

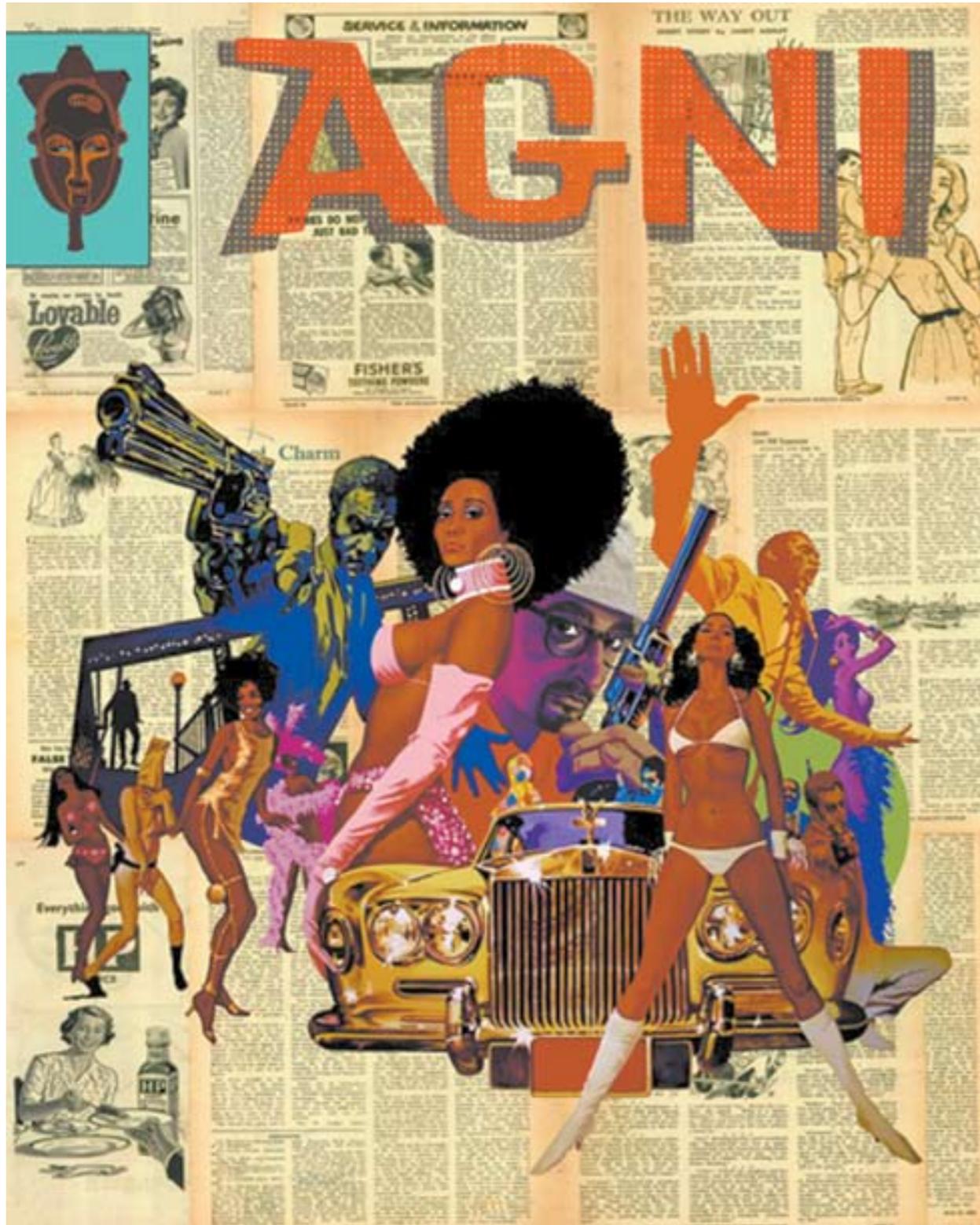
What's On

- 24 Sep – 11 Oct** **How's My Painting**
MOP PROJECTS
2/39 Abercrombie Street
Chippendale NSW
- 26 Sept – 31 Oct** **Speakeasy**
GALLERY 4A
181-187 Hay Street Sydney NSW
- 26 Sep – 11 Nov** **When Ideas Become For**
CONNIE DIETSCHOLD GALLERY
2 Danks Street Waterloo NSW
- 30 Sep – 31 Oct** **Hitesh Natalwala**
GALLERY BARRY KELDOULIS
285 Young Street Waterloo NSW
- 01 Oct – 31 Oct** **Debra Phillips**
BREENSPEACE
289 Young Street Waterloo NSW
- 01 Oct – 18 Oct** **Penny Byrne**
SULLIVAN STRUMPF FINE ART
44 Gurner St Paddington NSW
- 02 Oct – 10 Oct** **Blue Screen**
BLACK & BLUE GALLERY
302/267-271 Cleveland Street,
Redfern NSW
- 02 Oct – 31 Oct** **Gabriella & Silvana Mangano**
ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY
CARRIAGEWORKS
245 Wilson Street Darlington NSW
- 07 Oct – 27 Oct** **Recent Arrivals**
GILLIGAN GRANT GALLERY
1B Stanley Street Collingwood VIC
- 08 Oct – 07 Nov** **Tony Albert**
GALLERYSMITH
170-174 Abbotsford Street
North Melbourne VIC
- 14 Oct – 11 Nov** **Karolina Novak**
Yvette Coppersmith
HORUS AND DELORIS
CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
102 Pyrmont Street Pyrmont NSW
- 16 Oct – 14 Nov** **She Went That Way**
ARTSPACE
43-51 Cowper Wharf Road
Woolloomooloo NSW
- 29 Oct – 21 Nov** **Sam Smith**
GRANTPIRRIE
86 George Street Redfern NSW
- 22 Oct – 14 Nov** **Dane Lovett**
CHALK HORSE
94 Cooper Street Surry Hills NSW
- 30 Oct – 21 Nov** **Peter Fifer, Andrew Liversidge,
Ka-Yin Kwok**
KINGS A.R.I.
Level 1/171 King Street
Melbourne VIC
- 05 Nov – 21 Nov** **Cashmere If You Can**
BLINDSIDE
Nicholas Building
Level 7 37 Swanston Street
Melbourne VIC
- 09 Nov – 29 Nov** **The Dwelling**
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE
FOR CONTEMPORARY ART
111 Sturt Street Southbank VIC
- 12 Nov – 05 Dec** **TV Moore**
Daniel Boyd
ROSLYN OXLEY9 GALLERY
8 Soudan Lane Paddington NSW
(off Hampden Street)
- 12 Nov – 12 Dec** **Arlene TextaQueen**
GALLERYSMITH
170-174 Abbotsford Street
North Melbourne VIC

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Images (clockwise from top left): (All details) Laime, Yvette Coppersmith, 'Genbu #2' Jamie Boys, 'Public Phone' Megan Yeo, 'Zurzzaki' Karolina Novak.



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Contents

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COVER IMAGE

Twelve Month Flowers – The Seventh Month Orchid by Chen Lingyang
courtesy of the White Rabbit Collection

Foreword	06
Ivan Muñiz Reed: Names and Places Interviewed by Sandra Di Palma	07
