



MICHAEL COOK

MOTHER



MOTHER (SWIMMING POOL) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (HOPSCOTCH) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (SKIPPING ROPE) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (BICYCLE) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (ICE CREAM) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (PEDAL CAR) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (ROLLER SKATING) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (TENNIS) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (MERRY-GO-ROUND) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (DOLLS HOUSE) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (SEESAW) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (ROCKING HORSE) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13



MOTHER (PRAM) 2016

Large—Inkjet print on paper, 120 × 180 cm, Edition 4
\$7,700 each—\$88,000 complete set of 13

Small—Inkjet print on paper, 80 × 120 cm, Edition 8
\$4,950 each—\$55,000 complete set of 13

MICHAEL COOK, ARTIST'S STATEMENT FOR: IDENTITY—ANDU (SON)

I grew up knowing I had Indigenous ancestry, however at the time I didn't 'feel' Aboriginal. At three weeks of age I was adopted by a non-Indigenous family named Cook. Early-on my parents made me aware I was adopted and had Aboriginal heritage, they also told me I was from somewhere in western Queensland. Coincidentally, Cook was also the maiden name of my unmarried biological-mother. At the hospital prior to adoption, my adoptive-parents were asked if they were related to any Cooks in western Queensland. They were informed that if there was even the remotest relationship they would not be able to adopt me.

As the youngest of six children (and the only one adopted) I have never felt anything other than the equal of my siblings. My adoptive-mother knew most of the Aboriginal community in the area where I was raised and she and two close friends were known as 'Charlie's Angels' because they helped local Indigenous kids who were in trouble.

My adoptive-mother had strong views about Aboriginal rights and this gave me a good understanding of my ancestry and the reasons for my adoption. She explained how my biological-mother had only been sixteen when she became pregnant. Being a teen-aged single mother living in a small country town in the late-1960s, conservative views within the community meant she was expected to offer me up for adoption.

My adoptive-mother received a small amount of information about my biological-mother, such as her age and the general area in which she lived. She also learned the name my biological-mother had given me: Michael. My adoptive-mother kept that name.

My adoptive-mother once explained to me that mothers who offer a child for adoption often have regrets later in life, usually around their fifties, as they have always wondered what happened to their child. She said that if I ever wanted to contact my biological-mother she would fully support me. The issue had always been in the back of my mind and when I turned thirty, knowing that my biological-mother would be getting close to fifty, I decided to make contact.

Initially this occurred anonymously through letters delivered by a Queensland adoption agency and we wrote to each other for six months before deciding to meet. I'm not sure why I wanted a meeting. I think it was partly to tell her that I was all right, had a loving family with lots of brothers and sisters, and that she need not worry too much about me. Another reason was to meet and learn more about her.

I also wanted to learn about my Indigenous ancestry; something my adoptive-mother had always nurtured, both personally and politically. In my childhood, the first Aboriginal person I strongly remember was Neville Bonner — standing on our front verandah, around 1970, having a conversation with my adoptive-mother about politics. She knew him well, as they were both members of the One People of Australia League.

My adoptive-mother was always a fighter for her political beliefs. She later spent many years on local council and people either loved or hated her. The haters were usually property developers, over her stance to stop high-rise developments with the intention of protecting foreshore parks in our local area. As a result of her personal efforts, the area continues to retain much of its natural beauty. I now know that my adoptive-mother had a future-vision, rather than that of the money-grabbing developers who simply wanted to fill their own pockets with cash.

I always called my adoptive-mother 'Mum', yet I often wondered who my biological-mother and -father were. Had I passed them in the street? Did they look like me? Had we met and not realized? So, after six months of

correspondence, I arranged to meet with my biological-mother in Brisbane. She and her husband met me at the Botanical Gardens, where we talked for about an hour. Many of my childhood questions were answered.

