

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Saint Ned (2022) is Brendan Kelly's latest solo exhibition of mixed media paintings focusing on the infamous Australian bushranger Ned Kelly and his place within contemporary Australian society.

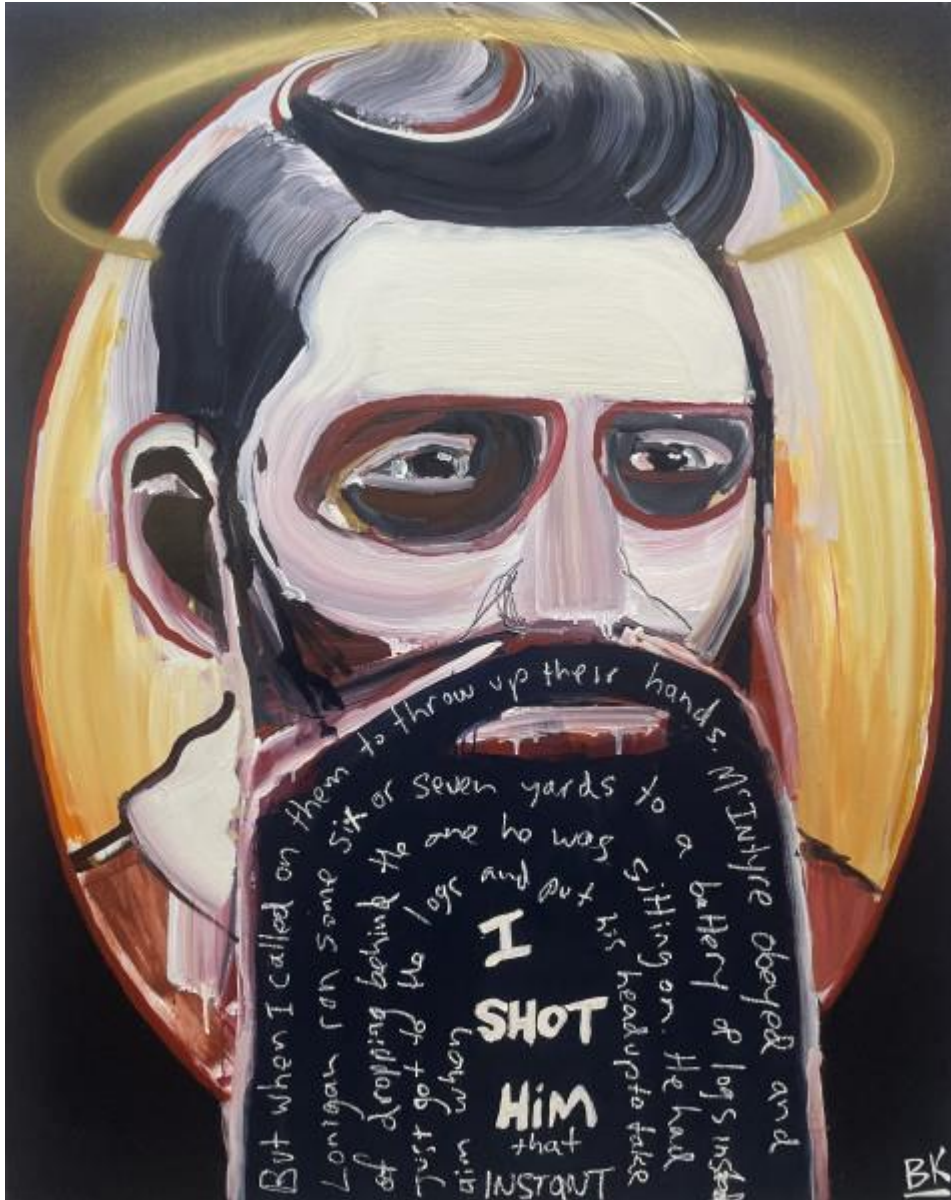
The artist seeks to analyse Ned Kelly through a broad lens, encompassing a wide range of elements, which have added to the Ned Kelly story, in order to comprehend the modern view of a man who, once thought a common criminal, hunted by police and executed in 1880, became Australia's most well-known 19th century individual, an Australian hero and icon.

Ned Kelly polarizes the masses, and has been labelled by diverse terms such as hero, villain, sinner, saint, thief, murderer, prophet, product, and merchandise item. For well over 100 years, Ned Kelly has been the inspiration for creative offerings in the form of novels, movies, songs and paintings, ultimately celebrated and honoured at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony on a worldwide stage.