Raquel Welch: I Hate Your Guts Interviewed by Jasmine O'Loughlin-Glover	13
Chris Fox Interviewed by Rose Vickers	19
Sarah Contos Review by Marcus Brown	27
White Rabbit Gallery Profile by Nick Garner	31
Costume Dramas Interviewed by Jasmine O'Loughlin-Glover	37
What's On	39

A Knife's Edge

Once, I got off a night train at the wrong stop. In the middle of the night a knock came at my cabin door and a lady spoke in Spanish that the next stop was my stop. Half asleep I jumped out of the tiny cabin bed, rushed and stuffed my bag, made hurried goodbyes to my compartment companions and ran to the train door, the train was starting to slowly pull away from the station, I gulped the Spanish night air and jumped from the moving train onto the station. As I watched the train speed away I was well pleased with my hard arsed moving train jumping skills that is reminiscent of many American movies where it is essential at some point in your life to jump from a moving train. I had done it. Well done I thought. Lucky I didn't miss my stop I thought, until I realised it was not the bustling Valencia station I had swashbuckled onto, instead it was a deserted country station situated in the middle of a shipping yard. Giant rectangular containers piled up around me and finally I realised I had made a big mistake. The following few hours (waiting for the station to open at 6) I spent sitting in the empty stairwell clutching a butter knife surveying the empty station for threats. I tightly held that knife with its meek yet sufficient perforated edge in front of my face, never letting my guard down lest some supernatural or natural danger should wander out of the empty shipping containers. This was my first experience of knives and living on a (butter) knife's edge.

A Knife's Edge is a place where art exists and thrives like barnacles on the underbelly of a moored boat. Contemporary art especially is constantly cracking open new boundaries in terms of being 'interdisciplinary', 'cross pollinated' and 'genre busting'. While these might be buzz words they do reflect a mirror of truths for contemporary art. The world of dance, textiles and costume, all sorts of design, craft revolutions and new forms of curating are making the world of emerging artists an exciting, poetic and at times political breeding ground. My experience of the Helen Lemprie Travelling Art Scholarship at ArtSpace last month and this months Primavera at MCA confirm these suspicions that contemporary art is existing more and more with overlapping genres, identities and forms within each project with great success.