Since that first meeting, I have always approached my biological-mother with a quite laid-back attitude. I think I have done this because to have behaved any other way would have shown disrespect to the family that raised me. I think being male and meeting her in my thirties made a big difference; to this day I still call her by her first name. I just couldn't call her Mum, as this would have been disrespectful to my adoptive-mother who raised me. This doesn't change how close I am to my biological-mother, it's just how I feel.

I now have a very close relationship with my biological-mother and she has lived next-door to me for the past seven years. She told me about her relationship with my biological-father when she was sixteen and how she had never told anyone in her family of seven that she had fallen pregnant to him. She kept it as a secret for thirty years. After I contacted her and we had decided to meet, she resolved to tell her whole family (including her parents and a sister to whom she was very close) that she'd secretly had a child when she was seventeen.

From her I also learnt some things about my birth-father and my extended Indigenous family. Six months after our initial meeting my biological-mother raised the courage to contact him, although I think the shock was too much and I have never heard from him.

After seeing a picture of him, I realized I had walked past him in the street a few years earlier. I remember looking at a man sitting in the window of a cafe and thinking "that could be my birth-father" and now I realize that it was. Since then, I have seen him another four times: either in restaurants or walking past just by coincidence. I'm still not sure if he knows who I am.

I create artwork about Indigenous issues, past and present, and how the past relates to the present and eventually moulds the future. I'm not sure where I belong, or whether I really need to belong anywhere. Put simply, I'm a person of mixed ancestry — some of which is Indigenous.

I'm sure that my understanding of the world and the angles I take in my work come from my adoptive-mother's beliefs and the upbringing she gave me, yet she is white. I have never been to my ancestral country (Bidjara), though this is what gets listed beside my name at every exhibition in which I'm involved. I was raised in Hervey Bay: homeland of the Butchula (people with whom my adoptive-mother had a strong connection) and the place I call home.

Who am I? Where do I belong? Does it really matter? Probably not to me. I have a family and a strong connection with the area where I was raised, I have a biological affiliation to a place I have never seen. Who knows if I would have a connection there? It doesn't really matter to me. I look at the big picture, I am Australian, I tell my stories to Australians of all races and also to those beyond our shores. I am a part of the human race.



IDENTITY—*ANDU* (SON) 2015

Inkjet print
62 × 56 cm
NFS

MICHAEL COOK, WALL-PLAQUE FOR: IDENTITY—*ANDU* (SON)

This self-portrait is about not feeling Aboriginal enough.

I was adopted at three weeks into a non-Indigenous family yet I always had a good understanding of my Indigenous ancestry. In earlier years I knew I 'was' but never 'felt' Aboriginal. People used to ask me where I was from, thinking I was Italian, Spanish or Greek. I would say, "I'm Aboriginal" and their reply would typically be, "No you're not" or "I thought you were Spanish or something". This made me feel that my Aboriginal ancestry was something to be embarrassed about.

Some people ask why my Indigenous ancestry is so important to me. I was raised to be proud of my origins at a time in Queensland where it was customary to be ridiculed for being Aboriginal or dark-skinned. Though I have always known I am Aboriginal, I don't have a direct connection to that part of my ancestry, therefore I don't feel a real connection. Yet I think it's natural to want to learn more about my history.

I am part of Australia's diverse multicultural population and I know my story echoes those of people like myself as well as those of different backgrounds. Aboriginal people are extremely diverse, our country's history has ensured this — we are who we are. Circumstances from the past have made me who I am today and I'm here to share my story.

To make this image I downloaded a photo from the Internet of a family member from the Aboriginal side of my ancestry. He probably doesn't even know I exist. I then placed some of his features over an image of myself. This family member has very strong facial features — the lack of which is something I have been questioned about whenever queried about my origins.

Third parties constantly associate my artwork with my Bidjara heritage, though I have never been to Bidjara country and have no connection with the community there. Aboriginal people today comprise many diverse groups and gone are the clichés of how we are supposed to appear. This self-portrait shows a connection to my Indigenous origins, Bidjara country, a place I have never visited yet one with which I am constantly associated.

