

**JASON WING**

People

of Substance







flap:

**Blacktown Dreaming** 2009  
Acrylic paint, wood, perspex,  
syringes, dimensions variable.  
Photo by Adam Hollingworth.

from left:

**Rainbow Dreaming** 2009  
Hypodermic syringe, perspex, food  
colouring, dimensions variable.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.

**Blacktown Dreaming** 2009  
Acrylic paint, wood, spray  
paint, spray paint cans, cotton,  
dimensions variable.  
Photo by Adam Hollingworth.

**White Bread** 2011  
Bread, 10 x 10cm.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Despite the initial sense of discomfort **People of Substance** evokes in viewers, Jason Wing's installation is embedded with an innate belief in the transformative qualities of negative paradigms through the power of positive and candid discourse.

Jason is of Chinese and Aboriginal heritage, and although much of his work involves dissecting his identity, **People of Substance** is more broadly concerned with the experience of being human and the universality of substance abuse, which cuts across all cultures, including Indigenous Australia.

Working predominantly in street art, **People of Substance** signals a departure from the recycled street signs and bold graphics for which Jason has gained attention for over the past five years. Despite this divergence in medium, the artist's message of rebirth remains fundamental in his practice. By addressing thorny issues around culture and, in this case, addiction, Jason encourages open and affirmative dialogue in an attempt to achieve regeneration through understanding. In a sense, this body of work compels us to cast aside our differences and unite against the devastation of drug and alcohol abuse. The artist forces us to reflect upon



our own experiences with addiction, either directly or indirectly, to cultivate compassion and empathy towards Indigenous communities who know too well the destruction of alcohol and drug abuse.

Jason's syringe bed was originally presented in 2009 at Blacktown Arts Centre to draw attention to the excessive amount of drug use in both the Aboriginal and wider Blacktown community. For **People of Substance**, the artist has further developed this concept, examining the ongoing impact of substance abuse in post-colonial Australia.

Like a bed of nails, which were traditionally used to offer relief from ailments and pain, Jason's beds are simultaneously uncomfortable and soothing; he draws our attention to the inescapable truth that despite the destructive nature of drug and alcohol addiction, many addicts find some solace in a needle.

The beds also present a complex paradigm between black and white Australia. Jason points out that from a non-Indigenous perspective they can be viewed as 'a prejudice statement that focuses on a minority of Aboriginal people who suffer from substance abuse as a result of colonisation.' Alternatively, 'an Aboriginal Australian may recognise the deliberate destruction

of a culture through the introduction of chemical substances'.

After seven years working as an art therapist in marginalised and disadvantaged communities, Jason remains committed to community consultation and engagement in his art practice. For this body of work Jason spent time talking with addicts, including 'chromers' or paint-sniffers. The beds in this exhibition reference these conversations, imitating the way chromers cough up different coloured paint on their pillows each morning

Although Jason's work is initially uncomfortable and confronting for viewers, it is imbued with a great sense of hope. Whether working on the street, within community or in the gallery, Jason continually demonstrates an absolute fearlessness and commitment to addressing some of the most significant issues facing contemporary Australia.

**Liz Nowell**

Exhibition Coordinator/Curator  
Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre

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**JASON WING**  
**People of Substance**  
25 June – 6 July

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