

Analysis of artwork "we call them pirates out here" by daniel boyd

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' Postmodernism' is a style of the late 20th century, which involves the intentional influence/use of past artist's work styles and conventions. As a characteristic of postmodernism, ' appropriation' occurs when artists deliberately borrow pre-existing art features/images adding little to no variation. This occurs in order to clearly represent these borrowed features in a new context and is known as ' recontextualisation'. For instance, artist, Emanuel Phillips Fox painted ' Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770' in 1902 and another artist, Daniel Boyd, appropriated and recontextualised Fox's work as his own in the artwork titled ' We call them pirates out here', painted in 2006. As the title of the original artwork suggests, Fox has depicted the landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, representing this event in a positive light. On the other hand, Boyd has recontextualised and juxtaposed this work's meaning from the positive perspective of the first fleet on new land to the Aboriginals negative perspective of these events, as their homeland was invaded and their people treated unfairly. This recontextualisation is established through the character representation of Captain Cook who is, in this work, dressed as a pirate, symbolising greed and possession.

In relation to the artwork ' We call them pirates out here', Boyd has evidently borrowed a large majority of Fox's original artwork, ' Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770'. Factors such as the medium used (oil on canvas), featured character's placement, background landscape and somewhat similar use of colour have been applied to Boyd's work, ' We call them pirates out here', in order to achieve an appropriated style of context. Minor adjustments that have been applied to Boyd's modern translation include the

bolder contrast in colour for dramatic purposes, border format to resemble a postcard (this format was applied in previous works and is a motif throughout Boyd's work), different representation of indigenous people in the background (to convey the settlers perspective of the indigenous inhabitants of the land), change of costume for Captain Cook representing piracy (through the parrot on Cook's shoulder and eyepatch across face), and the replaced flag held by one of the featured characters (from the Red Ensign flag in Fox's work to a flag featuring skull and crossbones over the Union Jack in Boyd's work). Through bold colours, and symbolic detail expressing its own originality, Daniel Boyd has conveyed a powerful message, showcasing society's changing views towards these events in Australian history.

Artist, Daniel Boyd was born in Cairns, Queensland in 1982. The indigenous Australian, born of the Kujjila and Gangalu people was a talented young man from an early age, taking inspiration from many well known artists. His interests were sport and art, where he dedicated most of his time into developing his skills. Although, his art career was recommended by family to be further pursued. Boyd moved to Canberra at age 19 and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree within the Australian National University's School of Art. Of his time attending the School of Art, Daniel Boyd found his major interest and art influence in the topic of Australian History, particularly drawing inspiration from the Indigenous people.

Surrounding Boyd's ' Captain Cook series', he has painted a variety of works such as ' Governor No beard' in 2005 and developed his first solo exhibition, ' Polly don't want no cracker', in 2005 at The Mori Gallery, Sydney. In 2014,

Boyd won the Bulgari Art Award for his artwork, 'Untitled 2014', and according to the website, 'deadly vibe', Daniel Boyd was one of the leading indigenous artists. In Daniel Boyd's artwork, 'We call them pirates out here', the artwork displays Captain Cook and his crew members unboarding their boats and making their way through Botany bay for the first time. In the air, one of the crew members carries a flag with a skull and crossbones over the Union Jack as each member makes their way up the sandy bay with little grass. The weather amongst the landscape features dark and dismal-looking clouds which ultimately positions the audience to feel depressed or gloomy when viewing the work. This factor guides the mood towards a negative outlook on the events displayed and assists the audience to see the perspective of the indigenous people around this time, instead of the perspective of the first fleet. Boyd's oil on canvas artwork reveals a considerable amount of symbolic detail throughout. For instance, the transformation of Captain Cook's appearance intentionally made to look like a pirate can be observed through the parrot on Cook's shoulder and the eye patch he is wearing. Similarly, the flag that one of the crew members are holding presents a skull and crossbones over the Union Jack. The symbol of the skull and crossbones implies themes of piracy, which in turn represents greed and power. The themes of greed and power relate to the arrival of the first fleet as they mistreated the indigenous people and abused their sacred land.

Other structural elements involved are the use of colour; the difference between the original artwork by E. Phillips Fox and the appropriation artwork

is the stronger contrast in colours (setting the mood of the work), focal point of Captain Cook's character (the bright/clean white colour of Cook's clothing is centrally placed and therefore immediately captures the audience's attention), and visual lighting devices specifically produced by the weather within the work (the gloomy, dark clouds also set an overall negative mood). Another symbolic feature within Boyd's work is the subtly present image of a skull face amongst the clouds, located in the top right corner. This image is linked to the theme of piracy, which is a motif throughout the work, 'We call them pirates out here'. Daniel Boyd's appropriation of E. Phillips Fox's work intentionally targets a native person's perspective of the arrival of the first fleet. As an indigenous Australian artist, Boyd is particularly interested in speaking out on behalf of these people through his work. Therefore, the perspective has been recontextualised from the first fleet's major discovery to the indigenous people's invasion of territory and suffering as a result of this event. This perspective has been changed in recent times due to society's gradual awareness and regretful acknowledgements of the impact this event had on the Indigenous Australians. In creating this work, Boyd has spoken out on behalf of these impacted communities and aimed to provide awareness of the severity and ongoing suffering that these people face today.

The Daniel Boyd artwork appropriation titled, 'We call them pirates out here', Boyd reinterprets the work of Emanuel Phillips Fox in his artwork, 'Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770', through the overall borrowed concept surrounding the arrival of the first fleet at Botany Bay. Few elements

have been recontextualised in order to fill the themes of the varying perspective. For instance, Boyd has played on the themes of piracy to convey the perspective of the natives as stolen from and abused, through symbolic images of piracy. In Boyd recontextualising Fox's work, he has challenged art for its differing meanings and challenged his audience's perspective on the past events to consider both parties/perspectives.

Daniel Boyd has represented the world today as more open to view change as he allows his work to communicate a new perspective in Australian history. By recontextualising, essentially, a widespread perception to communicate an important and unheard view, Boyd has challenged the world's one sided perspective of these events from just a wholly positive experience to reveal the underlying damage caused for good.

In response to Boyd's artwork, ' We call them pirates out here', the audience's reaction to this work revealed signs of intrigue and interest into Boyd's artistic approach. For example, MCA (Museum Of Contemporary Art) curator, Glenn Barkley commented, " I think it is fascinating that Boyd has used the traditional medium of painting to make a point and the whole idea of reclaiming imagery for conceptual and political purposes I find quite appealing. I like the bluntness of the message. It's black humor".

To conclude, it is clearly evident that Boyd's approach to the appropriated artwork, ' We call them pirates out here', has overall received a positive response from its audience and although it's concepts are recognised as predominantly borrowed from artist, Emanuel Phillips Fox in his work titled, '

Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770', the work still is regarded as original. This is specifically due to the remaining creative originality that Boyd has expressed opposing the addressed perspective in Fox's work.