Preferably, I believe I belong to a wider community: humanity.

MICHAEL COOK—FINDING THE LOST MOTHER

DR CHRISINE DAUBER

Representations of the mother figure have been elemental throughout human history. From pagan depictions of fecundity to Christian images of the Madonna and Child, woman has been revered for her unique potential as a wellspring of life and creativity, or for the exemplary virtues of chastity and motherhood. Such idealised images have promoted an illusory concept of both women and mothers which, whilst impossible to emulate in real life, have impacted women's politico-social existence over centuries. Yet, to unpick the stereotype is extremely challenging and can bring us to unexpected destinations as is evidenced by two recent exhibitions.

In August 2015 an exhibition entitled *The Great Mother* opened in Milan, Italy at the Palazzo Reale. Show cased during the 2015 World Expo, it drew large audiences of both tourists and locals. It was yet another European event where the link between fashion and art was played out in the sponsorship profile: Fondazione Nicola Trusardi providing funding. Not about fashion, the exhibition explored changing concepts relating to "motherhood". Neither glib nor sentimentalist in approach, the widely varying images engaged with thematics concerning the history of women's empowerment; gender struggles and clashes between tradition and emancipation. The highly politicised approach prompted the following comment, "Paradoxically, any discourse about motherhood in the 20th century tends to imply the authority of fathers, nations, and religions".¹

The second exhibition was *Mother and Child* held at McMaster Museum of Art, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 2014. Relying on the museum's collections, the aims and objectives of this exhibition were to provide "an ambulatory view through time of the complex "nodes" between the domestic expressions of intimacy and sentiment, and society"². Where exhibits in *The Great Mother* varied greatly and set out to challenge conservative views and expectations of mothering and motherhood, this exhibition was more cautious in its approach and almost exclusively showed images and sculptures of a mother embracing or holding her child. One exhibit however stood out from the rest, not because it was a photographic image but because the woman held a doll (not a baby) and clearly challenged sentimentalist expectations set up by the exhibition's thematics.

Entitled *Civilised #12*, the photograph is the work of Australian artist Michael Cook. Image twelve of a fourteen image series of the same name, this fantastical image shows an Aboriginal woman dressed in historical costume: it is black and could be construed as mourning dress. She also wears a stylised hat. The woman is seated at the water's edge, the point of initial European contact. Her dress is spread wide on the sand (as though to encircle her) and her bodice is undone as if she intends to suckle her substitute baby. The baby appears to be white. These words float across the top of the image in script, "They have no houses, but lie in the open air, without any covering; the earth being their bed, and the sky their canopy...".³ The affect upon the viewer is one of ethereal beauty. The words speak of an encounter between Indigenous Australians and the European adventurer William Dampier. The elaborate

1. Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, www.e-flux.com/announcements/the-great-mother-at-palazzo-reale/ 1/3/2016

2. Holubizky, Dr Ihor (Exhibition curator). Personal correspondence, 18/2/2016

3. William Dampier (1651–1715), an English buccaneer who first visited Western Australia in 1688 on the privateer *Cygnet*, quoted in Pinkerton, John. *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in Various Parts of America*, Volume 1, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, London, 1819. p. 65

costuming of the woman situates the event in the historical past, but at the same time contradicts the words of the journal which imply a much more simplistic or “primitive” state. The doll, if it speaks of motherhood at all, sets up a tension between reality and contrivance and invites the viewer to enter the subliminal realm of the imaginary, where Cook explores the highly complex and ambiguous world of identity formation and interracial relationships in Australia. It is argued here that this image should be re-examined in the context of Cook’s newest addition to his portfolio, a suite of thirteen images entitled *Mother*.



