

Illustrator and Caricaturist  
**Samuel McNair**

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# After Bruegel



## Press release

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## Detailed press release

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Illustrated densely as a kind of eye-spy for adults. Layers of meaning, dark humour, whimsy and wit collide in McNair's hand drawn, digitally coloured monograph to Bruegel.

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Following Bruegel's example of illustrating proverbs McNair contemporises the 16th century Seven Sins print series in inventive ways. Each illustration is accompanied by the original from which it is adapted and a list of proverbs to find within.

Satirised in this book are the many powers and political figures of our day Xi Jinping, the Trumps, Putin, Murdoch, Zuckerberg, Bezos, Rhinehart, Morrison, Kanye and many, many more all jostle in the visual melee.

This book is a time capsule reflecting the era as McNair sees it.

## Bio

Political cartoons mash with proverbs and puns inside the head of Sydney illustrator Samuel McNair. A professional caricaturist, McNair, smashes out drawings like stones smash glass houses. His cartoons have featured in The Independent, South Sydney Herald, Shepparton News and the CityHub. McNair performs live drawing at festivals such as Wide Open Space (NT), Burning Seed, Mountain Sounds, World MS Day and hundreds of private events.

For years McNair has been chipping away at his personal monolith monograph *After Bruegel*. As the name suggests McNair's debut book follows the sixteenth century Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder's work; specifically the Seven Sins print series of 1558.

## Synopsis

*After Bruegel* is an illustrated dedication to the Flemish artist's work. Pieter Bruegel the Elder lived in 16th century Antwerp, as an artist he reflected the society in which he inhabited in a peculiar way. Emulating Bruegel's crowded, chaotic illustrative style, Australian political cartoonist Samuel McNair has produced *After Bruegel* as a monograph in homage to the Dutch master.

Included in *After Bruegel* are lists of proverbs, puns and idioms for the reader to find throughout the book, much in the same way as did Bruegel's *Nederlandse Spreekwoorden* (Netherlandish Proverbs) 1559. The illustrations make reference to contemporary geopolitical events, pop culture and personalities; some examples include COVID-19, BLM, Brexit, Daesh, slave wages, Disney, Trump, Putin, Xingping, Johnson, Murdoch and many, many more.

The picture book is a time-capsule reflecting the age in which we live.

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## Complete outline

In essence the book is similar to Hanford's *Where's Wally* (Hanford, 1987) whereby the book is a kind of eye-spy excursion, the target audience is older - suited to people who enjoyed Hanford's work as children.

After Bruegel is sequenced as follows: seven double pages (each of the sins), these illustrations are accompanied by a list of proverbs to find in the images and each has the sixteenth century originals for comparison. Additionally there are four more illustrations based on Bruegel's work and an about page which gives a little information about the artist, context and rationale.

Each of the images (double pages) have a collection of expressions for the viewer to find; for instance Sloth has: resting on your laurels, passing the buck, couch potato, lazy susan, beer crime, band-aid solution and many more. Each of the illustrations have hidden expressions throughout, the expressions relate in theme respective to the topic of the illustration (e.g. envy: the green-eyed-monster, playing second fiddle, keeping up with the Jones'). There are additional hidden elements for the viewer to find such as a sneaky rabbit, worms in hats and repeated curious characters that reappear in multiple images.

Although the book is based around the seven deadly sins it is not aligned to any religious beliefs or religious agenda - the sins are used as a platform rather than dogma.

If the book is successful there is potential for a follow up in that Pieter Bruegel the Elder also did a series of etchings relating to the seven virtues which Samuel McNair will reinvigorate.

## Sample Q&A

Why Bruegel?

In my childhood home there was a print of Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow*. I think that set it off for me. Later when studying art in school I reconnected with it and started to understand why it appealed to me. Bruegel's work is a time capsule. He captured the ordinary lives of the people, even in his most fantastical proto-surrealist works there is an element of his lived reality. As compared to Bosch - who was a big influence on Bruegel, having lived just fifty years earlier - whose works are so fantastical one loses the sense of when the art was created.

Why is your work an eye-spy?

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Well, three reasons:

When I started doing these illustrations I was just mucking around and for fun I would put my little logo which is a rabbit in the images. When I would show my students I found that as soon as they had spotted the rabbit they would lose interest. Gradually I added more and more things to find in the pictures.

Second, Bruegel did the same. There is a painting called The Dutch Proverbs (1559) which is a composition featuring more than one hundred proverbs.

Third, my parents are English teachers. Growing up, if you couldn't do word play - you weren't in the game.

How deep have you hidden some of the proverbs?

Most of the proverbs are listed for the reader to find and match up. Most. Some are not written and people can puzzle it out from the picture. There are some proverbs that have been reversed and are for the reader to figure out by deconstruction. There are also a bunch of repeating characters and objects that are speckled throughout - they each have a kind of personality type which they represent. Furthermore, there are little glimpses of my homelife, I live in a big tin shed sharehouse which features occasionally in the pictures.

Why did you decide to self publish?

After Bruegel is just such a niche book I don't think there is a publisher in the world that would touch it. It's so esoteric, it's a really hard sell. Honestly I don't imagine there will be a huge demand for it, but that's ok with me. I kind of did it for myself, my family and my friends.

## Contact

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<https://www.instagram.com/thatsneakyrabbit/>

<https://www.facebook.com/samthecaricaturist>

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## One minute promotional video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhnO5e-9GqE>

Click [here](#).

## Sample images below



