

# MEDIA RELEASE

January 2022



## HEIDE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS

*A major retrospective of renowned Australian artist Sidney Nolan and response work by celebrated First Nations contemporary artist Dean Cross*



**Melbourne, Australia:** Heide Museum of Modern Art is proud to present two important exhibitions this February, originally intended to coincide with the museum's 40th anniversary in late 2021: a major thematic retrospective of renowned Australian modernist Sidney Nolan and a new work by Dean Cross in response to Nolan.

Featuring key works, including several well-known masterpieces, ***Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise*** surveys Nolan's career from a fresh perspective, and pays tribute to this central figure in the history of the museum and the lives of its founders, John and Sunday Reed. For Nolan Heide was a garden of Eden, that he later saw as a season in hell, where his life-long fascination with the elusive notion of paradise and the consequences of its loss began. From his nostalgia for St Kilda, his childhood heaven, to his explorations of the Australian landscape and restless travels abroad, ***Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise*** examines one of the artist's deepest impulses and the journey of self-discovery it engendered.

Celebrated inter-disciplinary artist Dean Cross presents a contemporary response to Nolan's legacy in ***Sometimes I Miss the Applause***, a new Heide commission and dual channel moving image work that confronts, complicates, and rebalances dominant modernist cultural and social histories. Using performance Cross inserts himself, and by association First Nations perspectives into the mythologies that Nolan set out to re-examine, shifting and providing a contemporary perspective and context to appropriated and overwritten histories, perennial human questions and artistic concerns shared between the two artists across generations.

**Heide Museum of Modern Art Artistic Director Lesley Harding said,** *One of Australia's leading artists of the twentieth century, Sidney Nolan is synonymous with Heide, and we are delighted to mark the museum's 40th anniversary with this significant exhibition and a new work by contemporary artist Dean Cross that offers a timely critique of this art world giant. Together they celebrate our rich history as a site of Australian modernity while simultaneously looking ahead to a bright future as we continue to build on the Reed's legacy and champion new voices.*

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Presented in the Heide Museum of Modern Art's Main Galleries, *Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise* offers new insights into his life-long fascination with the elusive notion of paradise, beginning with Nolan's nostalgia for St Kilda, his childhood heaven, his arcadian Heide years, and his revelations about the Australian landscape in the Wimmera in the early 1940s. It includes later representations of Australia and its mythic figures, including Ned Kelly, Eliza Fraser, and Burke and Wills, which embody similar ideas of the promised land and escape, exile, and futility. Paintings of travels to alluring locations from the mid-1950s and beyond further document Nolan's realisation that 'nothing is fixed—everything keeps being transformed—and you have to sense where Paradise is in the process'.

**Heide Museum of Modern Art Head Curator Kendrah Morgan commented, *Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise* is an important project for Heide. It acknowledges Nolan's significance to not only the history of Heide and its reputation as a crucible of modernism in Australia, but also to its legacy. Including many well-known masterpieces, the exhibition also considers Nolan's diversity of interests, techniques, and aesthetic approaches during pivotal periods in his career as he sought critical recognition and commercial success and embarked on his life beyond his enmeshment with the Reeds.**

**The exhibition is structured using six themes including.**

- **Childhood Heaven** explores Nolan's ongoing nostalgic connection to St Kilda, for him a utopian site of evocative memories from his childhood and youth.
- **Garden of Eden** focuses on Nolan's formative period time at Heide with art patrons John and Sunday Reed, leading into his reinvention of the Australian landscape in the Wimmera, and his imaging of a uniquely Australian myth in the form of his visual narrative of the Kelly gang's exploits.
- **Paradise Lost and Found** traces Nolan's 1947 trip to Queensland, encounter with Fraser Island and rupture with the Reeds, as expressed through his preoccupation with the story of Eliza Fraser and her betrayal of the convict Bracewell. This theme also examines Nolan's representation of the Australian outback as both paradise and its inversion through lyrical studies of Queensland scenery, flora and fauna and surrealist-inflected drought images, along with paintings of Burke and Wills' ill-fated expedition.
- **The Promised Land** follows Nolan to Europe in the 1950s, charting his sojourns in Italy, on the idyllic Greek island of Hydra, and subsequent travels to far-flung exotic locations such as Africa and Antarctica.
- **Search for Self** features a number of celebrated self-portraits and images of alter ego that explore Nolan's identification with complex and romanticised anti-heroes, from the fugitive bushranger Ned Kelly and fictitious poet Ern Malley to transgressive proto-surrealist Arthur Rimbaud.
- **Paradise Garden** sees the exhibition and Nolan's wanderings come full circle in an immersive installation of fecund tropical Paradise Garden drawings that were conceived in tandem with vengeful poems reflecting on Nolan's past relationship with the Reeds and Heide. At once sensuous and venomous, these works embody the paradox of Nolan's ceaseless quest, with paradise forever beyond his reach.

