

Peter Drew

50 Flags

Melbourne Art Fair, Booth #K3

17 – 20 February 2022

Jan Murphy Gallery is pleased to present the final iteration of the series '50 Flags' by Adelaide based artist Peter Drew at Melbourne Art Fair, 2022.

Well known for his 'Aussie' posters installed on city streets across Australia, Peter Drew's '50 Flags' series features Australian flags, hand-sewn to government specifications and then ripped, cut, torn and painted with signs of conflict. Found in the National Archive, the portraits depicted are of people who applied for government exemptions to the White Australia Policy, enabling them to travel abroad and return to Australia without fear of exclusion. Once tiny and hidden, these black and white portraits are given a bold presence and a reverent monumentality.

"These artworks represent the completion of the 50 Flags series initiated in 2019, and the culmination of the broader body of work established in the Aussie poster series. My hope in creating these artworks is to elevate the portraits beyond the confines of the archive to a place of empathy.

Beyond that, I'm happy for viewers to read the flags however they wish. On the one hand they speak to the aspirational ideal of the nation state as equaliser and unifier. On the other hand they expose the legacy of racial prejudice which compromises that ideal. But often these academic notions are secondary, and offer little more than a means of avoiding feeling. Ultimately, I hope '50 Flags' offers an opportunity to gaze upon the other and feel their gaze returned, to recognise oneself within the other and, for a moment, allow all boundaries to dissolve." Peter Drew, 2021

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Adelaide (1983), Drew studied Psychology and Philosophy, then Art History at the University of Adelaide before completing his Masters at the Glasgow School of Art. His work is held in major public institutions including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia, State Library of New South Wales and the Victorian Immigration Museum.