

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Visible invisible**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Collection of Mallory Wall and Rinaldo Di Stasio, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Marlbatharndu Wanggagu insignia

2014 Naarm/Melbourne

metal, neon tubes, fittings, electrical  
component

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Purchased 2016

*Marlbatharndu Wanggagu insignia* was commissioned for *Once Upon a Time in the West*, a project that charts the history and experiences of First Peoples from the Yinhawangka, Banyjima and Nyiyaparli (IBN) lands who came to live, work or be connected to the pastoral stations of the Pilbara region. In 2013 Rennie took a three-day trip to Roy Hill Station, where he heard firsthand the stories and history of the region. The stockman's hat is a symbol of masculinity, independence and reliability that was embraced by many Aboriginal men as they excelled in their work at stations. In adopting this cowboy culture that is connected to pastoral life, these men reclaimed an expression of identity. The yandi dish, traditionally used as a cot for babies or as a bowl, is presented as a symbol of resilience and ingenuity.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Regalia

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

opaque synthetic polymer resin, neon,  
electrical components

ed. 1/2

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living  
Australian Artists, 2015

2015.178.a-c

*Regalia* is an emblematic statement about the original and continued sovereignty of Australia. As Rennie stated in 2013:

The crown symbol pays homage to my graffiti roots and to Jean-Michel Basquiat, but most importantly reminds us that Aboriginal people are the original sovereigns of this country. The diamond symbol is emblematic of my connection to the Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi people: like a family crest, it is a part of me. The hand-drawn Aboriginal flag in the form of a graffiti tag pays respect to all Aboriginal people, from environments both urban and remote, and anywhere in between.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Untitled (Fixie bike)

2010 Naarm/Melbourne

fixed gear bike, kangaroo fur, acrylic, vinyl

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

## Horse and cart

2010 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and ink on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

*Horse and cart* and *Untitled (Fixie bike)* both reflect upon the life and legacy of Rennie's grandmother, Julia. A Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay woman, Julia was forcibly removed from her family and community. The painting *Horse and cart* is rendered using a stencilling technique learned in the artist's graffiti days. The technique involves cutting a design from materials like paper, acetate or cardboard then applying paint through the stencil onto surfaces. This method facilitated quick reproductions, which suited Rennie's interest in proliferating his messages of advocacy. Shown with *Untitled (Fixie bike)*, which represents Rennie's then preferred mode of transport, the works together acknowledge that culture and history are always connected to the present. They illustrate Rennie's passion for social justice, in particular Aboriginal rights, land rights, union rights, Blak identity, and the rights of the stolen generations.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Message stick (totem pole)**

2011 Naarm/Melbourne

bronze steel base

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Purchased 2012

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Camo self portrait

2007 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

Rennie's approach to camouflage design has always been subversive, adopting a bold, bright and eye-catching palette. *Camo self portrait* is Rennie's first artwork to incorporate camouflage, which he has paired here with a black-and-white self-portrait. Rennie celebrates graffiti culture by enshrining the act on canvas in unmissable colours and asserting his cultural presence in contemporary Australian art.

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**OA WARRIOR I (pink)**

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

neon

ed. 2/2

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living  
Australian Artists, 2020

2020.734

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## OA WARRIOR I (blue)

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

neon

ed. 2/2

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living  
Australian Artists, 2020

2020.733

The ghosted outline of a warrior figure is a recurring motif in Rennie's practice. With his *OA WARRIORS*, here rendered in blue and pink neon, Rennie challenges colonial histories by centring the powerful presence of the warrior. Depicted in various works and in mediums such as painting, sculpture and wall reliefs, the figure's distinctive stance of strength and conviction pays respect to Rennie's Aboriginal heroes. Created in response to revolutions of recent times that have seen statues of colonial figures defaced and torn down, these anonymous neon figures are Rennie's way of recognising and reinforcing Indigenous sovereignty.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Original Aboriginal

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint, ink and spray paint  
on canvas and aluminium stretches