A Knife's Edge is also a state of being. It is a frozen yet dangerous circumstance to find oneself in. A cliff between ideas and actions. Contemporary art often lives in a place of danger. From studying performance, one of the most important rules I learnt was that for a performance to be successful, you the performer must risk something. When you risk something, truly for yourself, you give the audience a chance to care. Risk can be achieved by walking a tightrope above a pit of hungry pandas or allowing a local to throw a pie in the face of an artist (as in Spat+Loogie's Pie Off in Primavera) or in the re-interpretation of a classic novel like Great Expectations into erotic S&M pieces (Sarah Contos) or an experimentation into democratic web based curating (Ivan Muñiz Reed) or the cultural reinterpretation that is offered in a new Chinese contemporary gallery in Sydney. The artists and curators on the following pages are living on a silver dagger, drawing moody teenager's tattoos, participating in multidisciplinary art practices, surviving the WFC and hating on poor Robin Williams (well just Raquel Welch is for now.)

These artists move beyond the proclaimed frameworks and historical genres of art and mash everything up like a dropped trifle at Christmas.

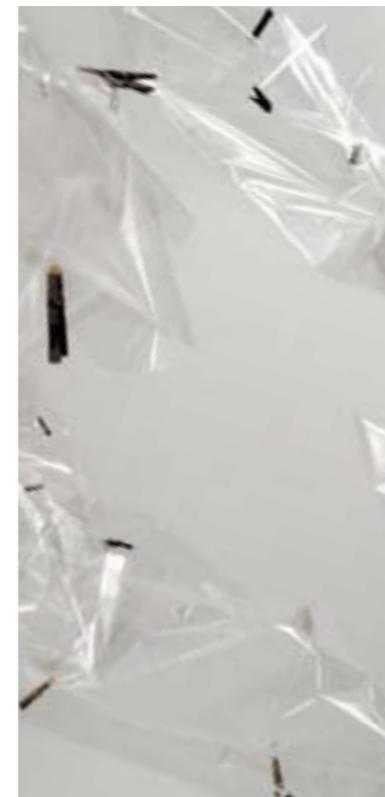
– Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris



Ivan Muñiz Reed: *Names and Places*

INTERVIEW
Sandra Di Palma

PHOTOS
Ella Condon



As a Mexican artist and curator living and working in Sydney, Ivan Muñiz Reed is currently involved in a series of cross-cultural curatorial projects between his native Mexican culture and adopted Australian counterpart. Aiming to provide visibility to Mexican art and culture and to facilitate dialogue and exchange between artists from both countries, Ivan recently curated the show *Names and Places* as part of Firstdraft's Emerging Curator program.

Bringing together nine Mexican and Australian artists, Ivan endeavoured to test the possibility of the exhibition as a site for collaborative artistic production and communication. The exhibition featured new and recent works from the Australian artists: Biljana Jancic, Ella Neville, and Benjamin Ryan; and from the Mexican artists: Artemio, Esteban Aldrade, Pia Camil, Renato Garza Cervera, and Joaquin Segura.

I recently sat down with Ivan to discuss the different aspects of this innovative discursive model and how it tested the limits of current curatorial practices.

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Can you broadly describe the curatorial premise of the exhibition?

Instead of having a central curatorial figure in the exhibition I set up an online forum (www.namesandplaces.org) where all the artists were invited to be active participants deciding every aspect about the show.

So there is no curatorial theme per se?

That's right. I was interested in encouraging collaboration and wanted to put an emphasis in the dialogue between the artists rather than limiting their work and newfound relationships with a prescriptive theme. I wanted to allow for a more open-ended exhibition.



Can you tell us about your choice of artists in the exhibition?

I met most of the Australian artists through university and through working in a Sydney gallery. I had seen their work previously and was very interested in what they were doing. Once I approached them and they seemed willing to get involved in this cross culture dialogue I made a visual compilation of some images of their work and flew to Mexico in a mission to find more artists. Also, before I left, I heard a Melbourne based artist Lyndal Walker talk about her experience with an Artist Run Initiative called “La Panaderia” (the Bakery) in Mexico City and more specifically about her working with one of its founders, Artemio. Lyndal was kind enough to introduce me to him via email and once in Mexico Artemio and I had the opportunity to meet in person. Artemio then suggested to me that I drop by the studio of a few artists and then from these conversations came other conversations which all led to a quite fortuitous process of meeting the participating Mexican artists.

How involved were you in the selection of works?

Although I wanted to intervene as little as possible, by being an artist myself, I think my own aesthetic concerns were almost unavoidably apparent. That being said, the artists were given all the freedom to decide whether they wanted to work in collaboration to create new work or whether they preferred to include a previous piece of their own.

