

**REKO RENNIE**  
**OA\_RR**

ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE Open daily 10am–5pm [artgallery.sa.gov.au](http://artgallery.sa.gov.au)





Reko Rennie explores his Aboriginal identity through his use of painting, stenciling, sculpture, installation and film. Although Rennie grew up in Melbourne, his heritage lies with the Kamilaroi people of northern New South Wales. The significance of this heritage was imparted to him by his grandmother Julia, with whom Rennie shared a special relationship. Julia was forcibly removed from her family during the 1920s and enslaved at a pastoral station.

In his youth, Rennie recalls a photograph of a pastoralist with his wife in their 'Sunday best', sitting in a luxurious Rolls-Royce car. He was struck by the injustice of his grandmother's experience when compared to the wealth and power of the scene portrayed in the photograph. In *OA\_RR*, Rennie uses the Rolls-Royce as a symbol with which to depict this contradiction.

Rennie has painted the Rolls-Royce with a camouflage pattern in bright and bold colours. Traditionally, camouflage conceals or disguises animals or objects by using a combination of materials and colouration to optically confuse the observer. Rennie's use of camouflage amplifies, rather than conceals, his identity. With his unique pattern, which is layered with a traditional diamond pattern of the Kamilaroi people, he has made the Rolls-Royce his own.

In *OA\_RR* Rennie drives his Rolls-Royce through Kamilaroi Country to a site near where his grandmother was born. Rennie drives the car onto a clearing of land to make temporary marks into the red earth. This ephemeral act of mark making references large engravings created by the Kamilaroi people for ceremonies.

image detail (front cover and above): Reko Rennie, Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi people, New South Wales, born 1974, Melbourne, *OA\_RR*, 2016 17, Walgett, New South Wales and Melbourne, 4K three channel digital video, PAL, stereo sound, 7 minutes, 47 seconds; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy the artist and blackarrprojects, Melbourne, photo: Justin McManus

## EARLY YEARS

### RESPONDING

Describe what is happening in *OA\_RR*.

How does this video work make you feel? With a friend, share one reason why it makes you feel this way.

What shapes can you see in the pattern painted onto the car?

Reko Rennie describes going back to Country as relaxing. What place do you feel most at home or relaxed?

### MAKING

Family, history and Country are very important to Rennie. Think about someone who is important to you. Create a drawing that celebrates who that person is and what they mean to you.

Rennie drives his car in a circular motion creating imprints in the red earth. Collect a range of objects and materials around your home or classroom. Using the objects make impressions into a bed of sand. Which object created the most interesting pattern? Document these marks by taking photographs to display in your classroom.