CIVILISED #12 2012

Inkjet print on paper, Edition 8

100 x 87 cm

Unlike the earlier image *Civilised #12*, there is no baby or child present in the new series. The successive photographic “portraits” in *Mother* depict an Aboriginal woman dressed in clothing typical of that worn by fashion-conscious city women in the late 1960s and early ’70s. In each instance, the woman, who appears to be very young, is dressed demurely, as though she is attending an important daytime function. Even her swimming suit is one-piece, a girlish pink and neither high-cut in the leg nor low-cut at the bosom. Her stance is almost prim; her feet are together and she either wears a small hat or headband, or has an adornment of ribbons. Juxtaposed within the hostility of an outback Australian landscape, her dress seems incongruous. Altogether, she projects an image of the “good girl”, a stereotype left over from an era when manners and dress aligned to procure entrée to societal acceptance.

Contrarily, it seems she has nowhere to go—although perhaps she is dressed to attend church or, most tellingly, she could be waiting for her child's return. Paradoxically, the child appears only in its absence. All that are left are the haunting memories of a childhood presence which are sustained by relics: toys, a pram, a skipping rope, a balloon, a bicycle and a pedal car. An old water tank acts as a make-do swimming pool beside which the young woman lounges. The sense of loss is almost palpable and is perhaps sustained by the bleak greyness of the setting and the dereliction that is evident in the presence of rubbish. Yet strangely, given the missing child, the woman is not dressed in black as in the earlier series and is not abject, but appears proud and erect. This sense of pride is further enhanced by the size of the images (120 × 180 cm and 80 × 120 cm) which are large and arresting, giving a sense of monumental dignity and honour to the protagonist.

Given that the costuming of the protagonist fits within the specific time frame when the forceable removal of Aboriginal children from their families occurred (1905–69), these images clearly resonate with narratives of the “stolen generations”. Indeed, it was Cook’s original intention to document this trauma in his work. For Aboriginal people this remains “a past that has not passed away”⁴. It is a past that has come to be told not by historians with their arm’s-length detachment but in individual testimony of those who were removed. Their narratives are personal, traumatic and emotive. They are also experiential. Whilst Cook creates artwork “about Indigenous issues past and present”⁵ and whilst he himself was adopted into a white family, he is not part of the “stolen generations”. He is, in his own words, “a person of mixed ancestry—some of which is indigenous”⁶.

There is a strong sense of the personal in these images and Cook’s own history seems to mesh with the scenario depicted. Yet we cannot say unequivocally that these images are biographical, because the protagonist is Aboriginal and Cook’s biological mother is white. Is the young woman representative of an idealised image of the lost mother? As a child, Cook often imagined what his biological parents looked like. She appears to be very young, just as his own mother was at the time of his birth. She is alone with no one to share her loss or to comfort her. Like many young unmarried mothers of that time, Cook’s own mother hid her pregnancy from her family because of the social stigma involved—a stigma that in her case was exaggerated by the myopia of a small town and the fact that the father was Aboriginal. Adoption seemed the only way forward and in many respects was not a choice—but was forcibly achieved by social pressure, the lack of familial support, and institutions which made a business of adoption. Although fictional, the Nine Network television series *Love Child* documents what now seem to have been oppressive practices. As she caresses the missing child’s toys, does our protagonist wonder what has become of her baby?

Once again the ambiguity of Cook’s images creates more questions than answers. The answers are in many ways unimportant, as is the identity of the mother and the location of the shoot—which takes place “in a real but unnamed place”⁷. In all his images, Cook plays creative director to a new fictional reality where the *mise-en-scène* is a product of his own imagining. Cook carefully chooses his props to enhance and manage the character of the setting. For

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4. Attwood, Bain. ‘In the Age of Testimony: The Stolen Generations Narrative, “Distance”, and Public History’. *Public Culture*, Volume 20, p. 81.
 5. Cook, Michael. *Identity—Andu (Son)* [Unpublished artist’s statement], 2015, p. 2
 6. Ibid.
 7. Dauber, Dr Christine. ‘Michael Cook—Broken Dreams a Journey of Discovery’, *Michael Cook: Broken Dreams* [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane and October Gallery, London, 2012