I was also very lucky to have one of the artists, Biljana Jancic, very actively involved in every aspect of the exhibition. Together we visited the space several times and as we were the only ones who had access to the physical space we suggested what we thought could work well given the architecture of the gallery.

Do you think that this model facilitated the relations between artists?

There was definitely some healthy exchange and some interesting conversations. At the same time, there were many moments of awkwardness and prolonged silence within the frame of the dialogue. The blog was in constant flux, it started with a series of random image sharing, which was great to watch, and it evolved at a constantly changing pace. As flawed as this conversational model might have been, I definitely think that the blog provided a space for the artists to chat to one another when in other instances they wouldn't have exchanged a word.

I think it is important to clarify that most of the Mexican artists had never seen the space nor met any of the Australian participants. How did the Mexican peers feel about not being able to have control over the placement of their work within the space and having to trust the Australian counterparts for the execution of their work?

In an attempt to get a scope of responses to help write the essay for the catalogue Biljana actually asked a similar question to all the artists through the blog. She asked them about the importance of that gap between formulating the concept of the work and its actual execution and placement in the space. Although unfortunately we didn't have a long time to develop these questions we did get some responses. Pia Camil, for example, said that for her there was no such gap. The concept of the work and its placement were interrelated as she conceives her work for a particular space.

I guess, like you said, there was also a strong element of trust and of course a great deal of very specific instructions to make sure that the work was displayed as closely as if they would have done it themselves.

Seeing how the exhibition was introduced to the public as a cross cultural, collaborative project, I think many people expected the exercise to focus on certain overlaps or perhaps notable differences between contemporary 'Mexican' and 'Australian' artistic practice. On a personal note, I couldn't help but observe the way people instantly tried to identify the 'Mexicanity' in the selection of works. What are your thoughts on this?

I think the nature of any cross-cultural show invites for this kinds of comparisons. Hopefully by blurring the lines, exercises like this might help expose the complexity within these type of exchanges. Many of the Mexican artists, for example, have undergone graduate and postgraduate studies and even practiced for years in Europe or in the US. The group of Australian artists also comes from various cultural backgrounds like Sydney, Croatia and the UK. Trying to homogenise Mexican or Australian practice is simply not the best way to go about it.

During the opening night I must admit I did overhear several people speaking about an obvious aesthetic difference between the Mexican and Australian work presented. The most popular opinion being that the Mexican work was more overtly political. Why is that?

It is definitely a problematic situation. On one hand, the chaotic state of Mexican politics has led to the proliferation of many artists whose work verges on activism and propaganda, hence many artists responding directly to the conflicts and violence inherent to life in Mexico City. On the other hand, it would be a superficial analysis to say that the work of many Australian artists lacks political content because they don't refer to it in such a literal and straightforward manner. Biljana's work, for example, is an intuitive response to the socially unsettled climate in our culture. Her sculptures fill the gallery with interference and anxiety and change the way in which the viewer experiences the space. Both Biljana's and Pia's work can be seen as examples of reductive work that is still deeply concerned with politics.

I wanted to congratulate you on your efforts of bringing something new to the table. What's next?

