



AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES
SYDNEY

RODNEY POPLÉ

Shell Shocked

MEDIA RELEASE

Exhibition Dates: 14 May - 2 June 2019
15 Roylston Street Paddington NSW 2021
Open 7 days 10am to 6pm

To be opened at 6:45pm by
Peter FitzSimons AM, Author & Journalist

Controversial Australian artist Rodney Pople's latest exhibition brutally examines the ANZAC legend and how it has been appropriated by politicians and others to achieve their own agendas.

In this series of paintings entitled *Shell Shocked* Pople portrays, with often graphic and sexual imagery, the hypocrisy and political manoeuvres that led to so many deaths.

'*Shell Shocked* is a way of remembering their sacrifices and the fallen in the context of truth rather than myth,' Pople says, 'At 100 years on, the reality of ANZAC is camouflaged by mythology and an orthodoxy that protects it from nearly any sort of criticism or re-examination. The exhibition is not about devaluing the sacrifices made by the tens of thousands of soldiers who died in WWI, many of whom I'm sure would be disgusted by the way their sacrifice is now so often used to prop up dubious causes and flag waving nationalism. The ANZAC legend has long gone from an account of Gallipoli and other WWI battles to a brand stamped on sportspeople, lifesavers and others who have never faced the horrors of armed conflict.'

Pople cites the recently announced half billion dollar expansion to the Australian War Memorial as more empire building than an honest assessment of Australia's engagement in conflict, particularly when it completely ignores the frontier wars.

Andrew Frost, art critic, lecturer and broadcaster says the exhibition looks at the narrative through an unrestrained and uncensored lens, as leaders and generals are satirized into a sexual and submissive production line.

'Using humor and metaphor Pople tackles the ANZAC legend with a profound sense of honesty, urgency and scale, qualities that arrest its viewers and unapologetically demand attention,' Frost says.

Pople says that over the past two decades the ANZAC legend has become the foundation of conservative Australia.

'*Shell Shocked*' is my way of putting the ANZAC story back in perspective, of pulling back the curtains of the ANZAC altarpiece to reveal the hypocrisy and cunning political maneuvers that led to so many deaths. It is a way of remembering the sacrifices and the fallen in the context of truth rather than myth.'

Shell Shocked follows his 2010 exhibition, *Bellini 21c*, dealing with pornography and religious institutions, and the 2012 painting featuring convicted mass murderer Martin Bryant at Port Arthur, which won the Glover Prize for landscape painting in Tasmania.

Shell Shocked is current until 2 June 2019.

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