Private Collection, Melbourne

*Original Aboriginal* is an ambitious work that brings together iconography and designs quintessential to Rennie's visual language. 'OA' was Rennie's first real street-art pseudonym and soon became his tag. Standing for Original Aboriginal, it riffs on 'OG', the acronym for Original Gangster, which is a term used to represent someone who has achieved respect for doing something on a street or neighbourhood for a long time. Rennie's story echoes the experience of many young street artists who began tagging on the streets before gradually making more ambitious works, both within and outside the gallery context.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Royal flag**

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

24 carat gold on aluminium

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Purchased 2013

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **RECKONING I**

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and gold mirrored  
acrylic

Leeton Pointon Architects Collection, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **RECKONING II**

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and gold mirrored  
acrylic

Private Collection, Melbourne

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**TOTEM REGALIA (FLAG)**

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

bronze

Private Collection, Melbourne

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**TOTEM REGALIA (FLAG)**

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

bronze

The Elliott Eyes Collection, Sydney

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**2STRONG\_RELENTLESS**

2021 Naarm/Melbourne

mirrored pink acrylic

Collection of the Token Group, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Genesis

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint, ochre on canvas

Collection of Mallory Wall and Rinaldo Di Stasio,  
Ristorante Di Stasio, Carlton

*Genesis* layers contemporary and traditional mediums to both depict and destabilise binary references to urban and traditional experiences of First Peoples. For example, stencilling creates a link to ancient techniques used in rock art that can be dated back over 30,000 years in Australia, as well as to the contemporary stencilling movement in graffiti culture that took off in Melbourne in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Rennie has also utilised the traditional process of applying mouth-blown ochre onto the surface of the canvas to depict abstracted scenes of his lived urban environment, reinforcing that his cultural identity exists as part of a continuum that presents in many spaces and expressions.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## I was always here

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

dye sublimation on satin, brass rod

Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.  
Wendy Barron Bequest Fund 2017

Taking the form of a cascading large-scale banner, *I was always here* calls upon Australia's potent history of activism and Indigenous rights, presenting one of Rennie's recurring statements of solidarity. *I was always here* is rendered in hand-pressed metallic gold foil on satin – lustrous and beautiful material finishes that instantly attract the viewer's gaze. The first iteration of this banner debuted in Ecuador in 2014 for the XII Bienal de Cuenca parallel exhibition *Fragile*, speaking to Rennie's longstanding advocacy for the individual and collective visibility of First Peoples across the globe.

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**YES untitled (yellow/pink)**

2017 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Private Collection, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## YES untitled (pink)

2017 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

*YES untitled (yellow/pink)* and *YES untitled (pink)* were made in response to the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 federal referendum that removed references in the Australian Constitution that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The YES font borrows from advertising and promotional material in the lead up to the vote, signalling growing momentum for political change within Indigenous affairs. The outcome resulted in what is still the highest yes vote for any Australian federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent of respondents voting for change.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **I ONLY SEE NGAARR (STRENGTH) (blue)**

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

mirror-polished aluminium with synthetic  
polymer paint, mirror chrome aluminium  
frame

The Fergus Collection, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## YESMOTHERFUCKERSYES (red, blue, black)

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and pigment  
on canvas

Private Collection, Sydney

Made in 2023, *YESMOTHERFUCKERSYES* layers text in a font used for the 1967 referendum's 'Yes' campaign with Rennie's renowned 'Original Aboriginal' camouflage design. The work was shown in the final days of the unsuccessful 2023 referendum calling for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Rennie's use of visual codes from his growing catalogue highlights the continued need to advocate for First Peoples' self-determination and visibility. This is evident across his works *YES untitled (pink)*, 2017, and *YESMOTHERFUCKERSYES*, 2023, both of which reflect ongoing relevance across decades.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **I ONLY SEE NGAARR (STRENGTH) (green)**

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

mirror-polished aluminium with synthetic  
polymer paint, mirror chrome aluminium  
frame

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **YALIWUNGA (green)**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and green mirrored  
acrylic

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## NGUWA (purple)

2022 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and purple mirrored  
acrylic

Collection of Frank Nagle and Christina Seator, Melbourne

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**GOLD TOTEM**

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

auto paint, chrome on aluminium

Collection of Craig Semple, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **MAGENTA TOTEM**

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

auto paint, chrome on aluminium

Buxton International Collection, Melbourne

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**YALIWUNGA**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
aluminium

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**NGUWA**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
aluminium

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Pink diamond (foil)**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and metallic foil on  
canvas

Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne.