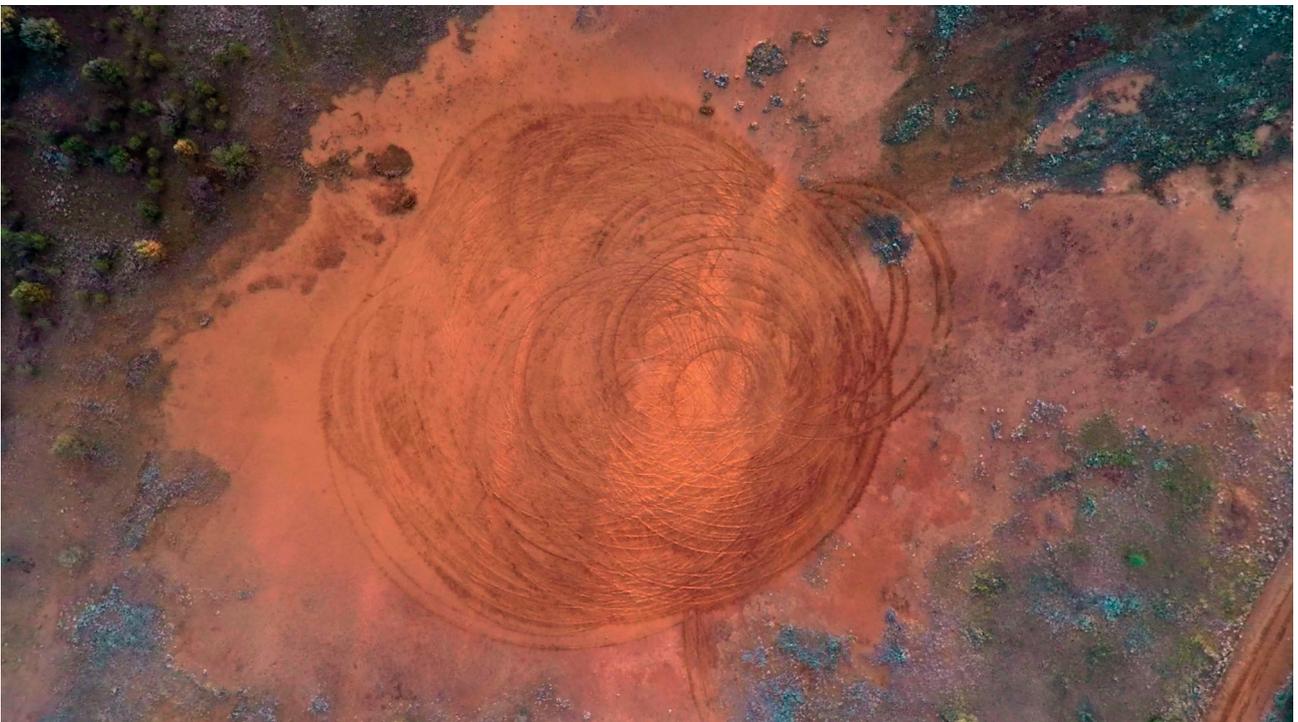


image: Reko Rennie, Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi people, New South Wales, born 1974, Melbourne, *OA\_RR*, 2016 17, Walgett, New South Wales and Melbourne, 4K three channel digital video, PAL, stereo sound, 7 minutes, 47 seconds; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy the artist and blackarrprojects, Melbourne, photo: Justin McManus

## PRIMARY

### RESPONDING

In *OA\_RR*, Reko Rennie returns to Kamilaroi Country. Find Kamilaroi on the AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia. Investigate the Indigenous names for places in your state.

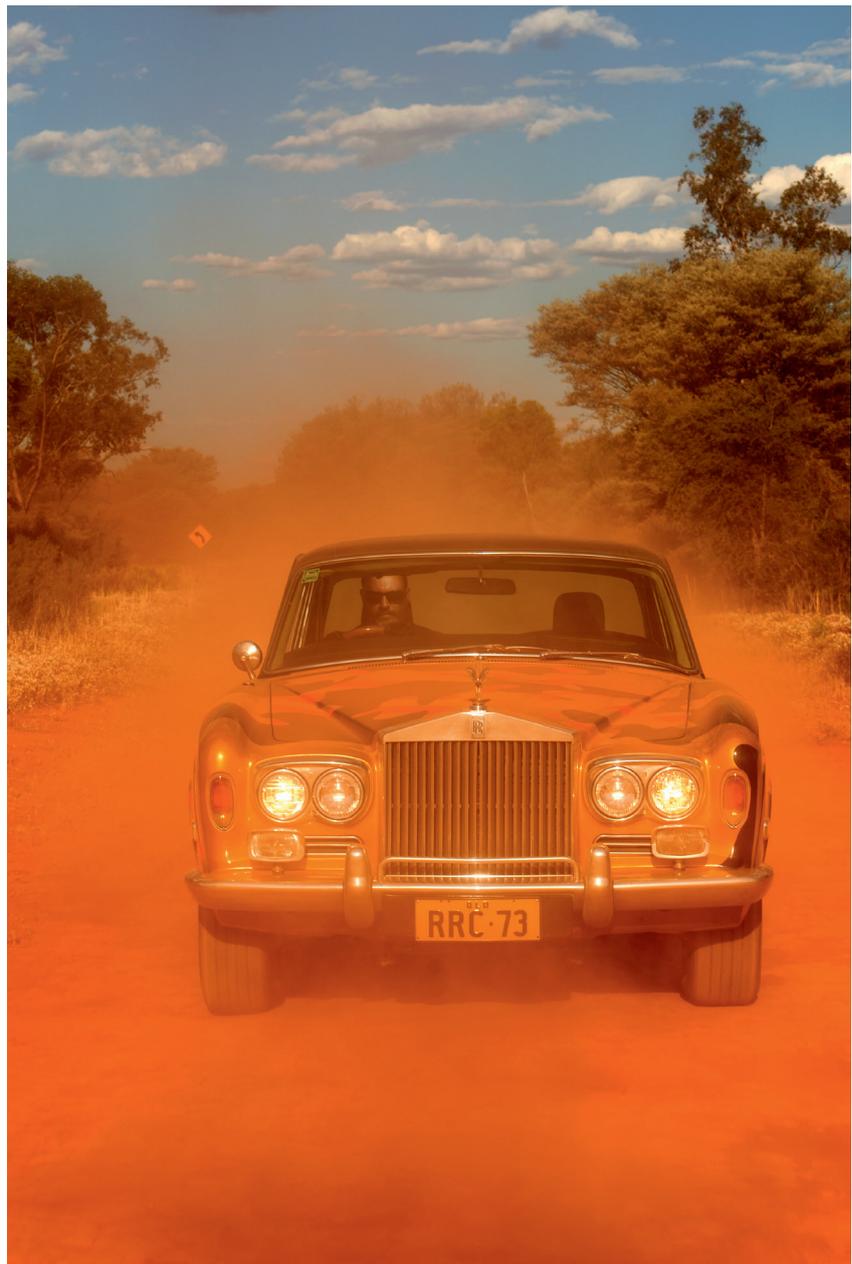
Rennie learnt the significance of his Kamilaroi heritage from his grandmother, who was a very important person to Rennie growing up. Who is an important figure in your family and why?