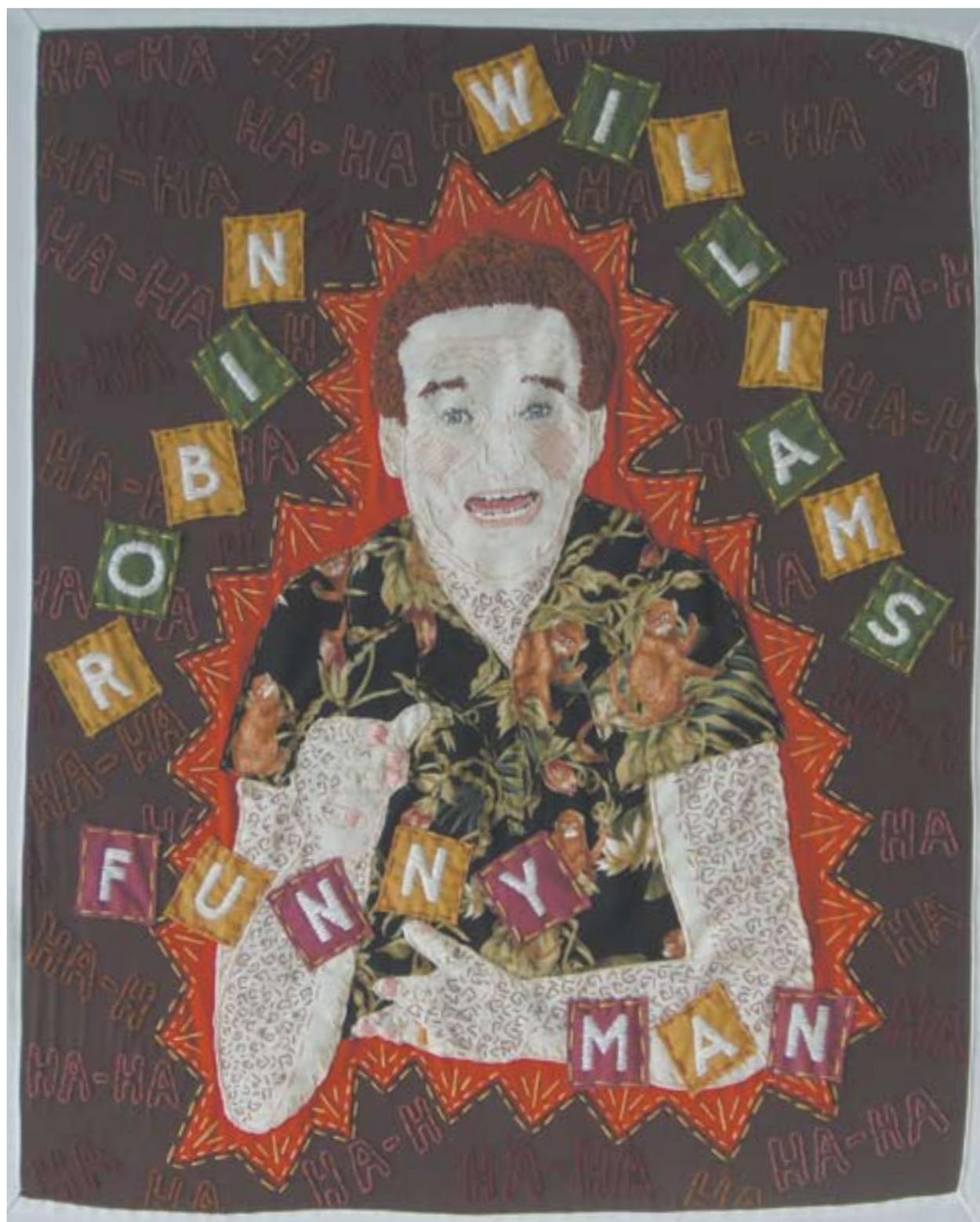
I was chatting about it with Biljana and we would absolutely love to get a group of Australian artists together for an exhibition in Mexico City. There is so much great Australian art being made that really needs to be introduced to Mexican audiences.

In comparison to other parts of the world the exchange between Australia and Mexico is still limited, so I really think you're onto something. It's always refreshing to encounter art and curatorship that challenges traditional modes of thought and practice. I look forward to your future projects and following their development.

Transcripts of the blog and exhibition catalogue can be found on www.namesandplaces.org

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Raquel Welch: *I Hate Your Guts*

INTERVIEW
Jasmine O'Loughlin-Glover

Raquel Welch unveiled her exhibition, 'I Hate Your Guts', at Sydney's Black and Blue Gallery earlier this year. In it featured twelve meticulously handcrafted tapestry portraits of Robin Williams, in his various comedic alter-egos.

What propelled Welch to spend hundreds of hours crafting portraits of someone she despises, and who she has never met? Your guess is as good as mine so I thought I'd go straight to the source of the anomaly herself.

. . . .

Hi Raquel. You very outwardly express your hate for Robin Williams. What is it about him that has provoked such a violent reaction in you?

Where do I start? For one, he's not funny! He's an annoying, ridiculous clown. He's just too irritating for words. He's always trying so hard to endear himself to his audience but he fails because he's really a dominating, aggressive lunatic who's in desperate need of attention. It's totally obvious. I hate him.

I have to confess – I don't mind a bit of Williams, in fact, Mrs Doubtfire was one of my favourite films as a child. Out of all the Hollywood stars, surely there are more petulant actors/comedians than him. So why Robin Williams?

Well of course there are celebrities who are just as famous as him and probably equally as annoying, but Robin Williams has done so much more to deserve this. He has a huge body of work, which consists of about 95% faecal matter. As a point of reference, and just off the top of my head, here's some examples: License To Wed, Man Of The Year, Cadillac Man, Death To Smoochy, Patch Adams, Flubber, Jack, The Birdcage, Nine Months, Toys, Club Paradise, Bicentennial Man, Hook, What Dreams May Come.

Point taken. So tell us what was involved in the creation of these works? Judging by their intricacy, they must have taken a great deal of time...

Yeah they're very time-consuming. I'd say each one took about 4 days straight to complete. And I'm talking straight. Like from dusk till dawn. I was also watching all his movies while embroidering so you can imagine how much pressure I was under.