Mother he chose toys that resonated with his own childhood memories of play. The scenic background, which is flat and grey looking, is achieved by splicing multiple shots together. His model wears clothing that is carefully chosen, at his direction, by a stylist who has done many previous shoots with him. Its selection is designed to give temporality and other attributes of identity (such as gender, race and class) to the sequence and so cannot be ignored. Through the adroit manipulation of scenery and dress, the artist creates a space between fantasy and reality. Here he explores the cultural, historical and personal past—so as to understand not just his own identity and dual heritage but how that identity fits within a particularly Australian construct of indigeneity.

To date, the temptation for commentators has been to explain Cook's photo-media work in terms of his Indigenous paternity without mentioning his maternal heritage. Yet Cook himself believes that his approach to life is strongly influenced by the values of his white adoptive mother, not by the beliefs of an Aboriginal father whom he has never met and whose country (Bidjara) in Central Queensland he has never visited⁸. Given that his birth-mother was white, comments such as Danielle Emmerich writes in her critique of *Civilised* are extremely problematic, particularly in relation to the words "uniquely Indigenous". She writes, "As the artist is of Aboriginal descent, it gives the work a uniquely Indigenous perspective and the connection Cook has with his ancestry strongly influences the work"⁹. We might well ask the meaning of "uniquely Indigenous", particularly as it pertains to both Cook's ancestry and to his work. Art historian Sally Butler argues that any attempt to define Indigenous art is "well nigh impossible to articulate"¹⁰. The over arching difficulty of such a definitive approach is that it tends to stereotype or constrain individual creativity, a situation that led artists such as Gordon Bennett and Tracey Moffatt to eschew the title "Aboriginal artist". Equally difficult is the possibility of defining what Rex Butler terms a "unified Aboriginal identity". Whilst these types of classification might fulfil a political need for solidarity, they run the risk of creating a type of blindness and unknowing which allows both generalisations and reductionism to co-exist. This in no way precludes the possibility that Cook presents a unique perspective in his work and this could be discussed in terms of his content, style and creativity.

Here we might give consideration to the way in which Rex Butler has described now deceased artist Gordon Bennett's creative process, which he argued was revolutionary, "Bennett developed a powerful language for analysing his experience as an Aboriginal man in contemporary Australia, made up equally of the psychoanalytic notion of the divided self, the historical questioning of cultural narratives and the philosophical practice of self-reflection"¹¹. Butler continued by describing what it was that made Bennett's art so revolutionary, "What was unique was that Bennett used these European systems of thought to ask questions concerning race and colonialism that they would never have dreamed of; to conceive of ways in which to understand his identity, in a society in which as a non-tribal Aboriginal man he had nothing to identify with."

Cook too invokes European systems of thought in a masterly fashion. As in earlier series, here the artist "plays" with a combination of strategies based on both the contemporary photographic concept of the *tableau* and the more traditional artifice—the *tableau vivant* (living picture)¹². In so doing, he produces a series of enigmatic images and

8. Ibid.

9. Emmerich, Danielle. 'Michael Cook's 'What-if' Retake on Australia's History', *Write About Art*, Issue 5, Eyeline Publishing, May 2013

10. Butler, Sally. 'My Country' but not 'My Style', *Eyeline: Contemporary Visual Arts*, Volume 81, 2014, p. 39

11. Butler, Rex. 'The Revolutionary Covering History', *The Australian*, 31 August 2007, p. 18

narratives which engage the viewer in a tantalising game evoking the uncanny, where recognition and strangeness co-exist. As these strategies have been discussed at some length in my earlier work, it would be perhaps more helpful to focus briefly on the element of “play” in the artist’s work as it is this factor that psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott suggests is important to creativity and identity creation. He writes, “It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self.”¹³ This is not to be misconstrued as the play of childhood but more as a means of expression for the personal, internal, symbolic world of fantasy. It is also about communication and the impact which that communication has on an audience. Cook plays at dressing-up—not himself but his models—and he continues that play by positioning his models within a fantasy landscape. Each time the scenario is different. To explore this notion further we might review *Civilised #12*.