Rennie's journey to Kamilaroi Country is a long one from his home in Melbourne. What long journey have you been on before? What new or interesting things did you see on your travels?

Describe the soundtrack for *OA\_RR*. What does it remind you of?

In Gallery 17, Rennie has painted a mural using a camouflage pattern. What are the similarities and differences between this design and the pattern on the car?

*OA\_RR* is the telling of Australia's colonial past through Rennie's personal narrative. Research other artists who have explored stories about the experiences of Aboriginal people. What is their story?



### MAKING

In *OA\_RR* Rennie has used the wheels of the car to make temporary marks into the red earth, which references the ephemeral sand engravings by the Kamilaroi people. As a class brainstorm a list of materials or sites that could be used to create a temporary work of art. Create a work that will only last for a short period of time.

Camouflage is a means of hiding something or someone using a combination of materials and coloration. Most commonly we associate camouflage with military uniforms or an animal's ability to disguise themselves from predators. Rennie's use of camouflage amplifies, rather than conceals his identity. Create your own camouflage pattern that represents who you are. Like Rennie, select only three colours for your design.

image: Reko Rennie, Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi people, New South Wales, born 1974, Melbourne, *OA\_RR*, 2016 17, Walgett, New South Wales and Melbourne, 4K three channel digital video, PAL, stereo sound, 7 minutes, 47 seconds; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy the artist and blackarrprojects, Melbourne, photo: Justin McManus

## SECONDARY

### RESPONDING

The *OA* in *OA\_RR* stands for Original Australian. What do you think the *RR* might stand for?

Rennie's choice of a 1973 gold Rolls-Royce Corniche acts as an auto-portrait, ('auto' means self). What other aspects of the car tell Rennie's story?

In pairs, discuss the benefits of being a multidisciplinary artist. Compare Rennie's mural in Gallery 17 *OA\_CAMO* to *OA\_RR*. Which work of art is more powerful and why? Conduct a class debate on 'Film is a more powerful art form than public art and painting'. Use works of art by Rennie as the basis for your argument.

In *OA\_RR* the Rolls-Royce was used as a symbol of wealth and power. Today, what symbols do you associate with wealth and power? Comparably, can you think of a universal symbol for compassion and tolerance?

Identify three symbols used in the film that signify Rennie's Kamilaroi heritage.

**TIP** Research Bora Rings as a starting point.

Write a film review on *OA\_RR*. Critically analyse the film techniques used to convey meaning. eg. Angles, colour, setting, music, shot type and use of symbolism. Compare *OA\_RR* to *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*, 1990 by Tracey Moffatt. What similarities do these films share?

Rennie's grandmother was forcibly removed from her family when she was only seven years old. Investigate the Stolen Generations and the impact this removal had on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Consider what the day-to-day life of Rennie's grandmother might have been like.