The breadth of work in the exhibition reflects Ned Kelly in the contemporary sense. Raw, bold, and direct gestural abstract-marks share the picture plane with fractured, figurative, almost cartoon-like passages that contain a wide mixture of mediums including acrylics, graphite, oil stick, aerosol spray, sheet metal and photo collage. Using an Australian colour palette the artist effectively showcases Ned's light and dark shades with intelligence, empathy, humour, irony, parody and pride.

Using Ned Kelly as a mirror, the exhibition asks us to look at our national identity through our radically changing perceptions of a 19th century bushranger. How and why has our view of Ned Kelly and ourselves altered? What are our current values and perceptions as a nation, and what were they in the past? What are our attitudes towards law and law enforcers? What are the parallels between the Ned Kelly story and the Australian story? What as a nation have we learned, if anything, from the life of Ned Kelly?

"SAINT NED" BRENDAN KELLY EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

I Shot Him, 2021

Signed lower right

Acrylic, oil pastel & spray paint on plywood

154 x 122cm

AUD 7,500.00 inc. GST

SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

The writing on Ned's beard in this painting is an extract from the infamous 'Jerilderie Letter' penned by Joe Byrne on Kelly's behalf, in which Kelly attempted to explain the killing of three police officers at Stringybark Creek (as well as other matters) in the hope that the letter would be printed and distributed as pamphlets, potentially being published in national newspapers.

Ned Kelly is Australia's most well know 19th century individual with a large portion of Australians viewing him as a national hero and icon.

What is it about Ned Kelly that allows some people to turn a blind eye to actions that others would call cold-blooded murder?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Ellen Kelly - Ned's Mum, 2021

Signed lower right

Acrylic & graphite on plywood

154 x 122cm

AUD 7,500.00 inc. GST

SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Ellen Kelly (1832-1923) was the wife of John 'Red' Kelly and the mother of Ned and Dan Kelly as well as ten other children. Born in Antrim, Ireland, she came to Australia with her parents in 1841.

In 1878 Constable Alexander Fitzpatrick went to the Kelly homestead to arrest Dan Kelly for horse stealing. According to Ellen Kelly, Fitzpatrick was drunk and 'made a pass' at her teenage daughter Kate, a scuffle then ensued.

Fitzpatrick refuted the claim accusing Ellen and some of the other Kelly family members of attempted murder.

Ellen was found guilty of assaulting a police officer and sentenced to 3 years in Old Melbourne Gaol.

The 'Fitzpatrick Incident' is said to have sparked the Kelly Outbreak.

The heart of the matter for Ned, was gaining his mothers release from prison, where she was serving what he considered an unreasonably harsh sentence on trumped-up charges.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Spirit of the Light Horse

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite, photo collage & woodblock stamp on plywood

122 x 90cm

AUD 4,400.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Many of the children of those connected with the Kelly Outbreak served with distinction in the Australian Light Horse during WWI.

Some would argue that the spirit of Ned Kelly and that of the Australian Light Horsemen is one and the same. Honesty, courage, loyalty, camaraderie, larrikinism and mateship are qualities displayed by both parties, qualities that many Australians have identified with deeply for over 100 years.

But do we still identify with these qualities? Does the spirit of the Light Horse and Ned Kelly continue to live in modern day Australians?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Terror at the Window, 2021
Signed lower left
Acrylic on plywood
122 x 90cm
AUD 4,400.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

You could mistake Ned for a stereotypical modern day terrorist in this painting. So was Ned Kelly a terrorist?

By definition a terrorist is someone who uses calculated violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear.

Terrorism is intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.

If you were to read Ned's infamous Jerilderie Letter you'd be hard pressed to say he wasn't openly threatening great violence against the police or any civilians opposing him.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Saint Ned, 2021
Signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel & spray paint on plywood
122 x 90cm
AUD 4,400.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Through the ages, all over the world there has been what is termed 'social bandits'. The most well known social bandit was Robin Hood although there is no actual proof that he ever existed.

Typically these bandits are 'forced' by unjust laws into outlawry, whence they 'take from the rich and give to the poor'.

In many cultures social bandits have been raised by the populous to become 'folk saints', where although not officially canonized, they are recognized as being on par with canonized religious saints.

Ned Kelly fits the description of social bandit, but is it stretching things too far calling him a saint?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Mourning the Icon, 2021
Acrylic & graphite on plywood
122 x 122cm
AUD 6,000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

This is Ellen Kelly in mourning for her son Ned.