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts  
Program by Anthony Scott 2018

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Pink diamond (foil)**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and metallic foil on  
canvas

Collection of Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne.

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts  
Program by Anthony Scott 2018

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Bora-Bora (Red kangaroo)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital print on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

## **Shields (blue)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital print on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

## **Message sticks (fuchsia)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital prints on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Bora-Bora (Red kangaroo)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital print on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

## **Message sticks (fuchsia)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital prints on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

## **Shields (blue)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

digital print on cotton paper

ed. 1/5

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Regalia

2015 Naarm/Melbourne, Meanjin/Brisbane  
synthetic polymer paint on aluminium and  
steel

Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.  
Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts  
Program by Reko Rennie 2018

*Regalia*, exhibited at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, includes symbols like the crown, diamond and the Aboriginal flag to assert the sovereignty of Aboriginal people. Created with Urban Art Projects, the piece showcases the artist's ability to translate his visual language into new mediums while maintaining a consistent message.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Warrior I**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and micaceous iron  
oxide on linen

Collection of Penny and Mat Everett, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Visible invisible II**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and micaceous iron  
oxide on linen

Private Collection, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Warrior II**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and micaceous iron  
oxide on linen

Sandrew Collection, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Initiation

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on plywood

Purchased with funds donated by  
Esther and David Frenkiel, 2014

2014.41.a-oo

As with much of Rennie's work, *Initiation*, exhibited at the NGV's *Melbourne Now* exhibition in 2013, reflects the artist's experience with both graffiti and formal art codes. When Rennie was younger, the NGV was a safe space where he could learn about art. It was not until he was older that he noticed a disconnect between so called 'traditional' Indigenous art and his personal experience as a Kamilaroi man growing up in an urban environment. Distinctly contemporary in its materiality and references to city living, *Initiation* is a testament to Rennie's contribution to expanding the idea of what First Nations art can look like.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **ALWAYS**

2021 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

The Gilbert + Tobin Collection, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Hetti

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and ink on raw linen

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

This portrait of Hetti Perkins, an esteemed curator and cultural advisor of the East Arrernte and Kalkadoon peoples, was Rennie's first entry into the Archibald Prize and was one of forty-one finalists from over 800 entries in 2012. Rennie chose Perkins as his subject to honour her values and conviction, particularly following her recent resignation from the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The portrait is simple yet coded. The choice of pen, for example, pays homage to graffiti artists customising refillable pens with leather-staining inks to render their designs more resistant to removal, while the methodical application of dots and diamonds blends the contemporary effect of pixelation with traditional Kamilaroi mark-making.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Murri (teal)

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in colour inks, from one plate

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2014

## Murri (purple)

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2014

## Murri (green)

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2014

## Murri (pink)

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2014

## Murri (gold)

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in colour inks, from one plate

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

These designs representing a men's initiation symbol are traditionally related to dendroglyphs (carved trees) found on Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri Country in New South Wales. Rennie has permission to work with the Kamilaroi diamond that has now become one of his most recognisable motifs. Here the diamond is configured as tessellating designs that ripples outward. Rennie recalls learning from family about how their Kamilaroi Ancestors developed and maintained sophisticated social systems defined by tolerance. The artist's continued use of the diamond is his way of asserting his ongoing connection to Country and culture.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Big Red

c. 2008 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on two canvas panels

Collection of the Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne

In 2008, Rennie won the prestigious Koorie Heritage Trust Acquisition Award at the Victorian Indigenous Art Award for *Big Red*, an almost two-metre-tall acrylic on canvas work. *Big Red* centres on a confident kangaroo, representing Rennie's connection to Country and community. Made using the stencil technique Rennie adopted during his years painting graffiti, the work symbolises the artist's journey from graffiti to contemporary art and his experience as a Kamilaroi man navigating the sociopolitical issues stemming from the colonisation of Australia. Rennie's assertive style and subject speaks to issues including First Peoples displacement from Country, and racial inequality in the justice system, education and employment.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Big Red**

