



MEDIA RELEASE
3 December 2025

Art and Activism -View from the Docks

The work of Sam Wallman

Melbourne-based Sam Wallman is both a wharf worker at a container terminal in Melbourne and award-winning writer, cartoonist and illustrator.

View from the Docks showcases his latest work in an exhibition at the Australian National Maritime Museum opening on December 4. It depicts how life on the docks has changed – and stayed the same – over the past decades.

His two careers developed in symbiosis. He had compulsively drawn since he was a child, but his first union-related drawings were created in his late teens, when he worked at a call centre.

His drawings resonated. People connected with them. He started to learn about the high-water marks of Australian unionism, such as the Green Bans and solidarity with Aboriginal people, women and gay rights movements.

He has published two books internationally and his artworks have been exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Australian Democracy, the Chicago Labor Notes Conference, the Australian Museum and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Museum Director and Ceo Daryl Karp said ‘I first came across Sam Wallman as a political cartoonist. His work stood out for its sharp insights, wit and visual style. I’ve loved the opportunity to showcase this powerful new work alongside one of our significant collection objects, the *Wharfies Mural*’



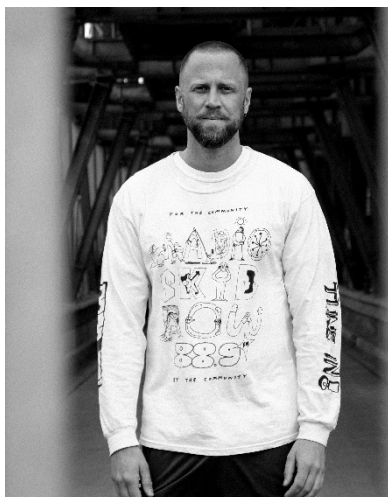
The *Wharfies Mural* was created in the mid-20th century by a group of worker artists to document that era's key industrial and political struggles, victories and aspirations. *View from the Docks* is a contemporary response to this, depicting a day on the wharf in drawings, against a backdrop of a huge decal of the dock and a giant crane. The powerful images are produced not on paper with ink or pastel, but on an iPad with a stylus pen.

'The museum has given me a lot of opportunity for self-expression and I really appreciate that', Wallman said. In the collaborative spirit of the *Wharfies Mural*, he told a meeting of the Maritime Union of Australia about the project, because he wanted to let everyone have their say.

'I thought everybody would say 'Who cares?', but probably 20 people started calling out suggestions: 'You've got to have Indigenous struggle and our relationship with that, you've got to have women on the wharf'- I've tried my best to put them all in.'



Peter Fray, Museum Assistant Director, Content and Storytelling said, 'Australia relies on its ports for the vast majority of imports and exports. It was so in the 1950s, when the *Wharfies Mural* was made, and it is so now. Sam's work leans backwards to the mural's spirit of activism and forwards to his time of automation. It's simply, powerful visual storytelling – Sam Wallman is the Matt Groening of the docks.'



Wallman's next book, *All Out: Pink Bans and Blue Collars*, explores intersections of queer and working-class organising efforts. It centres on the Pink Bans, a time in the 1970s when construction workers refused to work on projects with links to organisations that persecuted queer people, 'All Out is about that and what it's like for me to be out and gay as a wharfie because I'm in the minority, that's for sure. I want us to celebrate that we can change things.'

For images: [Sam Wallman](#)

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