



MATHIEU BRIAND

SYDNEY CONTEMPORARY

13 -16 SEPTEMBER 2018

UTOPIA TO DYSTOPIA

The Bounty was chartered by the British Admiralty to collect bread- fruit trees in Tahiti. When tensions on the ship rose, one of the crew, Fletcher Christian, along with other disaffected crewmen, seized control of the Bounty, tricked Tahitian men and women into boarding the ship and set sail for Pitcairn Island. After disembarking, they burnt the Bounty on 23 January 1790.

I like to imagine Christian being inspired by the story of Libertalia, a fictional tale published 70 years earlier in which two men, both obsessed with Utopias, abandon their roles in European civilisation, sail the Jolly Roger and settle on an Island in Madagascar to found the ideal society with their crew.

In 1999 a scandal occurred that shook the community of Pitcairn Island where a large number of cases of sexual abuse came to light; committed by certain men on almost all of the Pitcairn women, while the latter were still minors. Some of the accused appealed to practices current and ancient, claiming in their defence that underage sex had been widely accepted as a Polynesian tradition since the settlement of the island in 1790.

What has been obscured by the romantic quality of Libertalia is the place of women. Libertalia might have been a libertarian utopia in which slavery was abolished, one that preached freedom and equality for men; but women seem to have had no role in this project.

On the contrary – their status there was regressive.

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01. Black Bounty

2015

Wood model, cotton sale, and rigging, colour print, light system

210cm x 275cm x 80cm

Edition of 2

\$50,000

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