2012 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in  
colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Purchased 2014

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Message stick**

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in  
colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Purchased 2014

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Big Red posse (yellow)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

acrylic

Collection of Fiona and Jim Lloyd, Melbourne

## **Big Red posse (black)**

2009 Naarm/Melbourne

acrylic

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## OA RR

2017 Naarm/Melbourne, Walgett,  
New South Wales

three-channel colour digital video,  
sound: 7 min 47 sec

Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.  
Acquisition through Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary  
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Initiation\_OA\_RR

2021 Naarm/Melbourne

three-channel colour digital video,

sound: 7 min 37 sec

ed. 1/3

This project was commissioned through RISING's  
Call to Artists initiative, a program supported by  
Creative Victoria, City of Melbourne and Besen  
Family Foundation

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for  
Living Australian Artists, 2023

2023.757

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**ALWAYS Untitled #4  
(pink/yellow)**

2017 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Private Collection, Sydney

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **ALWAYS Untitled #1**

2018 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint and flash paint on  
cotton on cedar stretches

Collection of the Queensland Art Gallery |

Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.

Purchased 2019 with funds from Belinda and Darren

Elderton through the Queensland Art Gallery |

Gallery of Modern Art Foundation

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**ALWAYS Untitled #5  
(blue/purple)**

2018 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Collection of Quentin Voss and Sam Bathurst, Sydney

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **(Un)original**

2005 Naarm/Melbourne

acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

## **(Ab)original**

2005 Naarm/Melbourne

acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

This diptych, the earliest work in the exhibition, reveals Rennie's initial efforts to translate his street art activism into contemporary art on canvas. *(Un)original* and *(Ab)original* were created in response to the Cronulla race riots of December 2005, which were marked by racism and violence involving over 5000 people and resulting in 104 arrests. The rioters' calls to 'reclaim the beach' exposed racist and colonial attitudes to both migrants and First Nations communities. Rennie's work exposes the falsehood of colonial sovereignty by highlighting the word 'original' in his 'Original Aboriginal' tag.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Message stick (silver)

2011 Naarm/Melbourne

hand-pressed metallic textile foil,  
screenprint, synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Message stick (green)

2011 Naarm/Melbourne

hand-pressed metallic textile foil,  
screenprint, synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2012

*Message stick (silver)* and *Message stick (green)*, honour Rennie's use of spray paint, his early medium of choice. While in his youth he found inspiration visiting galleries like the NGV, Rennie felt better able to express himself and claim space as an artist via graffiti. Traditionally, message sticks were cultural objects used by First Peoples to convey important messages across large distances. Rennie adapts this tradition, celebrating spray paint as his modern-day message stick.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **RELENTLESS totem I**

2021 Naarm/Melbourne

automotive spray on stainless steel

Collection of Roger Wood and Prue Todd, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Untitled totem (red, blue, black)**

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

stainless steel, automotive paint, clear coat  
varnish

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Untitled totem (purple, pink, black)**

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

stainless steel, automotive paint, clear coat  
varnish

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## OA totem I

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

aluminium and 2K automotive paint

Private Collection, Melbourne

Rennie began working with sculpture in 2013, creating totems that reflect his interest in materiality and design. Made from aluminium and stainless steel, his sculptures are partly inspired by artists he discovered during his 2009 travels through Europe and the United States, as well as key figures of Australian art such as Clement Meadmore and Inge King. Rennie's bold totems merge hard-edge abstraction and Western geometry, fusing references to Plato's philosophy of nature's building blocks with Kamilaroi design. His integration of references challenges a linear origin of art history by combining both Western and First Nations design elements.