She mourns not just the loss of her son, but also the loss in modern times of values he once stood for and things that once seemed to matter.

Times have changed and Australians see themselves very differently now compared to even just 20 years ago.

The Internet, mobile phones, algorithms and narcissism have changed our values at a rapid rate. People are less likely to go against the grain these days, seldom daring to dream.

Is Ned Kelly relevant in the contemporary Australian mindset or is he just a relic of another time? Who will define the present times and why?

Who will be our next hero, hopefully not a kitten playing a piano on YouTube

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Forced Outlaw?, 2021
signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood
122 x 122cm
AUD 6,000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

A common belief among modern Australians is that Ned Kelly was forced into outlawry by unfair laws, but is that really an accurate assumption?

Kelly openly admitted to stealing over 280 horses before any of his real troubles began. Nobody forced him to do that.

Nobody forced him to ambush and kill Constable Thomas Lonigan at Stringybark Creek where he could easily have escaped due to being far more competent on horseback in the bush than the police of the day.

Nobody forced him to hold men, women and children captive during the Glenrowan Seige, a decision that cost many their lives.

So, the question remains, was Ned Kelly really a forced outlaw?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Julian Ashton's Removal, 2021
Signed lower left
Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood
122 x 122cm
SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

This painting is based on a courtroom illustration sketched by Julian Ashton for the Illustrated Australian News at the trial of Ned Kelly.

Ned, not wanting to be sketched, asked for Ashton to be removed from the courtroom, which indeed he was!

Who'd ever have thought that the founder of the Sydney Art School had once, been removed from court, by none other than the infamous Ned Kelly, and for drawing nonetheless!

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

All in the Armour, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel, photo collage & spray paint on plywood

122 x 122cm

AUD 6,000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Ned Kelly would be long forgotten along with countless other Australian bushrangers if not for his armour. The idea of armour most likely came to him while reading R D Blackmore's 'Lorna Doone' (a book he is said to have read).

There were 4 suits of armour, one for each member of the Kelly Gang, consisting of helmet, breastplate, backplate, arm guards and waist apron weighing 45kg each being made from 6-7 single-furrow plough mouldboards.

It was Sidney Nolan's 1946 Ned Kelly paintings that really brought a focus onto the armour, particularly the helmet, depicted as a simple black square.

Along with the armour came visions of gallant knights on horseback with virtues such as chivalry, valour, wisdom and compassion, and so Ned Kelly, through his armour, won the hearts of so many Australians.

It's all in the armour.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Edward Kelly - Step Right Up!

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel, spray paint & photo collage on plywood

122 x 184cm

AUD 8,900.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Edward 'Ned' Kelly (1854-1880)

He's Australia's most well-known 19th century individual. Some people love him, others hate him, and many are undecided.

The world's first feature length film was about him and more movies have been made about him since. Mick Jagger played him. Heath Ledger played him, and countless books have been written in his honour.

There are hotels, motels, streets, bars, bands, songs and businesses that use his name. Key rings, drink holders, doorstops, garden lights or statues big and small. Real armour, fake armour, paintings, drawings, cups, saucers, plates and poker machines.

Step right up folks, get some Ned Kelly, three for a dollar!

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Super Ned, 2021
signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel & photo collage on plywood
122 x 154cm
SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

In some people's minds Ned Kelly was forced to become an outlaw and he did no wrong full stop.

There are those who aspire to be 'As Game As Kelly' or so the saying goes.

Others ask themselves, "What would Ned Kelly do?" before they make decisions.

Some proudly wear 'Such Is Life' tattoos in reference to Kelly's last words (apparently 'quoted' by a reporter sitting too far away from Ned at the execution to have heard him say anything).

And who wouldn't want to 'Die Like A Kelly', advice supposedly given to Ned by his mother before he was executed.

How much the average person really knows about Ned Kelly is anyone's guess, but he was no Superhero that's for sure.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Well I Suppose It Has All Come to This, 2021

signed lower left

Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel, photo & sheet metal collage on plywood

100 x 215cm

AUD 8,800.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

The title is something Ned supposedly said while in prison awaiting execution.

He definitely wasn't a national icon at that point in Australia's history.

For many years after his death he wasn't very popular at all, but how things have changed.

