

**PETER ADSETT**

**TRI-NATIONS**

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After decades studying Māori art, and that of central desert aboriginal artists, Peter Adsett brings new dimensions to his medium of abstract painting. He shares with the latter a technique of horizontality, working flat on the ground, since by this means he avoids looking at the world across distance, with a measuring eye, and thus achieving “good form” (gestalt), which he understands as a kind of picturing. Picturing, in turn, is the imitation of a model, an original, that remains outside painting, at a remove from the material object, the canvas.

Adsett’s tertiary education at Palmerston North Teacher’s College under Cliff Whiting, Frank Davis and others, also shaped this approach to his medium, as did his childhood apprenticeship in his father’s cabinetmaking workshop in Gisborne. Furthermore, growing up in the vicinity of Matawhero fostered an early sense of historic injustices. In recent decades Adsett has dealt with the related massacres at Matawhero, and Ngatapa Pa (*Matawhero, Bullet Holes and Bandages*, 2009; *Betrayal* 2012), both exhibitions having been endorsed by Ngāi Tāmanuhiri elder, Olivia Horowia Bradbrook, before travelling to different sites in the North Island.

In late 2019 Adsett was in Gisborne to mount a two-part exhibition at PAULNACHE Gallery entitled *October*, and *Navigation*. The show marked the 250th anniversary of Cook’s landing in Poverty Bay, an event that was highly sensitive for the local population. The paintings were devoid of any imaginable expressiveness, being constructed from pale, cream-coloured raw linen. All the markings – vertical lines of black, cream and grey acrylic – were banished to the far extremes and side edges of the stretcher. On the reverse side of each painting is the date of a particular conflict from colonial times. The series signalled history’s general silence on such matters. On a neighbouring wall, the theme continued with a vast wall on which the painter combined black geometry with erased drawings, leaving ghostly imprints, nails and holes, and naming the whole, with unmissable irony, *Navigation*.

Adsett’s most recent work, made during the long Covid-19 lockdown in Victoria, has turned to black and white relations in a trio of paintings titled *Tri-Nations*. Begun at the time of the ‘All Blacks’ rugby success in Australia in 2020, and coinciding with the ‘Black Lives Matter’ protests in the USA, with its echoes in Melbourne and Sydney, the work develops a significant aspect of the *October* series. With his habitual ironic humour, Adsett focusses the spectator’s gaze on the off-sides, the edges of the (‘playing’) field. The surprise produced by this wit is more than a match for the deft, balletic play of the kiwi team.

Travelling back and forth between New Zealand and Australia, for the purposes of teaching and exhibiting, and maintaining close, familial links in both countries, the painter has created his own one-man cross-Tasman ‘bubble!’

See, <https://www.paulnache.com/tri-nations>

*Tri-Nations* runs in conjunction with his solo exhibition ‘Foul Play’ at Araluen Art Centre, Alice Springs, Northern Territories, Australia, curated by Stephen Williamson until 20 March 2022.

Visit: <https://araluenartscentre.nt.gov.au/whats-on/peter-adsett-foul-play>

## PAULNACHE

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Link: <https://www.paulnache.com/tri-nations>

## Opening Preview:

Waitangi Day, Sunday the 6th of February 2022, 11-3pm

Exhibition: 6 February – 20 March 2022

## Credits:

Text written by art historian Mary Alice-Lee

Photography by Felix Adsett, © the artist, courtesy of PAULNACHE

# TRI-NATIONS

# PETER ADSETT



Series: *Tri-Nations 1st Test* (View: face/front view)

Year created: 2021

Medium: horizontality

Materials: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 106cm sq. x 6cm (D)

Provenance: painted at Humbug, the artist home and studio, Melbourne

Signed: and numbered verso

**TRI-NATIONS**

# PETER ADSETT



Series: *Tri-Nations 2nd Test* (View: left of field)

Year created: 2021

Medium: horizontality

Materials: Acrylic on linen

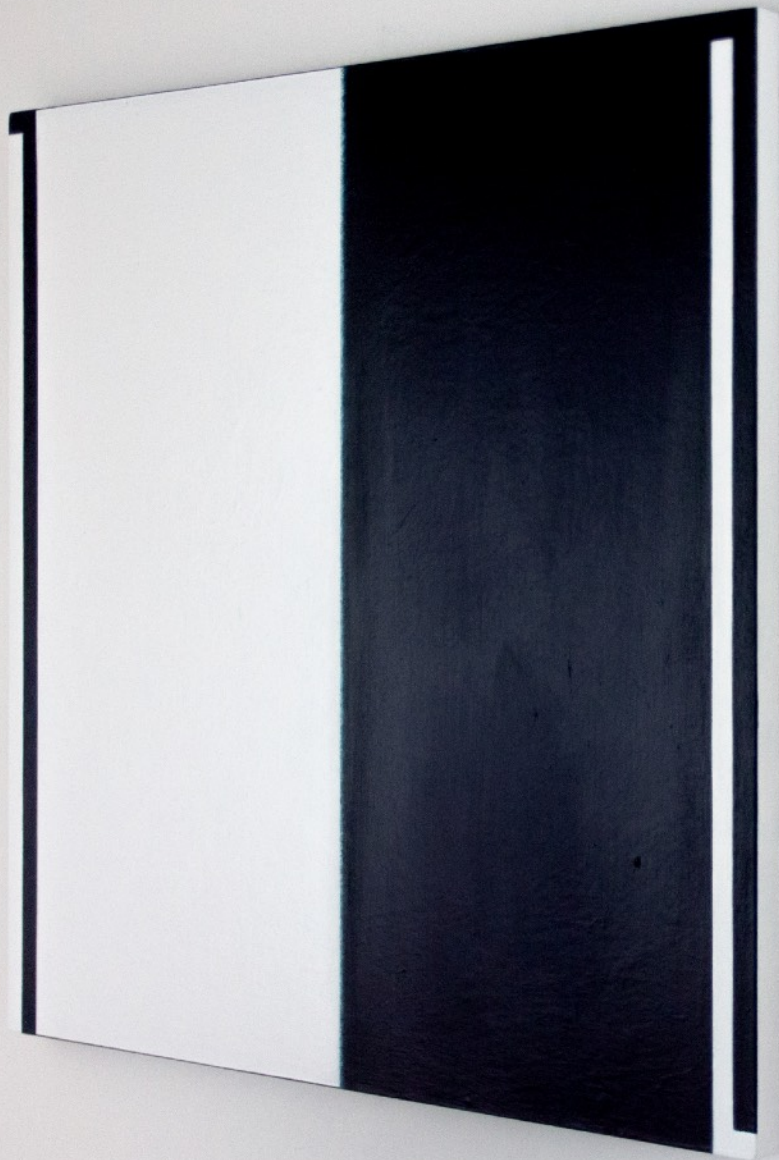
Dimensions: 106cm sq. x 6cm (D)

Provenance: painted at Humbug, the artist home and studio, Melbourne

Signed: and numbered verso

**TRI-NATIONS**

# PETER ADSETT



Series: *Tri-Nations 3rd Test* (View: right of field)

Year created: 2021

Medium: horizontality

Materials: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 106cm sq. x 6cm (D)

Provenance: painted at Humbug, the artist home and studio, Melbourne

Signed: and numbered verso

**TRI-NATIONS**