Rennie's work addresses the dislocation and dispossession of Aboriginal people and highlights that these stories should never be forgotten. How do we currently publicly recognise or commemorate the dislocation and dispossession experienced by Aboriginal people?

The use of camouflage is a reoccurring motif in Rennie's work. Research other works of art by Rennie where he has used a camouflage patterning. Using these as examples, explain how Rennie challenges us to rethink our assumptions about Australian art and identity.

Rennie's background is in street art and he claims his public work in particular is always political. What makes his work political? Compare Rennie's work to that of Richard Bell. Discuss their approaches to art making and politics.

### MAKING

In *OA\_RR* Rennie uses the Rolls-Royce as his tool for making marks into the earth. Create a tool or apparatus that will make a temporary mark into a surface.

Create a short film about a lesser known Australian story. Consider adapting some of the filmic elements used in Rennie's film. Collaborate with students from your music department to develop an appropriate soundtrack for your film.

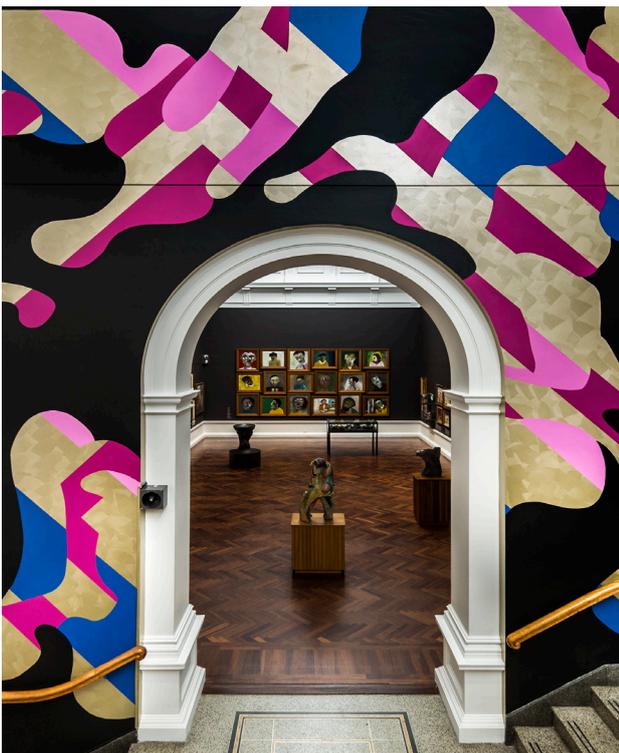


image detail: Reko Rennie, Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi people, New South Wales, *OA\_CAMO*, Adelaide, 2017; Commissioned for TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy of the artist and blackartprojects, Melbourne, photo: Saul Steed

## RESOURCES

### WEBSITES/ARTICLES

AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia  
<http://bit.ly/2huSteV>

The Design Files – Reko Rennie Interview  
<http://bit.ly/2wc8cFS>

Reko Rennie  
<http://bit.ly/2v4jSWk>

The Personal Structures of Reko Rennie (Australia Council – Venice)  
<http://bit.ly/2wRVVDO>

Wearing his own Crown by Vincent Alessi  
<http://bit.ly/2wc8Lj5>

Reko Rennie Website  
<http://bit.ly/2whwaIQ>

### VIDEOS

Art Gallery New South Wales– Stencil Workshop  
<http://bit.ly/2fMpsKX>

Art Gallery of Western Australia – artist talk  
<http://bit.ly/2v3JYJb>

Colossal Reko Rennie artwork unveiled in Kew  
<http://bit.ly/2vFoYf6>

In the Artist's Studio: Reko Rennie  
<http://bit.ly/2vFvRwS>

National Gallery of Australia – Defying Empire (Reko Rennie)  
<http://bit.ly/2wXrMXm>

Reko Rennie: Patternation  
<http://bit.ly/2vKF0mx>

Reko Rennie and Frank Buffalo Hyde: The Bridge PAI Mural  
<http://bit.ly/2fNWomx>

SBS – Colour Theory  
<http://bit.ly/2fmpDct>



Reko Rennie installing *OA\_CAMO* in Gallery 17, 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the artist and blackartprojects, Melbourne, photo: Saul Steed

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Information and hyperlinks correct at time of print. Art Gallery of South Australia staff Kylie Neagle and Lisa Slade contributed to the development of this resource.