

Museum in 'act of return' at home town of explorer

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WHITBY'S Captain Cook may be known as one of the world's greatest explorers but his actions were also to alter ancient cultures forever.

Now, some 250 years since the famous sailor first landed in Australia, his once home town hosts a powerful act of "return".

An exhibition, *Revisions*, curated by Rebecca Hossack with British artist Patrick Waterhouse, brings Aboriginal art to Whitby for the first time.

For the past decade artists have been working together on a series of pieces to "amend" the official British history of old documents and maps.

Now Aboriginal works give voice to the stories that were passed down from generation to generation instead, and from the original custodians of the land.

Ms Hossack, curating the special exhibition at Whitby Museum, said it was years to come to fruition.

"The show has no feelings or anger, but is a "revision" of history, she said. "They have brought these marvellous curlicues of colour to our vision of this landscape."

Whitby, she added, was where it all began; where the *Endeavour* was first built: "That ship brought change to the world. That is why it is so wonderful to come back."

Here, from Whitby Museum, visitors can see the very site where Captain James Cook's famous ship was built.

But it was Cook's landing in Botany Bay in 1770 that was to mark the beginning of British colonisation in Australia, irrevocably disrupting the lives of Indigenous populations.

And while explorers had charted their own maps of Australia, dissecting the land with "arbitrary" lines and imposed borders, they did not necessarily heed tradition or lore.

Now Whitby, said curators, provides a deeply significant setting for this exhibition.

Revisions, by the Warlpiri of Central Australia with British artist Patrick Waterhouse, revises a collection of old maps, flags, photographs and archive material.

The works, they said, give voice to original lore.

Back in 2014, Patrick Waterhouse had travelled to the Warlpiri area for the first time, tracing Australia's colonial history.

With members of the Warlukurangu Art Centres in the Yuendumu and Nyirripi communities, they have reworked the official documents he found.

Using the traditional technique of dot painting, the artists have added layers of patterns and symbols to share their own histories and traditions.

This could be a "revision", they said, of the stories that lay hidden beneath the surface.

The exhibition includes the UK premiere of *The True Story*, a video installation narrated by members of the Warlpiri community.

It reflects on what is missing from the records, curators said, confronting Australia's colonial narrative with its Indigenous history. It is really intriguing," said Ms Hossack. "Every single picture holds your attention, it compels you to look. This is something really wonderful."

The exhibition runs at the Pannett Art Gallery at Whitby Museum until October.



TONY JOHNSON



PIECES OF HISTORY: Top, Whitby Museum; Bottom, Pannett Art Gallery at Whitby Museum

Hazel Wright looks at the art on display in the new exhibition *Revisions*; Curator at the Pannett Art Gallery at Whitby Museum Sabrina Nangala Robertson and Sabrina Napangardi.