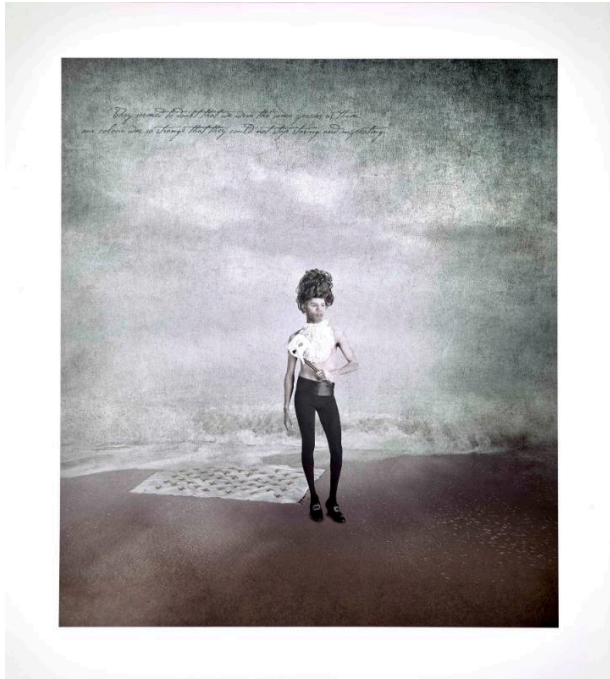


Basic Detail Report



00054881

Title

Civilised #8

Date

2012

Primary Maker

Michael Cook

Medium

Inkjet print on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 1208 × 1080 mm Image: 990 × 865 mm Mount /
Matt size: 1312 × 1156 mm

Name

Photograph

History

ARTIST'S STATEMENT "I was never taught Aboriginal history at school, only about European settlement of Australia. What I learnt in school was similar to the first European settlers' beliefs, with words like 'natives' and 'discovery of Australia'. Looking back now, I realise that it was a false way of teaching, and that it hid the truth about the treatment of Aborigines over the past four hundred years. Captain Cook wrote "these people may truly be said to be in the pure state of nature, and may appear to some to be the most wretched upon the earth; but in reality they are far happier than ... we Europeans." What was the colonisers' view of what it means to be civilised, and would a better understanding of Aboriginal cultures have made a difference to our history? Was being civilised about fashion, speech, cultivating the land, having Christian beliefs, or was it to do with the colour of someone's skin or how they appeared? Upon the European discovery of Australia, Aborigines were seen as 'natives'—part of the flora and fauna. European settlers were not interested in understanding new cultures, or how Aborigines lived in harmony with the land—only that their way of life was superior. Even today, Aboriginal people are still suffering because these beliefs still exist amongst some non-Indigenous Australians. Even today, in a so-called 'modern' society, racism is rife." This body of work by Michael Cook dresses Aboriginal Australians in the fashions of four European countries that visited Australia before and in the early stages of colonisation: Spain, The Netherlands, England and France. It asks 'what makes a person civilised?' and suggests how different history might have been if those Europeans had realised that the Aborigines were indeed civilised. For

Aboriginal Australians were certainly civilised, as James Cook appreciated. The harmony with the land that had existed for tens of thousands of years was precious, in perfect balance, and in the last 400 years, some of these lessons could have been considered more thoughtfully.