

Politico-Magic-Realism, Destiny Deacon

Political magic realism sums up the character of artist Destiny Deacon and embodies her amazing, troubled, playful, insightful, creative spirit and art practice, intellectually hovering, a parallel warm shadow on the outside looking in.

Destiny has often pointed out that she's a teacher by training. One can't force people to react in a set way to artwork and Destiny's art is more than just a statement, inviting you to feel. Her use of dolls-mostly black dolls-is as surrogates, actors in a theatre of the absurd that she directs. A child at play humming a jingle. A child singing her own song for her own pleasure, telling her own story by parable, but not necessarily a pleasurable parable.

The title *Ride a cock horse*, 2006, comes from an English children's nursery rhyme that, like many such rhymes, hides serious political messages inside a harmless ditty. Part of a series, this image of a male black doll on a children's toy 'cock' horse, rides through a schoolroom map of Australia. Here it reminds us, through play, of ingrained facts about colonial conquest.

The 3 diss graces, 2009, also part of a series, plays on the Three Graces of classical Greek and Roman legend, embodiments of goodness, charm, and beauty, that later let male artists paint and sculpt multiple naked female figures while seeming high-minded. Destiny's graces are party girls dressed in party frocks and perhaps more naughty than good in their idea of fun.

Ebony and ively face race, 2016, like many of Destiny's titles plays on the name of a popular song, in this case the simplistic Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney hit Ebony and Ivory. The

image first appeared in a show called Race (as in the construction of 'race') where two dolls- one 'white' and a bit wonky but in a higher superior position, one black and fine-talk to each other leaving us to guess what they are saying.

Destiny moves her shadowy magical form, to redraw playful fables and children's nursery rhymes of brutal, stinging and realistic colonial power plays that scar us all.

Djon Mundine OAM, 2020 Red Ochre Life-time Achievement Award Winner of the Australia Council, and Concept-Curator of the 1988 Aboriginal Memorial