Certainly! Sounds like sadomasochism to me. Which brings me to what I consider the strangest element of this body of work: the idea that you would devote so much time and effort to channelling your hatred into tangible objects, which are actually quite beautiful. Was this some sort of cathartic experiment?

Not really. If anything, it made me hate him even more! I resented having to make all these portraits of his ugly head. Of course, embroidery being a very painstaking process, there's a great deal of affection that goes into each one. I had to remove myself from my subject, which wasn't too hard. Every now and then though, it would creep up on me and I'd laugh at how ridiculous the whole idea was.

The results are quite spectacular. Looking at these works close-up and in the flesh, it is astounding to view their intricacy and resolve – right down to the hand-stitched wrinkles that crease every one of Williams' faces. How do you feel about having created something beautiful out of the depths of hatred?

I feel quite pleased with myself. What an achievement it is to make that mug Robin Williams look good! Ha ha! No but seriously, I like to be honest about my subjects and try to depict them as accurately as possible. In saying that, I do embellish a little – very subtly – in order to make my work as pleasing to the eye as possible. I don't like looking at ugly things. So even though the show was about hate and each portrait was designed to ridicule Williams, I didn't want these feelings to overshadow the overall aesthetic of the work. I didn't want the hate to be too obvious, so maybe that's why it confused a lot of people. They thought that deep down I really loved him. As if!

The theme for this issue of DSP is 'A Knife's Edge'. Your work, which is situated in an 'art' context, yet relies on craft traditions as its medium, and pop culture references as its source of inspiration, seems to straddle the knife's edge between art vs craft, and high art vs popular culture. Is this something you are conscious of in your practice?

Only when I go and see other people's work and realise that everyone takes their 'art' very seriously. I am totally bored by 'art' in that sense of the word. I hate all that highbrow conceptual rubbish. I don't know how anyone finds it enjoying. It's so pretentious!

I'm totally obsessed with pop culture – it's such trash. And there's so much of it so there's a lot to work with. My work is very much like watching a cheap movie or reading an unauthorised biography. It keeps me entertained and it makes me laugh.

Your previous works have also involved a lot of tapestry and embroidery. What is it about this medium that fascinates you?

The whole arts & crafts thing has always been a big thing with me. I remember being a kid and my mum teaching me to embroider, make figurines out of clay and photo frames out of bits of cardboard, fabric and lace.

Over the years I got really into old Hollywood movie stars; I watched so many movies and read so many books about them, so I guess embroidering these personalities was just an extension of my interest; it was like I was paying tribute. Immortalizing them in tapestry is really the ultimate homage.

How do you think Robin Williams would react to 'I Hate Your Guts'?

I think he'd be amused. He is a comedian after all, so he must have sense of humour. I can imagine he'd be flattered that someone felt as strongly about him as I. Who wouldn't though?

Do you feel as though you have finally purged yourself of your hatred?

For him? Probably. When I see his movies now or someone tells me about what he's up to now, I don't really care – he's done for me now. Maybe it's time I turned my spotlight elsewhere.

Would you recommend slanderous tapestry as a form of therapy for others dealing with powerful feelings of anger and hatred?

Of course! Everyone needs an outlet. I also recommend sending hate mail. That's always a lot of fun!

Who have you got your eye on next?

