

STATION

Daniel Boyd

Treasure Island

4th October — 25th October 2014

There are inescapable dualistic qualities in the art of Daniel Boyd, not that of disputing dialectics, rather of contrasting forces creating a monotheistic condition; where the primitive and modern, of this world and the next, and of traditional aesthetic techniques with contemporary application fuse as one. In his exhibition *Treasure Island* we are given this exemplar. Acquiring its title from Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel of the same name, Boyd's *Treasure Island* continues the narrative that has been gradually unfolding throughout his artistic vocation. Stevenson was also partial to creating works that dealt with two-isms, famously written within the characters of Dr. Henry Jekyll and Mr. Edward Hyde. But also in *Treasure Island's* primary antagonist Long John Silver, who is simultaneously a courageous friend and treacherous cut-throat.

Boyd's new works continue this engagement through application and in the subject matter of archived images. Take one of the larger works in the series, here we are presented with the cult figure that is the Jamaican born Grace Jones in a photograph by equally idolised Robert Mapplethorpe. Boyd's gestural charcoal markings traces Jones, whose body has been painted over with somewhat tribal markings by the artist Keith Haring, evoking a handful of twofold postulations. This speaks of the androgyny that Jones was celebrated for and the 'ethnographic' resurrection in the modern culture industry—both in Haring's brushstrokes and equally in the identity that is Grace Jones, the Jamaican daughter of a clergyman cum New York City runway model cum avant-garde musician. These past to present notions are also recognisable in Boyd's ongoing reference to Picasso, known for modernist 'primitivism', and maybe even in the Pop Art-ish, Lichtenstein-esque glued dots that hark back to Indigenous Australian art.

The ongoing, somewhat metaphysical narrative that Boyd's practice concerns itself with—that of archaeology, colonisation, time, location, slavery, and identity—here passes into another chapter or scene, and like a Hitchcock film, everything that Boyd introduces within his paintings holds vast importance to the larger plot. Maybe best epitomised in two abstract works (in contrast to their painted partners), one of the 'Vatagele' sand drawing and the other a Marshall Islands sailing chart. The former named after a rock pool located at the southern end of Pentecost Island, Vanuatu—from which Boyd is descended—speaks of a design drawn in the ashes of the fire on which the ghost of the dead cooks its last meal. If drawn, said ghost may submerge into the pool and pass through to paradise, bypassing the purgatory of being a nomadic island phantom. A kind of boatman's tale that evokes the dichotomy of this life and the next. The latter, sailing charts from the South Pacific made from a combination of sticks—representative of ocean currents and swells—and shells—symbolising the islands; memorised onshore these allowed for Islanders to navigate from one island to the other safely. A historical tale that could easily apply to the pirates of *Treasure Island*, the voyage of Captain Cook, and to the contemporary voyage of asylum seekers.

Daniel Boyd's masterful and unique paintings are full of rich and consequential themes, both past and present, many of which speak of dualities, some maybe more of disappointment and lack of rigorous dialectics—thinking of our Prime Minister's view on the definition of that which is 'unsettled' and that which is 'settled'. "I have only one thing to say to you, sir ... if you keep on drinking rum, the world will soon be quit of a very dirty scoundrel!" said Dr. Livesey in *Treasure Island* to Billy Bones, talking of the 'civilised' world and the lawless criminal world of the pirates. So maybe it is best to think of this duality in a variety of forms, and rather than discussing them in opposition, think of them as a multiplistic hegemony.

— Jack Willet