As already noted, the woman in *Civilised #12* is dressed in a long, black dress. At the symbolic level a number of interpretations spring to mind. Whilst the dress could reference the disparaging sexual put-down “black velvet” which was used for Aboriginal women by colonists, it is unlikely. The woman sits proudly, her hair is coiffed and demurely covered by a halo-like hat. Historically, Dampier’s verse situates the encounter in the mid-seventeenth century, a time when Cromwell was in power in England and so, if true to the temporality of the fantasy, the dress is more likely to be puritan in origins. Given that the image is of a mother and “child”, we cannot rule out the idea of a Black Madonna figure. Inculturated into Christianity, it is thought that the Black Madonna’s origins go back to pagan times to an ancient goddess known as the Earth Mother. Alternately her image may have arisen as an illustration for the Bride of God in the Old Testament text *Song of Songs*, where she is quoted as saying, “I am black but beautiful”¹⁴. Such figures which occur across the Catholic world (most famously in Czestochowa, Poland and Mexico City) have been attributed with great powers such as healing and magic. As a miracle worker, she is also considered to be helper of the oppressed and the reconciler of races¹⁵. Yet, it is the “child” who captures our attention as it is not black—but perhaps not white either. In the context of Cook’s birth circumstance, the child takes on a new relevance. My question would be, does the child represent not so much Christ but rather an amalgam of both Indigenous and white cultures and therefore the future reconciled?

As a non-tribal man, Cook inherits the art historical legacy that Bennett forged. It is a legacy that, despite any subtlety of white prejudice, acknowledges the capabilities of an Aboriginal artist working at the cutting edge of contemporary art. Bennett also made it possible for Cook to understand that, “the category Aborigine was as much a white construction as a lived reality for Indigenous Australians”¹⁶. Paradoxically, whilst Cook’s work situates itself both

12. Dauber, Dr Christine. ‘Michael Cook—Broken Dreams a Journey of Discovery’, *Michael Cook: Broken Dreams* [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane and October Gallery, London, 2012

13. Winnicott, D.W. ‘Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena’, *International Journal of Psycho Analysis*, 34, pp. 89–97. Cited in: Knafo, Danielle. ‘Dressing Up and other Games: the Function of Play in the Art of Cindy Sherman’, *American Imago*, Volume 53, Number 2, Summer 1996, p. 141

14. ‘Song of Solomon 1:5’, Old Testament, King James Version

15. Rozett, Ella. ‘Black Madonnas and Other Mysteries of Mary’, www.interfaithmary.net/pages/blackmadonna.html 1/3/2016

16. Butler, Rex. ‘The Revolutionary Covering History’, *The Australian*, 31 August 2007, p. 18

inside and outside concepts of the Indigenous, as a man of mixed ancestry, Cook also understands that he too has nothing with which to identify—unless it is to understand his own humanity. It is here that Cook's uniqueness lies.

Setting out to examine Michael Cook's new body of work, the photographic series *Mother*, the proposition posed earlier was, "Paradoxically, any discourse about motherhood in the 20th century tends to imply the authority of fathers, nations, and religions". This seems to imply the common perception that women will be subjugated by these institutions of power. In his representations of the mother figure, Cook offers empowerment and honour. If the authority of the father is implied, it exists in the gift of paternity which opens the door to the rich heritage of an age-old culture. For the nation, reconciliation is vital. Like the *Song of Songs*, Cook has again affirmed the statement "Black is beautiful".