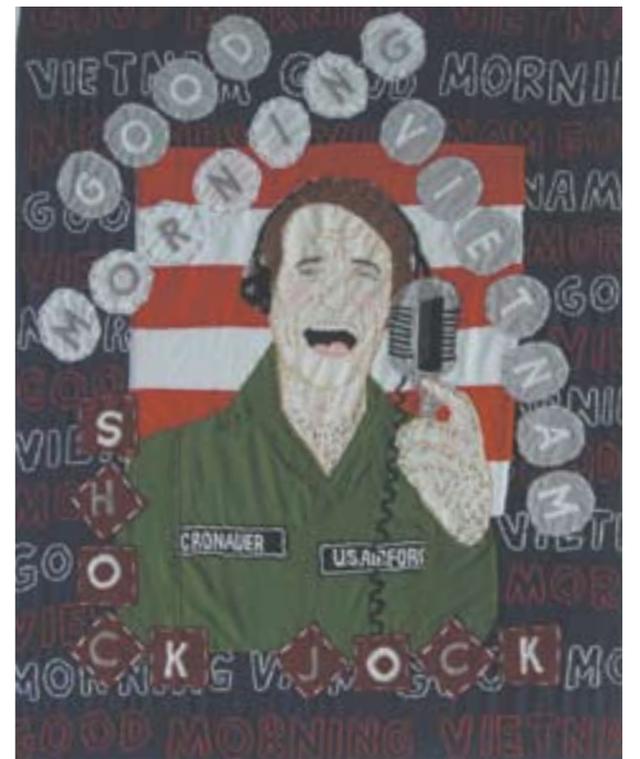
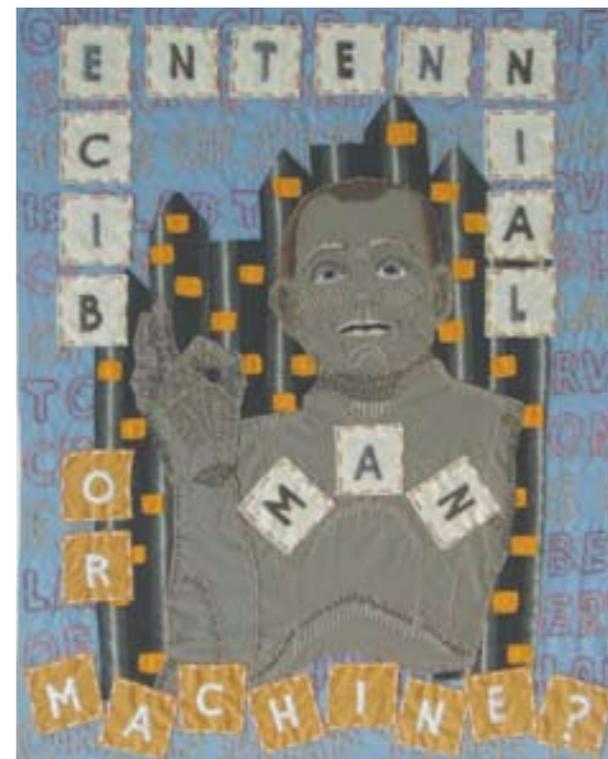
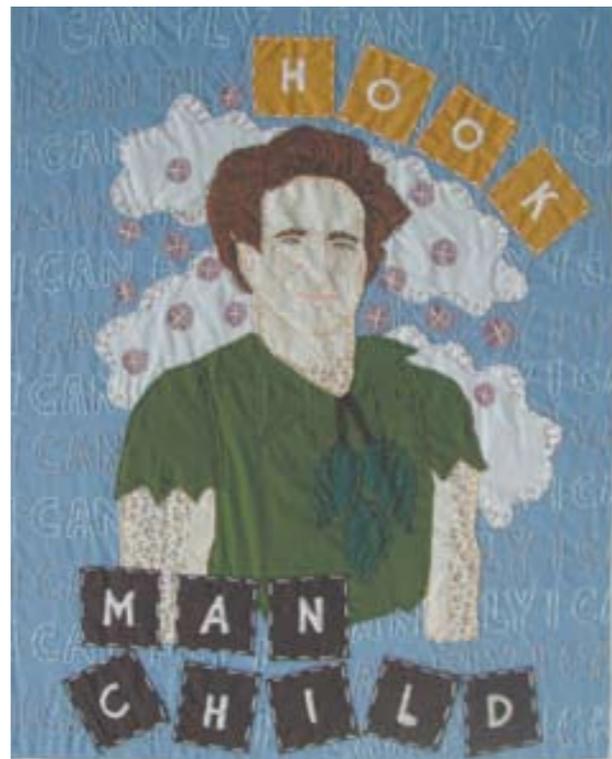
