



Johnny Romeo - Speed Crew 2010 acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm



Johnny Romeo - Sally Oak Coy 2010 acrylic and oil on canvas 61cm x 61cm



Johnny Romeo - Diamond Bird Tale 2010 acrylic and oil on canvas 101cm x 101cm



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 ng art gallery tue - sat 11am - 10pm mission tue - fri 11am - 10pm sat 9am - 10pm

Johnny Romeo

Inspired by the folk lore tales of Ned Kelly, Johnny Romeo's exhibition *You'll Never Take Me Alive* is an investigation into Kelly's presence in Australia's historical fabric and his influence on our national pop culture. Romeo is fascinated by the presence of Kelly as, in Romeo's words, "a revered Australian icon" but the seeming truth of the matter Kelly "is nothing more than a cold blooded killer". This fascination, coupled with a deep knowledge of contemporary film, gave birth to the series in this body of work – both conceptually and aesthetically.

In creating his Ned Kelly, Romeo draws upon the perceptions of the character used in contemporary films and other visual art mediums. Much like the characters in a Quentin Tarentino film, the depiction of Kelly is raw and graphic. The use of symbols- such as guns and damsels in distress – pushes the boundaries of folklore portrayal. Romeo's pieces can be read as a film's

storyboard layout. Each image depicts a scene with the focus driven by the characters within a scene in general, not necessarily specific historic events – "I wanted the works to loosely follow and be inspired by the main sequence of the Kelly story".

This storyboard, filmic approach is further explored through the works' comic aesthetics. The use of speech bubbles and word insertions emphasizes the immediacy of the works. They are depictions of moments in Australian pop culture. This comic style highlights the mass consumption of cultural heritage and stories in media - like film, comics as well as the visual arts. The tales of Ned Kelly have been much explored in Australia's short history but in this exhibition, Johnny Romeo uncovers his view of Kelly while simultaneously discussing the notion of story telling in our contemporary society.

Owen Craven, arts writer
Deputy Editor Artist Profile, 2010

NG Art Gallery

warmly invites you to the opening of

Johnny Romeo

you'll never take me alive - the ned kelly hero series

tuesday 9 march

6pm – 8pm

exhibition 9 – 27 march 2010

artist workshop and lunch with Johnny Romeo \$85
saturday 20 march, 12 noon