DR CHRISTINE DAUBER, BA, BA HONOURS (ART HISTORY), PHD (DEAN'S HONOURS)

MICHAEL COOK

BIOGRAPHY

Born 25 August 1968, Brisbane
Heritage Bidjara people of south-west Queensland

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2016 *Mother*, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane
- 2015 *Through My Eyes*, KickArts, Cairns, Queensland; Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery, Queensland
Undiscovered: Photographic Works by Michael Cook, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney
Object, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne
- 2014 *Majority Rule*, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane
Australian Landscapes, La Trobe University Museum of Art, Bundoora, Victoria
Through My Eyes, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra
- 2013 *Hear no... see no... speak no...*, Queensland Centre for Photography at The Depot Gallery, Sydney
- 2012–15 *Civilised*, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane; Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne; The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2012 *Broken Dreams*, October Gallery, London, UK
Through My Eyes, La Trobe University Visual Arts Centre, Bendigo, Victoria;
The Mission, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne
Stickman, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne
- 2011 *Uninhabited*, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane
- 2010 *Through My Eyes*, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Indigenous Australia: enduring civilisation*, The British Museum, London, UK
Lifelines: Contemporary Indigenous Art from Australia, Musée de la civilisation, Québec, QC, Canada
Encounters: Revealing stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander objects from the British Museum, National Museum of Australia, Canberra
Personal Structures: Time Space Existence, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy
Photo LA: The 24th International Los Angeles Photographic Art Exposition, The Reef/L.A. Mart, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Photo Independent: The International Exposition of Contemporary Photography, Raleigh Studios, Hollywood, CA, USA
Resistance, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

Encounters, National Museum of Australia, Canberra
Moving Backwards into the Future, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Storm in a Teacup, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria
Photo Contemporary, Raleigh Studios, Hollywood, CA, USA
The New Black: Contemporary Indigenous works from the collection, Artspace Mackay, Queensland
Cross Pose: Body language against the grain, UQ Art Museum, The University of Queensland, Brisbane
New Sensation: Recent Acquisitions, Artspace Mackay, Queensland
Feeling for Place: Moreton Bay Regional Council Art Collection—Recent Acquisitions, Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Queensland
Right Here, Right Now: contemporary art from the collection, Rockhampton Art Gallery, Queensland
Discerning Judgement, Supreme Court Library Queensland, Brisbane
National Self-Portrait Prize, UQ Art Museum, The University of Queensland, Brisbane
The 19th Biennale of Sydney: You Imagine What You Desire, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Episodes: Australia Photography Now, 13th Dong Gang International Photo Festival, Yeongwol, South Korea
Kyoto Hanga: International Print Exhibition Japan and Australia, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, Japan; Fukuyama Museum of Art, Japan
Photo LA: The 23rd International Los Angeles Photographic Art Exposition, L.A. Mart, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Mother and Child, McMaster Museum of Art, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada
New Passports, New Photography, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
Novocastria, Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales
Private Assembly: A Contemporary Collection, Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah, New South Wales
Monuments to the Frontier Wars, Damien Minton Gallery, Sydney
Courting Blakness: Recalibrating Knowledge in the Sandstone University, The University of Queensland, Brisbane

2014–17
East Coast Encounter, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney; Caloundra Regional Gallery, Queensland; Redland Art Gallery, Queensland; Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, Queensland; Artspace Mackay, Queensland; TYTO Regional Art Gallery, Ingham, Queensland; KickArts, Cairns, Queensland; Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville, Queensland; Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Queensland; Lockyer Valley Art Gallery, Gatton, Queensland; Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery, New South Wales