Surely the defining moment for Kelly in the Australian mindset was at the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games when a gang of giant Ned Kelly figures entered the Olympic arena wearing Sidney Nolanesque black square helmets, brandishing rifles that sprayed sparks into the crowd.

Ned's arrival caused an audible shocked silence for the briefest moment while Australia seemed to make up its mind about Ned Kelly once and for all.

Did we as a nation accept him? The deafening roar of over 100,000 people said yes we certainly did!

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Fading Icon, 2021
signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood
122 x 122cm
AUD 6,000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

For many years following the Kelly Outbreak, the Glenrowan Siege, and the execution of Ned Kelly in 1880, Australians as a whole were not in favour of Ned.

The late 40's saw a shift in public opinion with Sidney Nolans' now famous Ned Kelly paintings making Ned more palatable, portraying him as a comical knight in shining gloss black modernist armour wandering through expansive landscapes with romanticized imagery.

By the new millennium Australians were celebrating Kelly as a National Icon at the Opening Ceremony of The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, a complete turnaround in opinion having taken 120 years to achieve.

But is Ned Kelly's popularity fading? Does a contemporary multicultural Australian society still relate to, or even know about Ned Kelly?

Do we still need to seek national heroes, icons or something to call the Australian spirit?
Many would argue that we've had an Australian spirit for well over 50,000 years.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Kelly in the Abstract, 2021
signed lower left
122 x 122cm
Acrylic on plywood
SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Whether it's Ned Kelly, the Light Horsemen, or the Americas Cup victory by Australia II, we as a nation in modern times have searched for something to identify with as 'the Australian Spirit'.

Most Indigenous Australians don't struggle with this particular identity crisis because they've known for tens of thousands of years exactly who they are and where they're from, but for many new Australians ever since colonization, who, having been displaced from their ancestral homelands, and lacking rights of passage, ceremony and culture, do struggle.

So in a contemporary sense do we have an Australian Spirit?

Is it possible for a modern multicultural nation to have a multi faceted but somehow all encompassing spirit?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Ned Stripped Bare, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel, photo collage & spray paint on plywood

200 x 90cm

AUD 7,000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Sometimes we seem to forget that Ned Kelly was a human being.

But when you strip away the armour and everything else that has become attached to him, you're left with a young man who died at the age of 25 having served 2 prison sentences and been on the run from police for a substantial part of his short life.

Nobody at the age of 25 has lived long enough to learn many of life's lessons, especially without a father, as was Ned's case from a young age.

Ned made some huge mistakes, the killings at Stringybark Creek, and the taking of men, women and children hostage at the Glenrowan Siege are but a few.

Some would say Kelly was honourable in that he died for a cause he believed in, which in its simplest terms, was for his mother to be released from prison, where she was serving a sentence that was undoubtedly unjust in its harshness.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Honeymoons & Music, 2021
signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood
184 x 122cm
SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

When Ned Kelly married Ettie Hart they must've had a honeymoon or at least a night of privacy somewhere. They were human beings after all with wants, desires and emotions, not just characters in a myth or fairytale story.

Maybe after the wedding celebrations they rode off together on Ned's favourite horse named 'Music'.

"Ooooh Neddy....let's do it on the horse!"

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Canned Kelly, 2021
signed lower right
Acrylic, graphite & spray paint on plywood
122 x 90cm
SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

A satirical look at how, in many ways Ned Kelly has become a product or commodity to be traded, sold, and sometimes even coveted.

If the 'Kelly Spirit' could be mass packaged, there are those who would eagerly buy it by the can.

"SAINT NED" BRENDAN KELLY EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

A Currency Lad 1, 2021

Signed lower left; inscribed outer edge

Acrylic, graphite, spray paint & photo collage on plywood

154 x 122cm

SOLD

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Currency lads and lasses were the first generations of native-born white Australians.

Here we see Ned with eyes made from photographs of his plaster death mask, a reminder of his eventual ruin, alongside images of the Sydney Harbour Bridge forming his torso, representing his future place of pride in the Nations heart.

The gold trimmed border of the work appears as a currency stamp playing on the notion of Ned Kelly as an Australian commodity.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

The Reverend Kelly, 2021

signed lower left

Acrylic, graphite & spray paint on plywood

90 x 122cm

AUD 4,400.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

On several occasions Ned Kelly took men, women, and children hostage. They were given food and drinks, as well as music, dance and games, then treated to trick horse riding displays to whip up excitement and enthusiasm for the notorious Kelly Gang.

