” and the more recent 2006 post-colonial interpretation by indigenous artist Daniel Boyd, “We call them pirates out here”. In Fox’s painting Cook is portrayed as a compassionate British explorer who beckons to his crew not to fire on the two Aborigines who have their spears raised ready for possible conflict. In contrast Boyd’s painting depicts Cook as a ruthless pirate waving a flag emblazoned with a skull and cross bone. A small plume of smoke can be seen on the headland contradicting the notion of Terra Nullius. In Hanks’ linocut Cook is seen admonishing his crew as they are about to indulge their hunting impulse. Their targets are two kangaroos ready to take flight. One is from a John Gould lithograph and the other from a George Stubbs painting. The latter is one of the first representations of this giant macropod and its recent sale to Australia has been stalled by the British government because of its historical significance. His image challenges the recent decision by the NSW government to allow amateur hunters to cull feral animals in National Parks without any supervision and regulations and thus placing the safety of native wildlife in serious jeopardy. Hanks’ concerns extend to the thoughtless introduction of many domestic and agricultural species into Australia. Their careless management and eventual accidental release into arid and coastal environments have contributed to it attaining one of the worst records of native species becoming extinct in the world. French explorer Le Perouse can be seen exciting this colonial calamity on his windsurfer unfortunately never to be seen again. Perhaps this may reflect Hanks’ views on the permanency of this loss of wildlife and Australia’s lethargic implementations of environmental initiatives to help arrest this rate of extinction from continuing.

*Elin Howe, 2016*

<http://www.nicholasthompsongallery.com.au/artists/rew-hanks/>

## Critical voice

The hours that Rew Hanks invests in each of his prints is palpable. With precise, measured line, this artist produces linocuts that look more like etchings in their exactitude. Less obvious are the months of research for the works. – Hanks raids newspapers, magazines, books and the Internet to come up with the images and ideas that fuel his practice.

*Bridget Macleod, 2013*  
*Artist Profile, Issue 23, 2013*

## Other relevant works



Rew Hanks, *Krefft's Chair* 2012  
linocut print 103 x 76cm ed.30



Rew Hanks, *It's Not Always Black and White* 2008  
linocut print 97 x 74cm ed.30

### ***Cook's Conquest***

*Cook's Conquest* represents another chapter in master printmaker Rew Hanks' revision of stories about our culture - this time he re-reads the stories of Captain James Cook's forays around the South Pacific, while simultaneously addressing Australian culture's obsession with sport at the expense of art and the environment. His narrative is suspended across two invasion stories: European invasion precipitated by Cook's arrival in 1770; and the invasion of the cane toad after its introduction in 1935 (to combat the sugar-cane beetle). Hawaii figures in both of these stories - romanticised in history paintings, it was the site of Cook's demise; and more recently, it was from Hawaii that the cane toad originated.

For full essay by Elin Howe go to <http://www.wattersgallery.com/artists/HANKS/2013/notes2013.html>