- 2014–17 *Saltwater Country*, Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland; Australian Embassy, Washington DC, USA; AAMU, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, Netherlands; Manly Art Gallery and Museum, New South Wales; Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum, Queensland; Cairns Regional Gallery, Queensland; Grafton Regional Art Gallery, New South Wales; Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Victoria; Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, South Australia; Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, Western Australia; Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo, New South Wales; Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, New South Wales; State Library of Queensland, Brisbane
- 2013 *Photo LA: The 22nd International Los Angeles Photographic Art Exposition*, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica, CA, USA
Debil Debil—Australian Ghosts, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Carriageworks, Sydney
Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
The Art of Sound, Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Queensland
Silver, Museum of Brisbane, Queensland
Olive Cotton Award for Photographic Portraiture, Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, New South Wales
- 2013–17 *My Country, I still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia*, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; Auckland Art Gallery | Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand; Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Queensland; Logan Art Gallery, Queensland; Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum, Queensland; Rockhampton Art Gallery, Queensland; Gympie Regional Gallery, Queensland; Redcliffe City Art Gallery, Queensland; Redland Art Gallery, Queensland; Perc Tucker Regional Art Gallery, Queensland; Artspace Mackay, Queensland
- 2012 *The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT7)*, Queensland Art Gallery/GoMA, Brisbane
29th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin
My Country: Works from Indigenous communities that celebrate their heritage, University of Western Sydney Art Gallery, New South Wales
Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
SCAP 2D 2012: Sunshine Coast Art Prize 2D, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Queensland
Omission, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne
Where the art leads: new explorations by Queensland Indigenous artists, Cairns Regional Gallery, Queensland
All I need is everything, Rockhampton Art Gallery, Queensland
Pairs, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, Melbourne
- 2012–13 *UnDisclosed: 2nd National Indigenous Art Triennial*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Cairns Regional Gallery, Queensland; Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australian, Adelaide; Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo, New South Wales

- 2011 *Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards 2011*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
Face Up: A Look at portraits from the collection, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
- 2010 *15th Redlands Westpac Art Prize*, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney

AWARDS

- 2014 Recipient, *Australia Council Greene Street Studio Residency*, New York, NY, USA
- 2013 Recipient, *ACCELERATE*, British Council, London, UK
 Finalist, *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
 Finalist, *Olive Cotton Award for Photographic Portraiture*, Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, New South Wales
- 2012 Finalist, *29th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin
 Finalist, *SCAP 2D 2012: Sunshine Coast Art Prize 2D*, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Queensland
 Finalist, *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
- 2011 Winner, 'People's Choice Award', *Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards 2011*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
 Winner, 'Visual Artist of the Year', *17th Annual Deadly Awards—the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards*
 Finalist, *Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards 2011*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
 Finalist, *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
- 2008 Winner, 'Visual Artist of the Year', *14th Annual Deadly Awards—the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards*

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Michael Cook: Broken Dreams [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane and October Gallery, London, 2012

Michael Cook: Civilised [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, 2012

Michael Cook: Majority Rule [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, 2014

Michael Cook: Through My Eyes [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, 2010

Michael Cook: Uninhabited [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, 2011

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COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

National Museum of Australia, Canberra

Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra

Parliament House, Canberra

Artbank, Sydney

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Artspace Mackay, Queensland
Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria
Brisbane Grammar School, Brisbane
Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Queensland
Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Queensland
Ipswich Art Gallery, Queensland
La Trobe University Museum of Art (LUMA), Melbourne
Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne
Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA), Albury, NSW
Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
Redland Art Gallery, Queensland
Rockhampton Art Gallery, Queensland
The University of Queensland, Brisbane
University of Western Sydney, New South Wales
University of Wollongong, New South Wales
The Macquarie Group Collection, Sydney
Westpac Corporate Art Collection, Sydney
Alex Mackay Collection of Erotic Art, Brisbane
Alstonville Art Collective, New South Wales
Dr Clinton Ng Collection, Sydney
Corrigan Collection, Sydney
Daryl Hewson Collection, Brisbane
Mather Collection, Brisbane
TEWRR Collection, Brisbane
The Bowerman Collection, Brisbane
The Gene and Brian Sherman Collection, Sydney
The M Collection, Melbourne
AAMU, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, Netherlands

Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA
McMaster Museum of Art, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada
The Owen and Wagner Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

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