



RONA GREEN

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IN FINE FETTLE

Rona Green is the ring-leader of a bizarre bestiary of animal-human hybrid hooligans, dandies, blokes, rock-chicks, weirdos, heart-throbs and trend-setters. Sometimes you'll feel like you've seen some of these characters before in real-life, perhaps on a dingy street corner somewhere, at a gig, a biker bar, on a park bench or maybe even in a police line-up. Sometimes they're so strange and unexpected they are surely the product of a museum of curiosities.

While in previous years Green's characters might have been elusive members of secret societies (*Treacherous Boys With Charisma*, 2003) or hiding something behind their backs (*Sergey*, 2008), her most recent figures over the past five years are decidedly out and proud. They're gutsy freaks and savvy mongrels, marked by their heritage and their loyalty to their mates, family or lovers. They are comfortable in their skins and face the viewer with an inner strength and an unbridled magnetism. They greet, command and sometimes flirt with the viewer not ashamed to be as cute, striking, bold or cheeky as they are. It's all there, in the subtle tilt of a mouth, a glint in the eye, a slightly visible snaggle-tooth or a missing piece of an ear. Their whole lives are summed up in their guise. Their flaws are trophies of their experiences and reminders of their alliance to a territory. Some have shady pasts, you can count on it, but perhaps they are reformed rogues. Edgy as well as endearing.

Wayno and Bazza, with their quiff hairstyles and prison-style tats, could be twins or perhaps mates for life. Either way they went through a lot together. Moustachioed and bespectacled *Olivier* looks like a tech-savvy, cultured sprite while *Nastja* and *Samuil* have androgynous, Glam-rock leanings and an attitude that evokes Lou Reed's *Walk on the Wild Side*. *Jersey's* soft demeanour is accentuated by big puppy-dog eyes, slightly skewed lip, love heart and horse tattoos and a classic working-class singlet. *Pascal* could be the dandy dude who plays keyboard in the band while the handsome, sailor-chic *McGoohan* seems like he would be as much at home at a trendy cafe as a piss-up at a mate's place.

In *Shitehawk Vs Dirck 'Foo-Foo' De Cock*, a half smile is ambiguous. In wrestling terms, it's hard to tell the heel from the face.¹ Perhaps the sparring that the title evokes is a verbal one, or a battle of wits just as much as for physical prowess. The shopworn but charismatic *Submission Magician* had his persona forged via the school of hard knocks. His tattooed markers of Aussie pride abound. Rose Tattoo's *We Can't Be Beaten* or AC/DC's *Thunderstruck* is inscribed in his heartbeat. His conviction, like his stare, is unwavering.

Like the human marvels in Todd Browning's *Freaks*,² these feisty figures are striking out on their own, overtaking the carnival. Soaking up the limelight and living it up. In this selfie-driven age, you can be sure these brash beasts are definitely not camera-shy.

Paul Compton

Artist

July 2018

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1. Wrestling lingo: "Face", short for "babyface", is the good guy. "Heel" is the bad guy.

2. *Freaks*, 1932. Written by Willis Goldbeck and Leon Gordon. Directed by Todd Browning.

Artwork details from left to right top to bottom:

Pascal 2017 hand coloured linocut 57 x 57 cm edition 23 / *Wayno and Bazza* 2018 hand coloured linocut 32 x 50 cm edition 17
McGoohan 2015 hand coloured linocut 51 x 66 cm edition 23 / *Olivier* 2015 hand coloured linocut 47 x 38 cm edition 23
Samuil 2017 hand coloured linocut 76 x 56 cm edition 9 / *Submission Magician* 2014 hand coloured linocut 56 x 76 cm edition 30

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CONTEMPORARY ART
AUSTRALASIA

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17 October – 24 November 2018

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10.00am - 5.00pm Tuesday - Friday & 10.00am - 4.00pm Saturday