

PRESS RELEASE:

# Richard Bell: *I Am Not Sorry*

Australia's foremost – and most controversial – Aboriginal artist exhibits his work for the first time in New York

*A Location One International Fellowship exhibition curated by Maura Reilly*

**OPENING RECEPTION:**

**Thursday, 8 October 2009, 6–8 PM**

**DATES: 9 October 2009 – 25 November 2009**

**HOURS: Tuesday-Saturday 12–6 PM**



*Scratch an Aussie #1, 2008*

Richard Bell, Australia's leading Aboriginal artist, and one of his country's most controversial creative talents, will exhibit new and old work in his first-ever US exhibition, "Richard Bell: *I Am Not Sorry*," which opens October 8<sup>th</sup> at Location One.

The exhibition, which is curated by Maura Reilly, is a centerpiece of the Location One International Fellowship awarded to Bell for the 2009 – 2010 season, which he will spend in New York, creating new work and exploring new creative directions under Location One's auspices.

Brisbane-based Richard Bell is one of Australia's most talked-about artists. Bell's works address – and protest -- the commodification of indigeneity in the western art market. They draw attention to frustrations and grievances brought about through the European colonization of Australia. His paintings play with the practice of appropriation, often mining the Pop Art styles of Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns, the paint drips of Jackson Pollock, or the dot matrix style of Aboriginal painter Emily Kngwarreye while including texts that complicate the way we think about racism and race politics.

*Aboriginal Art—it's a white thing* (2002), included in the exhibition, is one of the artist's famous 'Theorems', in which he accuses the contemporary art world of manipulating and exploiting indigenous art. In his most recent 'Theorem', titled *Pay the Rent* (2009), Bell demands of the colonizers that they pay in back rent what they owe to the colonized Aborigines since 'the invasion' in 1788. Likewise, in a provocative recent video, *Scratch an Aussie* (2008), Bell plays reversal politics by charading as a black Sigmund Freud who psychoanalyzes racist white Australians. The exhibition will also feature a new video *Broken English* (2009) in which Bell plays chess with indigenous politics, asking white and black Australians why Aborigines appear to lack a vision for their own future.

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This survey exhibition also comprises critical works from the early 1990s, including a photographic series in which the artist presents himself in a series of stereotypical roles imposed upon indigenous males: “drinker,” “failure,” trouble maker”; while in another early text piece, as spokesperson for all indigenous peoples from “The Lucky Country” (aka Australia), Bell seeks to initiate an “emigrant enhancement program” with countries like China, Iraq, South African, Taiwan, and so forth, with a view to making treaties in order to gain parliamentary representation and sovereignty of lands.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of events, including a public lecture by the artist, as well as a two film programs curated by Richard Bell featuring *Walkabout* (1971), *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), *Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978) and *Samson & Delilah* (2009)—as well as the important local documentary *Incident at Oglala* (1992).

### **About Richard Bell**

Richard Bell was born in 1953 in Charleville, Queensland, and is a member of the Kamilaroi, Kooma, Jiman and Gurang Gurang communities. Based in Brisbane, Richard has held numerous solo exhibitions since 1990. He is represented in major collections in Australia and New Zealand and is internationally recognized through numerous exhibitions, including the significant European touring exhibition *Aratjara: art of the First Australians*, 1993; *Culture warriors*, the National Indigenous Art Triennial, National Gallery of Australia, 2007; the 9th and 16th Sydney Biennales, 1992 and 2008; Australian Perspecta 1993, Art Gallery of New South Wales, the *Unfamiliar Territory*, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art in 1991 and *Half-Light: Portraits from Black Australia* at the Art Gallery of NSW. His work was the subject of the survey exhibition *Positivity*, presented by the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, in 2006. He won the National Telstra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2003. A past member of the Campfire group, Richard is a founding member of proppaNOW, the Brisbane-based Aboriginal artists collective that also includes Tony Albert, Vernon Ah Kee and Gordon Hookey. Richard Bell is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.

**Location One is extremely grateful to QIAMEA (Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing & Export Agency), to the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, and extends special thanks to Josh Milani for invaluable help in making this fellowship and exhibition possible.**

### **About Location One**

Based in the Soho arts district of New York, Location One is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to fostering new forms of creative expression and cultural exchange through exhibitions, residencies, performances, public lectures and workshops. Traditionally focused on technological experimentation and new media, Location One’s residencies and programs have favored social and political discourse and dialogue, and acted as a catalyst for collaborations. With a unique environment providing individualized training, support, and guidance to each artist, as well as exposure for their creations and collaborations, Location One continues to nurture the spirit of experimentation that it considers the cornerstone of its mission.

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### **Media Contact:**

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