

nanda\hobbs

BLAK DOUGLAS

NEWCASTLE NIGHTS



AUGUST, 2021



Join Blak Douglas and Ralph Hobbs as they discuss Blak's Douglas' latest painting *Newcastle Nights* in this [short video](#). In his painting, Blak Douglas appropriates the early colonial artist Joseph Lycett's 1818 *Corroboree at Newcastle*.

Blak Douglas and Ralph Hobbs speak of the inspiration and intricacies of *Newcastle Nights* while delving into the eccentricities of Lycett's work. The commentary draws upon the social history and implications of the colonial work, juxtaposing it with Blak Douglas' powerful contemporary painting.



BLAK DOUGLAS

Blak Douglas, put simply, is a force of nature. His art practice has an urban aesthetic, delivering a message that is both muscular and profoundly important for our time. Political, absolutely—yet the fabric of his electric narrative has a fluidity that runs deeper than mere social commentary. The stories of Blak's father of Northern NSW Dhungatti heritage, surges through his veins.

It is the unexplained otherness that permeates his vast, yet intricate paintings, providing a spiritual anchor to his wry narrative about our society. This artist is at the forefront of a conversation that rightly won't go away. Douglas leaves us in no doubt that we still have a long road to travel to reconcile the true identity of our beautiful, yet stained land.


History is rich with imagery and forms that have been created to direct the way we view our world. In a time before mass broadcasting, TV and the reach of the internet, statues of the good and the great—gods and mortals—populated the world. They were, and are, effectively icons of Empire. The bronze and stone materiality lasts an eternity, underpinning the power of its creator's patron. It is this intergenerational subliminal messaging about assumed power that Douglas seeks to deconstruct.

The artist is not acting with unchecked iconoclastic zeal. Rather, he is building his own historical narrative—juxtaposing an alternative against accepted history. Douglas asks us, *"Where are the monuments of our many First Nation heroes—the people that have fought for a different history; marginalised, or worse, by the powerbrokers of history?"* The nature of his practice searches and builds the heroic people and, indeed, the unknown protagonists—recognising the power of language and culture as fundamental to our collective survival.

Douglas could be viewed through a postcolonial lens; however, this belies the positivism of his future vision. There is power in the methodology of his painting and sculptural inspiration. He is not simply sniping at black/white relations—his argument is complex and laced with swashbuckling humour. Douglas' heroic and monumental works echo one of modernity's most recognisable signposts—the billboard.

The works, intensely bright with a pop sensibility, speak a contemporary language. He points, laser-like, to a different way of thinking. Whilst many are large in scale, size is not the key driver in the gravitas that is inherent within the picture plane. The language of symbols, real and invented, referencing both his ancient and contemporary cultures, has marked him as an artist of significance, but more importantly, a Ngangkari (healer) for a new and just land.

Ralph Hobbs
November, 2020





NEWCASTLE NIGHTS

2021
Synthetic Polymer on canvas
90 x 300cm



CORROBOREE NEWCASTLE

Joseph Lycett

1818

Oil on wood panel

State Library of NSW collection









NEWCASTLE NIGHTS

2021
Synthetic Polymer on canvas
90 x 300cm

BLAK DOUGLAS

Artist's CV

**VIEW AVAILABLE WORKS
BY BLAK DOUGLAS**



Photo: Blak Douglas © SallyTsoutas

WINNER

STILL

National Still Life Award 2021

Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery

12-14 Meagher Street
Chippendale \ Sydney

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