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Presented in the Project Gallery from 5 February, *Sometimes I Miss the Applause* by inter-disciplinary artist **Dean Cross** focuses on the life, work and persona of Sidney Nolan and draws upon some of Nolan's most recognisable imagery. Wearing a mask with a likeness of Nolan, Cross appropriates a self-portrait painting from 1943, conflating Nolan's image with his own. Through this shift of identity Cross triggers a complex narrative in which autobiographical moments from both his and Nolan's life become inextricably intertwined suggesting a series of convergences, cultural collisions and slippages in time.

In his unfolding parallel narrative, two characters, each on separate screens, with the composite appearances of Cross and Nolan, simultaneously rehearse a dance performance. Identifying their dance movements as 'a rehearsal', Cross incisively alludes to history and culture as a dynamic work-in-progress, a complex unfinished trajectory in which ideas, practices and gestures are constantly shifting being contested, challenged, redefined, rewritten and realigned. With *Sometimes I Miss the Applause* Cross explores Heide as simultaneously a site of Australian modernity and millennia of First Nations cultural practice.

**Heide Senior Curator Melissa Keys said**, with a background in contemporary dance and choreography and a multidisciplinary practice spanning installation, sculpture and photography, *Dean Cross* has become one of Australia's most exciting and ascendant early career artists. This new commission continues his personal fascination with Sidney Nolan's artistic practice, legacy and life. *Sometimes I Miss The Applause* explores Heide simultaneously as a site of Australian modernity and millennia of First Nations cultural practice and continuing history. The work confronts and explores the legacy of modernism, shifting perspective from dominant cultural and social histories, offering audiences a timely and fresh celebration, critique and rebalancing take on Nolan's contribution as a pivotal figure in visual culture and national identity.

**ENDS**

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## IMAGES HERE

### **IMAGE CAPTIONS (L to R):**

Sidney Nolan

*Self Portrait* 1943

Ripolin enamel on hessian sacking 61 x 52 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales 1997

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Sidney Nolan

*Bathers* 1943

ripolin enamel on canvas 62.9 x 75.5 cm

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne

Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982

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Dean Cross

*Self Portrait as Sidney Nolan's Self Portrait 1943 2021*

Image courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery Sydney & Singapore

## EXHIBITION DETAILS

### ***Sidney Nolan: Search for Paradise***

19 February - 13 June 2022

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen, Victoria, 3105

Museum opening hours: Tuesday–Sunday and public holidays, 10am–5pm. Closed Mondays

Admission fees apply: Adult \$20 | Concession \$15 | Children (16 and under) free | Members free

[Heide.com.au](http://Heide.com.au)

### ***Dean Cross: Sometimes I Miss the Applause***

5 February - 29 May 2022

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen, Victoria, 3105

Museum opening hours: Tuesday–Sunday and public holidays, 10am–5pm. Closed Mondays

Admission fees apply: Adult \$20 | Concession \$15 | Children (16 and under) free | Members free

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## ABOUT HEIDE

Set on sixteen acres of parkland with Yarra River frontage, Heide Museum of Modern Art, or Heide as it is affectionately known, is one of Australia's most important cultural institutions. Once a significant Wurundjeri gathering place, the property was later a dairy farm before becoming known as a hub for Australian modernist art and writing after it was purchased by art patrons John and Sunday Reed in 1934.

The Reeds opened their home to the most progressive artists of their era, including Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval, Charles Blackman and Danila Vassilieff. Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series (1946–47) was painted in the dining room of the Heide farmhouse.

Continuing this spirited legacy, today Heide works to inspire creative talent, collaborating with emerging and mid-career artists as well as celebrating those who have made major contributions to Australian and international art.

## ABOUT DEAN CROSS

Dean Cross was born and raised on Ngunnawal/Ngambri Country and is of Worimi descent. He is a paratactical artist interested in collisions of materials, ideas and histories. He is motivated by the understanding that his practice sits within a continuum of the oldest living culture on Earth – and enacts First Nations sovereignty through expanded contemporary art methodologies. He hopes to traverse the poetic and the political in a nuanced choreography of form and ideas. Dean has exhibited widely across the Australian continent and beyond and has work held by major institutions including the Art Gallery of South Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. Cross is represented by Yavuz Gallery Sydney & Singapore.