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**Warrior**

2017 Naarm/Melbourne

neon

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## WARRIOR

2015 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint, ink on canvas

The Elliott Eyes Collection, Sydney

Here, Rennie's iconic warrior motif is presented in response to the warrior dance performed by Adam Goodes in 2015 after scoring a goal at a Sydney versus Carlton AFL game. Goodes was criticised widely in the media for his actions, but described his intention at the time as simply being 'a little bit inspired by the under-16 [AFL] Boomerang kids, who taught us a little bit of a war cry, just a little bit of a tribute to those guys ... [and to share that I am] proud to be Aboriginal and represent'. The warrior motif is generally used by Rennie as a symbolic representation of the collective strength and endurance of First Peoples, but here he has powerfully canonised a specific historic example of this power.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## No sleep till Dreamtime

2014 Naarm/Melbourne

birch plywood, metallic textile foil, synthetic polymer paint, diamond dust, gold leaf

Collection of the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, Sydney.  
Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery of New South Wales Society Contemporary Art Group 2014

*No sleep till Dreamtime* is a multi-panelled installation showcasing Rennie's subculture-inspired iconography.

It combines his personal experiences, diverse influences and Kamilaroi culture, presenting them as a genuine expression of his voice and a shared message.

As Rennie stated in 2014:

*No sleep till dreamtime* takes its cue from the Beastie Boys single 'No Sleep Till Brooklyn', released on their album *Licensed to Ill* in 1986. As an urban Indigenous Australian, my work often references the hip-hop and graffiti subcultures that were influential on my artistic practice in my formative years. In this work I have merged traditional Kamilaroi diamond-shaped designs, hand drawn symbols and repetitive patterning to subvert romantic ideologies of Aboriginal identity.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Diamond

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series  
2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta,  
Indonesia  
embroidery

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Flash**

2016 Naarm/Melbourne

neon, perspex, stainless steel

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## What do we want?

2022 Naarm/Melbourne

three-channel video, sound

2 min 20 sec

AP

This project was commissioned by ACMI and Artbank, through the 2020 ACMI + Artbank Commission.

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

In a martial arts dojo, a sensei master, played by Yorta Yorta man Adam Briggs, cries ‘What do we want?’ to which his students respond, ‘Land back! Equality! Restitution!’ *What do we want?* is influenced by martial arts films, including the blaxploitation films of the 1970s and 80s, and makes a statement about authenticity, respect, bravery and collective power. Rennie learned jiu-jitsu after experiencing violence in his own life, and the martial art has remained a significant aspect of his life. At its core, jiu-jitsu is about leveraging technique over strength and size, emphasising that intellect and control are superior to brute force alone. As an art, it promotes mental discipline, humility and respect – qualities that have ultimately shaped Rennie’s character.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Remember me

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

aquatint, etching, relief roll, printed in  
colour inks, from one plate

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2014

This print reinterprets the coat of arms of Australia, known formally as the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, to include recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Custodians and ongoing sovereigns of the land. In Rennie's interpretation, the crest has been replaced with the warrior figure, who for the artist has become symbolic of the humanity, strength, power and presence of First Peoples in his work. The motto of 'Australia' or 'Advance Australia' has been replaced with 'Remember Me', a statement that asserts the true sovereignty of Australia.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Regalia (gold)

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

gold-plated aluminium

Collection of André and Teresa Biet, Sydney

*Regalia* refers to a collection of symbols frequently used in Rennie's work. Each symbol carries significant meaning that reflects the artist's identity and values. The crown symbol is an homage to Rennie's graffiti roots while also symbolising the sovereign status of Australia's First Peoples. The diamond is emblematic of Rennie's Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi identity and might be understood in a Western context as being like a family crest. The Aboriginal flag, rendered in the style of his graffiti tag, pays respect to all First Nations people in Australia – from urban and remote environments and everywhere in between.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## REMEMBER ME

2020 Naarm/Melbourne, Warrane/Sydney  
LEDs, aluminium, MDF, electrical  
components

Gift of the Eva, Mila and Reko Collection  
through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2023

2023.229

Commissioned by Carriageworks, *REMEMBER ME* is a monumental illuminated text first exhibited in 2020, the year of the 250th anniversary of Captain James Cook's first landfall at Botany Bay and the *HMB Endeavour's* charting of the east coast of Australia. Rennie has responded with a present-day memorial in recognition of the frontier wars, the massacres and the survival of the original sovereigns of this country. Rennie asks us to consider the personal impact of our past and how history is made today:

On April 29, I choose not to celebrate the arrival of colonial invaders and the dispossession of our land. Instead I want to acknowledge the original inhabitants whose lives were changed forever on this day, as well as affirm our survival, and reiterate that sovereignty was never ceded.