After gaining an element of trust Ned would take the stage and give his captive audience a speech. In these 'sermons' he'd explain in detail exactly what he was doing in relation to what's now known as the Kelly Outbreak, and more importantly, why he was doing it.

Many hostages later became Kelly sympathisers and actually helped Ned to continue his operations in hiding.

Was Ned Kelly trying to build a following, or possibly a flock?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Kelly Through a Stained Glass Window, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite, oil pastel & spray paint on plywood

184 x 122cm

AUD 8,900.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

In order to reasonably consider the common questions of whether Ned Kelly's actions were murder or self-defence, just or unjust, right or wrong, and whether he's a sinner or a saint we need to view things through many different lenses.

It's a complicated story that requires us to know him better as a man and to understand the times in which he lived and the laws that governed him.

Things are rarely black and white, and so too, the Ned Kelly story is full of grey areas, as well as coloured areas like a stained glass window.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Kelly at a Distance, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood

122 x 184cm

AUD 8,900.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

This is the view overlooking the King Valley from where bushranger Harry Powers had his secret hideout. Powers took Ned Kelly on as 'apprentice bushranger' when Ned was just a teenager, and some would say that Kelly's troubles began with this association.

The Kelly Gang, consisting of four members, Ned Kelly, Dan Kelly, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart would eventually use Harry Powers' secret hideout themselves, many years after Powers had been captured and brought to justice.

Some would argue that Ned, being the Kelly Gang leader, had caused the eventual downfall of the other three Kelly Gang members through their association with him.

It's easy to see the inevitable downhill path these four young men had taken when viewed from a distance.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Death Masks & Ettie Hart, 2021

Acrylic, graphite & photo collage on plywood

184 x 122cm

AUD 8,900.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Was Ned Kelly ever married? The answer appears to be yes, he married Ettie Hart the sister of Kelly Gang member Steve Hart.

In 2010 Ettie's great-great-grandson Paul O'Keefe found her scrapbook at the family home containing compelling evidence to say that Ned and Ettie were indeed married.

But...there's also a story about Ned having a son named Niall to an Irish migrant named Orla O'Meara.

As a matter of fact almost every aspect of the Ned Kelly story is shrouded in myth, mystery, lies, furbies and inaccuracies so who really knows?

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

A Currency Lad 2, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite & spray paint on plywood

154 x 122cm

AUD 7,500.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Currency lads and lasses were the first generations of native-born white Australians.

Here is Ned Kelly elevated to Christ-like status with glowing golden halo and the pained expression of a martyr. A man destined for Sainthood.

The gold trimmed border of the work appears as a currency stamp playing on the notion of Ned Kelly as an Australian commodity.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

A Currency Lad 3, 2021

signed lower right

Acrylic, graphite & spray paint on plywood

154 x 122cm

AUD 7,500.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Currency lads and lasses were the first generations of native-born white Australians.

Here is Ned Kelly elevated to Christ-like status with glowing golden halo and the pained expression of a martyr. A man destined for Sainthood.

The gold trimmed border of the work appears as a currency stamp playing on the notion of Ned Kelly as an Australian commodity.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly
Kelly in the Dreaming, 2022
Acrylic on plywood
90 x 122cm
AUD 4,400.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

In north-western Australia, in the farthest corner of the continent from Kelly Country, the Yarralin Aboriginal people have taken Ned Kelly into their dreaming. They tell how, when salt water covered the land, Ned and his angel friends came in a boat, made a river and caused the salt water to retreat.

Another legend tells of Ned Kelly killing four policemen and then being taken, by Captain Cook, back to England where he is killed and buried. After a thunderous sound, Ned then rises into the sky.

"SAINT NED" **BRENDAN KELLY** EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



Brendan Kelly

Last look Kelly, 2022

Acrylic on plywood

122 x 122cm

AUD 6000.00 inc. GST

DESCRIPTION/COMMENTARY

Ned Kelly was captured during first light at the Glenrowan Siege on the 28th June 1880 after a night where everything went wrong for the Kelly gang.

Joe Byrne was the first to die when a stray bullet passed between a gap in his armour, severing an artery in his groin.

It appears that Dan Kelly and Steve Hart took their own lives, they were found lying on the floor next to each other on their backs with their heads leaning up against a rolled-up rug. Some say they took poison.

Ned, still clad in armour stumbled out the back door of the Glenrowan Hotel into the bushes where he rested briefly until his final showdown with the police.

He was taken alive and eventually sentenced to death by hanging.