



# **SUPERPOSITION**

## **Equilibrium & Engagement**

### **16 March – 11 June, 2018**

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## **21st Biennale of Sydney**

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### **History and place**

**The impact biennales have had on institutional exhibition programming has been immense, bringing to the fore ideas about place and history that have become increasingly important in understanding art practice, and to presenting dialogues between local and international contemporary art.**

While there are common themes and ideas being investigated by many artists throughout the world, the specific conditions in a particular place can refine variations on those themes and ideas in significant ways.

Different points of view about history and place, even from within the same context, illustrate the way some histories become visible or privileged and others are made invisible or discounted. This is also where art takes place in social and political contexts, as the promotion of one history over the silencing of another demonstrates the exercise of power in a given context.

International histories of colonialism exemplify how we might think about the complexity of a set of conditions that have similarities across the globe, but that have specific conditions and consequences in different times and places. These specific forms of colonial violence and dispossession play a key role in shaping both particular

artists and their work, as well as broader cultural contexts which frame our understanding, not just of art, but of our own place in the world.

This is especially important in Australia where every aspect of our society is shaped by our colonial past; where artists articulate their ideas through investigations of our cultural inheritance and identity; and where the Biennale of Sydney is an exhibition that takes place in cultural spaces that contain and express the history of conflict. Past exhibitions have included First Peoples artists from around the world, including Beau Dick, Reuben Paterson and Lisa Reihana, who explore the impact of colonial histories in the present. And the work of artists such as Christian Thompson, Brook Andrew, Destiny Deacon, Brenda Croft and Esme Timbery tell important stories about colonisation and survival in contemporary Australian culture.

What is often exciting is that Biennale exhibitions can experiment with spaces outside the museum conventions – 'in-between' spaces in the city, and historical spaces like Cockatoo Island and Carriageworks, which are, in a sense, museums of another kind and part of Sydney's heritage culture. Such spaces become places of experimentation for both artists and viewers. Within the exhibition, they can be dynamic and demanding historical sites for the exploration of specific legacies of colonial history.