

# Archie Moore

Language: Kamilaroi

14 Queensland Nations  
(Nations Imagined by RH Mathews) 2014

Arrinda Nation  
Barkunjee Nation  
Dippil Nation  
Goothanto Nation  
Inchalachee Nation  
Joongoonjje Nation  
Kamilaroi Nation  
Kogai Nation  
Kooimberburra Nation  
Koonjan Nation  
Mycoolon Nation  
Pamkalla Nation  
Warkemon Nation  
Yowerawarrika Nation



Kamilaroi Nation  
(from 14 Queensland Nations  
(Nations Imagined by RH Mathews) 2014)

'Archie Moore ... is a very interesting Aboriginal artist. Archie Moore is a very interesting thinking artist, period.'<sup>1</sup>

Kamilaroi man Archie Moore is a multidisciplinary artist whose innovative practice has generated widespread acclaim. Born in Toowoomba in 1970 the Brisbane-based artist has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. He studied visual art at Queensland University of Technology and fine art at the Academy of Fine Arts Prague. Within his freeform practice Moore conceptually interrogates different binaries of power while looking at a larger narrative of colonialism and nationhood: 'memory has been in all of my work somewhere. I'm still intrigued by who I am, what I think I am, and the reasons why.'<sup>2</sup>

There is an innate grungy expression to Moore's work that reflects the still fresh wounds of life experience. This, however, does not make him weak but enables him to speak with honesty and self-reflection while also engaging in political activism, deconstructing the colonial regime of Australia and the policies and practices that affect Indigenous peoples. The questioning of language and its relationship to identity features heavily in Moore's work. The derogatory words that were spat to him as a youth are reclaimed through works like *Blackdog* 2013, a sculptural taxidermy 'self portrait' referencing racial bullying and the 'black dog' (depression) this has caused.

I'm always looking at words and seeing other words within them, seeing them spell another word upside down, I probably see all words as potential false friends (words in two languages that are similar in pronunciation but have different meanings) and I'm attracted to finding out underlying meanings or unintended connotations, which might stem from my experiences with schoolyard racist jokes.<sup>3</sup>

Moore also has two collaborators in his practice: his alter egos Magnus O'Pus and Grubbanax Swinnasen. Magnus is the lead singer of Moore's band, ΣGG√ein. In a reflexive state of consciousness, cathartic manifestos of writings and drawings have been produced by Magnus

with illustrations by Grubbanax expressing lyrics and poems of love, loathing and reflection. Tongue-in-cheek humour and pop-culture references add another layer of dynamism to his practice.

His most recent work, *14 Queensland Nations (Nations Imagined by RH Mathews)* 2014 was created in response to the research of anthropologist RH Mathews who, in 1900, created a map of Queensland based on Aboriginal language groups. Interrogating the validity of Mathews' work, Moore examines how the bias of racial superiority held by anthropologists like Mathews at the time could have tainted his research and how this position could have influenced his understanding of Aboriginal Queensland.

The perception of shared experience and interpretation is consistent within Moore's practice and through the flags he wanted the viewer 'to think about the land they sit on, the country they're living in and the nations that existed before.'<sup>4</sup> Moore also explores how these documents – that are seen within the western hegemony as 'valid' archival histories – affect Aboriginal people's lives post-1900. In conceptually paralleling these flags with the questionable records of Mathews, Moore is initiating an act of sovereignty. Through the intervention of hanging the flags in institutions that often have connections to anthropologists like Mathews, Moore also references a sense of independence from the national flag as an emblem of nationalist power.

Moore questions history and patriarchal dominance and reflects on personal vulnerabilities while looking at the duality of his own identity and notions of authenticity. His dynamic practice is actively creating new discussion in the discourse of Australian Aboriginal identity and sovereignty within contemporary art.

**KM**

1 Djon Mundine, *Flags of convenience*, <<https://archiemoore.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/flags-of-convenience2.jpg>>, accessed 28 May 2015.

2 Wes Hill, 'Archie Moore in conversation with Wes Hill', in *Eyeline*, Issue 82, 2015, p. 30, <<http://archiemoore.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/eyeline2.jpg>>, accessed 28 May 2015.

3 Wes Hill, 'Archie Moore in conversation with Wes Hill', p. 31, <<https://archiemoore.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/eyeline6.jpg>>, accessed 28 May 2015.

4 Courting Blakness, *A flag for every Nation*, 30 July 2014, <<http://courtingblakness.com/video/a-flag-from-every-nation/>>, accessed 28 May 2015.