

MEDIA RELEASE

Exiles – Rudolf Boelee



Dan Davin
Acrylic and lacquer on hessian on board 2007 collection of the artist

Robin Hyde

John Mulgan

14 December 2009 – 7 February 2010

Timed to coincide with 3 other concurrently themed *exile* exhibitions: - *Ey! Iran* developed by the Gold Coast City Art Gallery and *Bah'ai Martyrs of Iran* – Shahriar Asdollah-zadeh and *Duality of Exile – Fred Uhlman in Captivity* curated by Scott Pothan

Exiles is a series of 7 striking portrait paintings of figures from that Great Depression Era generation of New Zealanders, described as 'the cream of their generation' - pathfinders and cultural explorers who went where few Kiwis had been before. Arresting and confrontational these acrylic on hessian paintings depict images of New Zealand men and women whose individualism and idealism sometimes put them on the fringes of their own culture. They have been selected by the artist as homage to their ability to see beyond boundaries and the confines of their homeland.

Exiles has toured nationally to galleries in Christchurch, Auckland, Blenheim, Oamaru, Invercargill and Gore and was most recently exhibited at the Rotorua

Museum. Boelee's work was last on view at the Whangarei Art Museum in the exhibition **'Inheriting the Netherlands – A Century of Dutch Art in New Zealand'** in 2000.

Born in 1940 in war-torn Holland under Nazi Occupation Boelee has a deep and personal connection to the impact of world events and how a sense of 'exile' can be felt both 'at home' – and in enforced distance from it, connecting his works to the 3 concurrent exhibitions at the art museum on the theme of 'art in exile'.

Charles Brasch Robin Hyde Dan Davin Rewi Alley
James Bertram Geoffrey Cox John Mulgan

All of them travelled, engaged with the world beyond these shores, exiled themselves ...most apart from Rewi Alley were born about the time of the First World War so their experiences through the Depression and Second World Wars had a profound effect on them....highly intelligent, sensitive and observant they used their creativity to promote the greater good, in most cases through literature'

Marian Maguire writes of this series of works;

'Seeing his homeland ravaged by war he chose to live in this country, the New Land, in a youthful search for utopia. In selecting these seven Exiles he identifies the need to look beyond regionalism at the wider issues for humanity.'

Rudolf Boelee has painted these portraits as bold chiaroscuro heads that completely dominate the coarse weave of the hessian surface. Each portrait is painted from a photograph. The backgrounds are dark; solid black. Light radiates off the facial planes in sharp contrast. Facial shadows are painted in a single flat colour, a different colour for each person, so although the images are bold, almost confrontational, the features are flattened, increasing the drama. The impression of each person, the idea of them resounds more strongly than their physical reality. Like many other works by Boelee the paintings flash like stills from film noir and create curiosity about the moments before and afterwards. Each of the Exiles had a full and active life and, aside from Geoffrey Cox, have all died. Despite the solidity of their achievements it is hard not to think that their lives, albeit intense, were fleeting.'

In the words of James Bertram, *"Hard to explain now just how strongly we all felt in those days. But it wasn't just politics, rather, a sort of evangelical sense of mission, of not allowing oneself to become contaminated and absorbed into the establishment"*.

For further information on the exhibitions and images released for copyright, please contact:

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