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**ARTS
VICTORIA**



**MONASH
UNIVERSITY**

Blind Ned
Derek Kreckler
17 March to 22 April 2001
Opening 16 March 6-8pm

 **CORPORATE INITIATIVES**
Audio Visual Specialists

Blind Ned

According to a recent poll, 91% of people view Ned Kelly as the victim of unfair land regulation and an unjust society; being more or less forced into crime, he died a reckless and audacious hero for a cause. The truth of the matter is still contested but it's no longer the point, since evidently the legend or myth has become separated from actual events such as the repeated assaults and thefts which escalated into the shooting of a policeman.

Films, books, paintings, and regular news stories all take great license on the matter such that an image or perception of Kelly freely circulates irrespective of whether or not he shot Constable Lonigan in self defence. It's an image perpetuated by Kelly himself – signing his Euroa letter on the run with a 'a sweet good bye from a forced outlaw' – but it's since been loaded with the abundant anti-institutional, larrikin sentiment for which Australian culture is renowned; Kelly has become a symbol of the oppressed rising up against the privileges of class.

Curiously, Sidney Nolan's Kelly series from 1945 shows the figure in metal armour, but it appears to be an empty facade, little behind it to substantiate the popular views of Kelly's heroics. John Reed described the series in 1946 as 'a mature statement to cover both the landscape and man in relation to the landscape', returning the original story to its elemental components of place and identity. In essence the Kelly legend provides this narrative potential for all who wish to argue its provenance. Beyond the truth of the matter, in retelling the story we express what we think about law and order, the Australian landscape, men and masculinity, class and nationality, and indeed all the themes which accrue to the story. It's the same with Greek mythology, from which we endlessly extrapolate the meaning of Western civilisation through poetry, opera, drama, all kinds of stories which in retelling the tales of the Pantheon reprise the role of desire, revenge, death, etc, in more recent culture. In this sense Derek Kreckler reprises the myth of Kelly as a figure who speaks directly to the Antipodes, a character forged in the difficulty of European settlement of already occupied lands, and who continues to represent the irresolution of the rights to *still be here*. Indeed, Kelly was caught between two sets of laws: the unspoken, sacred sovereignty of Aborigines (which was first of all occluded by a declaration of *terra nullus*); and the legislated, proprietorial rights of the most privileged colonists. No doubt, many people still identify with the battler Kelly, caught in the middle. Kelly himself describes his lack of choice in the course of action he follows: 'Circumstances have forced us to become what we are - outcasts and outlaws'.

Kreckler's video presents him stumbling through the bush, a hopeless figure estranged from his natural context. Meanwhile various national animal symbols of Australia are scattered about, stuffed, motionless. The whole dysfunctional ensemble is viewed beyond a white picket fence, which demarcates a domes-

tic, settled space, as if we are looking on from our own front yards or looking into somebody else's.

Like Oedipus or some other mythical Greek figure, Ned has been blinded, a metaphor for disempowerment. The environment about him is dead, now merely decorative, redoubled by the pretty English picket-frame for the scene. Ned appears to us like an apparition, a rare sighting of endangered wild life recorded on scratchy old film stock; a relic of the past. In the background we can hear Kreckler imitate by mouth the sound of an old film projector, a pathetic attempt to re-animate the failing legend.

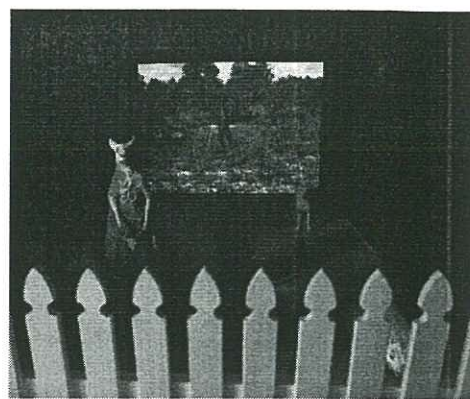
Kreckler brings these motifs into intriguing, elliptical relation to reflect on the settlement of Australia, to recast the stories of bushrangers and aberrant fauna – of a lawless world turned upside down – and ultimately to question the sustainability of the remnant colonial culture in Australia which, though it persists in the retelling of one legend or another, also dissipates each time to reveal new, slowly changing attitudes.

Stuart Koop

Derek Kreckler

Select Exhibitions and Performances

2000 Remove, University of South Australia Art Museum, University of South Australia
Shift, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
1999 WORD, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
A Window: Inside and Out, Kwangju City Art Museum, South Korea
Living Here Now: Art and Politics: Australian Perspectives, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
Mr. Whites Diary, Artspace, Sydney
Planet of Noise, IMM title, with Brad Miller and McKenzie Wark
Moorditj- Australian Indigenous Cultural Expressions, IMM title, DUIT, University of Western Australia
1998 Blind Ned, Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, Hobart
Blind Ned, FIM Salvador, Bahia, South America
Yurabirong: The people of this place, Classic FM, Australian Broadcasting Commission.
1997 sit.com, Festival of Perth with Sidetrack Performance Group, Sydney
Nadia & Ned, (with Pushpamala) Fire and Life, New Horizons part 2, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
Body of Information: Australian Video and Interactive work, Gallery Connexion, Frederickton, New Brunswick, Canada
1996 Ecology, Gallery Chemould, Bombay, India,
25 Years of Performance Art, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, NSW, Perth Institute Of Contemporary Arts, WA,
Experimental Art Foundation, SA, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
1994 DALI (with David Field), The Stables Theatre, Sydney and La Mama Theatre, Melbourne
Fountain, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
1993 White Pointer - You are listening to the sounds of humans observing fish, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney and Victorian Centre for Photography, Melbourne
1992 Get Out Of Here, Artists Space, New York
Decoy, Matinaze, Sydney Intermedia Network (SIN), Art Gallery of New South Wales
1990 8th Biennale of Sydney: Art is Easy, Art Gallery of NSW



Select Publications

Chris Reid, 'Remove', *Eyeline* #44, 2000
Alan Cruickshank, *Remove*, University of South Australia Art Museum, 2000
Linda Michael, *Living Here Now, Art and Politics, Australian Perspectives*, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1999
Kim Sun Hee, *A Window Inside and Outside*, Kwangju City Art Museum, Kwangju, South Korea, 1999
Julie Ewington, et.al, *Fire and Life Parts 1 & 2*, Asialink Melbourne, 1997
Rebecca Coyle, *Sounds in Space*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1995
Anne Marsh, *A History of Australian Performance Art 1962-90*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993
Alex Selenitsch, 'White Pointer', *Agenda* #30/3, 1993
Gabriel Finnane, 'Out of The Internix', *West* # 6/7, 1992

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