# **Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **Visible – Invisible**

2020 Naarm/Melbourne

24 carat gold leaf, synthetic polymer paint  
on canvas

Private Collection, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Remember us

2023 Naarm/Melbourne

marble, steel, enamel

This project was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia with support from Lead Patrons Ginny and Leslie Green 2023

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

*Remember us* directly references the marble monuments and inscriptions of ancient Rome. Created in 2023, the sculpture is a monument to the 551 Aboriginal lives lost in police custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody final report was submitted in 1991. Little has changed in the three decades since the Royal Commission. The number inscribed by Rennie is already outdated in 2024, underscoring the severity of this systemic issue.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Leather jacket

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta,

Indonesia

fibreglass, synthetic polymer paint

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Untitled (Vespa)

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Vespa scooter, enamel

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Untitled (Leather jacket)

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Yogyakarta, Indonesia

synthetic polymer paint, leather jacket

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Boxing kangaroo coat of arms

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta,

Indonesia

aluminium, embroidery

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## OA\_RR

2016–17 Naarm/Melbourne

custom 1973 Rolls Royce Corniche, enamel paint, carving

Collection of Anthony Medich, Sydney

This is the customised, handpainted camouflage Rolls-Royce that featured in Rennie's video work *OA\_RR*. Cars have always been important to Rennie. As a young man growing up in Melbourne's western suburbs, he was surrounded by a culture of car customisation, which Rennie recounts as being popular among mostly working-class men who took pride in their vehicles. Adorned in the artist's signature 'Original Aboriginal' camouflage design, the Rolls-Royce represents the artist's connection to Kamilaroi Country and

Pride in your vehicle was a very western suburbs thing, and it wasn't until later that I started looking at other artists later on like Richard Prince, who used the vehicle as a contemporary medium which inspired me to make a connection with cars and contemporary art.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## **I wear my own crown**

2013

neon

*I wear my own crown* is a neon by celebrated Kamilaroi contemporary artist Reko Rennie. The work is currently on loan to the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) for the artist's first retrospective exhibition titled *REKOSPECTIVE: The Art of Reko Rennie*.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## 1 **2 REGAL (blue)**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
neon

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

## 2 **2 REGAL (pink)**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
neon

Collection of Linda and Patrick Hughes, Melbourne

## 3 **2 REGAL**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
pigment and synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas and aluminium stretches

Private Collection, Melbourne

## 4 **2 REGAL**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
pigment and synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas

Collection of Roger Wood and Prue Todd, Melbourne

## 5 **REGENT OA**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
pigment and synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas and aluminium stretcher

Collection of Sam Adams, Melbourne

## 6 **I WEAR MY OWN CROWN**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne  
pigment and synthetic polymer paint on  
canvas and aluminium stretchers

Johnson Collection, Sydney, London

7

## **I wear my own crown**

2013 Naarm/Melbourne

neon

Collection of RMIT Gallery, Melbourne

8

## **REIGN**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne

pigment and synthetic polymer paint on canvas and aluminium stretcher

Private Collection, Melbourne

9

## **OA ROYALTY**

2022 Naarm/Melbourne

Flashe, pigment and synthetic polymer paint on canvas and aluminium stretchers

Collection of Marcello Jiminez, Sydney

Rennie's advocacy for self-determination and recognition that sovereignty was never ceded in Australia is reflected in three bodies of work that all use his signature visual style. This is evident across the neon work *I wear my own crown*, 2013, and paintings from his 2023 solo exhibition *WILL THE REAL KING PLEASE STAND UP*, responding to King Charles III's coronation and Australia's ongoing links to the British royal family. The titling and use of camouflage design cleverly provokes discussion of the cultural and social visibility of First Nations peoples in modern-day Australia.

# Reko Rennie<sup>3</sup>

Kamilaroi born 1974

## 1 & 3 **Diamond**

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

embroidery

Courtesy of the artist, Melbourne

## 2 **LOVE / HATE**

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

embroidery

The Arthur and Suzie Roe Collection, Melbourne

## 4 ***Warriors come out to play***

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

digital video, sound

4 min 28 sec

AP

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

Created during an Asialink residency in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, *Warriors Come Out to Play* is a body of work that spans video, textiles, sculpture and found objects and draws stylistic references from two dystopian cult films released in 1979: *The Warriors* and *Mad Max*. Commenting on a social hypotheses of modern Australia, where bkie culture and outlaw behaviour is the norm, Rennie translates his immediately recognisable patterning onto leather jackets, patch designs and customised vespas. These designs layer together his Kamilaroi background, his upbringing in Melbourne's western suburbs, and the influences of graffiti and pop art during his formative years.

Top to bottom, left to right:

## Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

### ALWAYS Untitled #3

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

Flashe and pigment on canvas with aluminium stretchers

Proclaim Collection, Melbourne

### Murri diamond

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on masonite board

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.  
Purchased 2019

### TOTEMIC III

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

ironbark, pigment and blackened steel

Collection of Craig Semple, Melbourne

### TOTEMIC IV

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

ironbark, pigment and blackened steel

Collection of Mick Molloy, Melbourne

### TOTEMIC I

2019 Naarm/Melbourne

ironbark, pigment and blackened steel

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

These three works from 2019 feature Kamilaroi diamond patterns and the distinctive ‘Reckitt’s blue’, a popular pigment used by Aboriginal artists from the 1930s onwards. The pigment is derived from an Australian laundry powder, therefore evoking the artist’s childhood memories and connecting him to his grandmother Julia’s past domestic enslavement. The use of Reckitt’s blue is a thread linking past and present and represents the ingenuity of First Nations artists who have embraced new media across time. These works merge personal and cultural symbols into distinct forms, reaching new audiences while also addressing history.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## 2%er

from the *Warriors Come Out to Play* series

2014 Naarm/Melbourne, Yogyakarta,

Indonesia

embroidery (framed)

Collection of David and Stefanie Hagger, Melbourne

In 2014, when this work was made, the Indigenous population of Australia made up around 2 per cent of the total population. *2%er* responds to the uneasy relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia, expressed through the symbolic icon of outlaws. Some motorcycle gangs and other outlaw clubs have referred to themselves as 'one percenters' and have used the symbol of a diamond with '1%er' placed inside. Rennie takes this modern graphic image and reworks it, here presented with a customised crest to assert First Peoples presence and pride of place.

**Reko Rennie**

Kamilaroi born 1974

**I WAS ALWAYS HERE**

2024

vinyl

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## Three Little Pigs

2024 Naarm/Melbourne

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

Rennie's new work, *Three Little Pigs*, grapples with the impact of a colonial justice system on the lives of Australia's First Peoples. With his distinctive use of bold colour, Rennie draws attention to the fact that First Nations people have a statistically higher chance of experiencing violence at the hands of police. By layering the figure with the Kamilaroi diamond motif, a symbol of strength, Rennie asserts the enduring resilience of First Nations cultures in the face of systemic oppression.

## Acknowledgements

Director: Reko Rennie

Producer: Film Camp, Philippa Campey,  
Molly O'Connor

Original musical composition:  
A.B. Original, produced by Trials

Director of photography:  
Sherwin Akbarzadeh

Editor: Carlo Zeccola

### *Featuring*

Sensei master: Adam Briggs (Yorta Yorta)  
Students: Caine Muir (Yorta Yorta/Wati Wati),  
Inala Cooper (Yawuru), James Saunders  
(Gunditjmara/Wiradjuri), Joe Bell (Yorta  
Yorta), Kelvin Onus King (Gunditjmara),  
Kimmie Lovegrove (Ngarrindjeri),  
Mila Rennie Galvin (Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi/  
Gamilaraay), Reko Rennie (Kamilaroi/  
Gamilaroi/Gamilaraay), Sermsah Pepi Bin  
Saad (Nyikina), Shane Mankitya Cook  
(Guwa [Koa]/Wulli Wulli), Talahiva Rose  
(Gomeri), Vicky Frowd (Wiradjuri)

1st AD: Molly O'Connor

Production co-ordinator: Felise Lyon

B camera operator: Carlo Zeccola

1st assistant camera, A cam: Lachlan  
Wright

1st assistant camera, B cam: Cameron  
Gaze

2nd assistant camera: Thomas Hayes

Sound recordist: Steven Bond

Boom operator: Hayden Guildford

Gaffer: Tommi Hacker

Grip: Birrin King

Lighting assistant: Louis Walter

Stills photographer: Ellery Ryan

Art department: Lauren Beck

Runner: Shivesh Ram

Costume design: Reko Rennie

Costume embroidery: Best Embroidery

Assistant editor: Louise Mullins

Conform: Eva Otsing

Post-production facility: Crayon

Colourist: Abe Wynen

Graphics: James Neilson

Sound post facility: Windmill Audio

Sound mix: Pip Atherstone-Reid

Camera house: VA Hire

Lighting supplier: Film Star Lighting

Legals: Guestwork Agency

Courtesy the artist, Reko Rennie

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Kimmie Lovegrove (Ngarrindjeri),  
Mila Rennie Galvin (Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi/  
Gamilaraay), Reko Rennie (Kamilaroi/  
Gamilaroi/Gamilaraay), Sermsah Pepi Bin  
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Camera house: VA Hire

Lighting supplier: Film Star Lighting

Legals: Guestwork Agency

Courtesy the artist, Reko Rennie

## **Acknowledgements**

Director: Reko Rennie

Producer: Film Camp

Commissioned by RISING Melbourne

Original score: Deborah Cheetham AO,  
performed by Deborah Cheetham AO and  
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Cinematographer: Bonnie Elliott

Video editor: Carlo Zeccola

Still images: Justin McManus

## **Acknowledgements**

Director: Reko Rennie

Soundtrack: Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds

Commissioned by RISING Melbourne

Cinematographer: Carlo Zeccola and  
Tim Mummery

Video editor: Carlo Zeccola and  
Tim Mummery

Still images: Justin McManus

**Schoolly D** artist, arranger,  
producer

**Jesse B Weaver, Jr** composer,  
lyricist

## **Am I Black Enough for You?**

1989

exhibition loop 13 min

Rennie has paired the song 'Am I Black Enough for You?' with his works *Warrior*, 2017, and *WARRIOR*, 2015, providing further insight into the music, communities and subcultures that have inspired him.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## UNMISTAKABLY AUS

2025

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist

This work is a response to the traditional First Nations cultural object known as a message stick, used to carry messages between peoples. Centring on the chevron design commonly found on these objects, this brightly coloured work employs modern, large-scale materials, amplifying the bold geometry and kinetic quality of the traditional design to convey its power as both ancient and contemporary. By seamlessly layering references to First Nations culture with Western concepts such as hard-edge abstraction and geometry, Rennie challenges romanticised ideas of what Aboriginal art is. His work proudly asserts that the influence of his upbringing in inner-city Melbourne is not at odds with his Kamilaroi identity. In this way, *UNMISTAKABLY AUS* powerfully points to the diverse experiences and enduring strength of First Peoples throughout history to the present day.

# Reko Rennie

Kamilaroi born 1974

## UNMISTAKABLY AUS

2025

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy the artist, Melbourne

Taking as its palette Australia's iconic green and gold, Reko Rennie's *UNMISTAKABLY AUS* is a new artwork that has informed the Socceroos' and Matildas' unisex football kits. A proud Kamilaroi man and contemporary artist, Rennie is the first artist in the history of football to be commissioned to design a national kit, collaborating with Nike and Football Australia on Australia's uniforms. Rennie's artwork translates an ancient chevron design often found on message sticks, traditional First Nations cultural objects that were used to carry messages between peoples, into a bold and kinetic work that embraces contemporary and traditional references. Having always lived in the inner-city – an experience shared by many of Australia's First Peoples today – Rennie looks to challenge stereotypical ideas of Aboriginal art and identity. From the gallery to the pitch, *UNMISTAKABLY AUS* powerfully asserts and expands the visibility of First Peoples cultures.