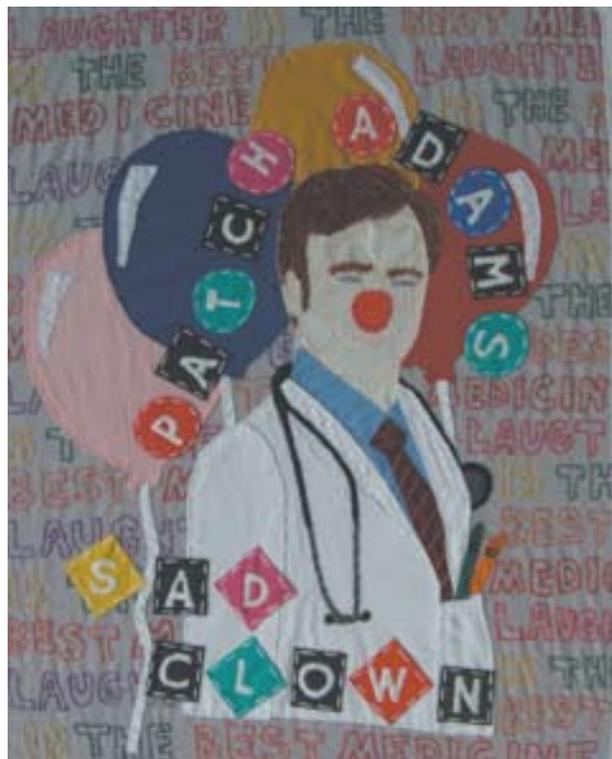
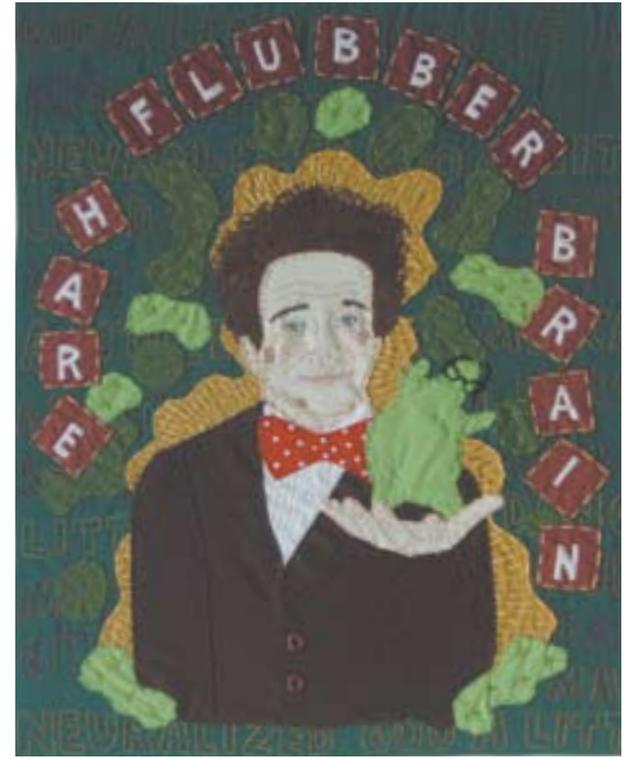
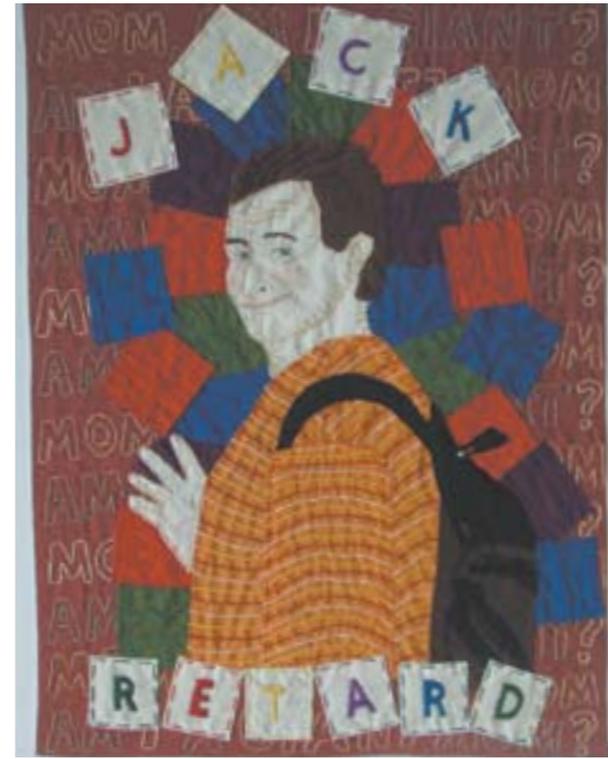
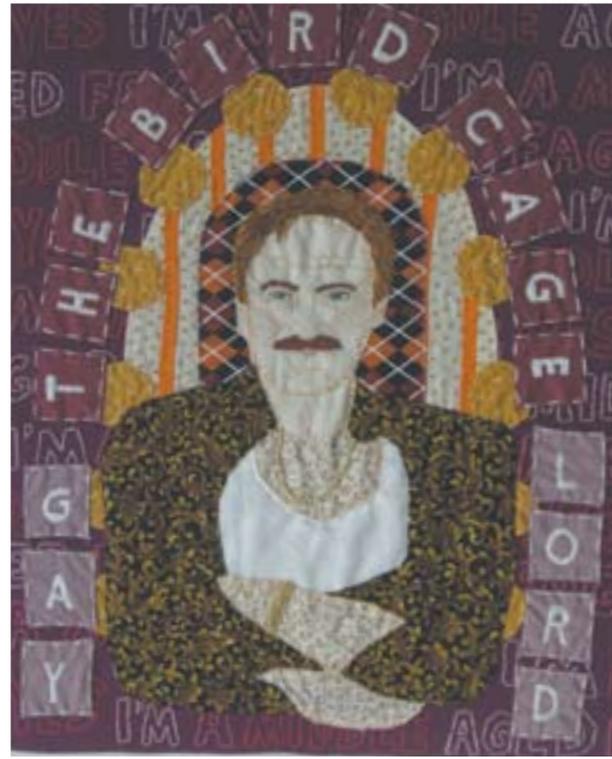
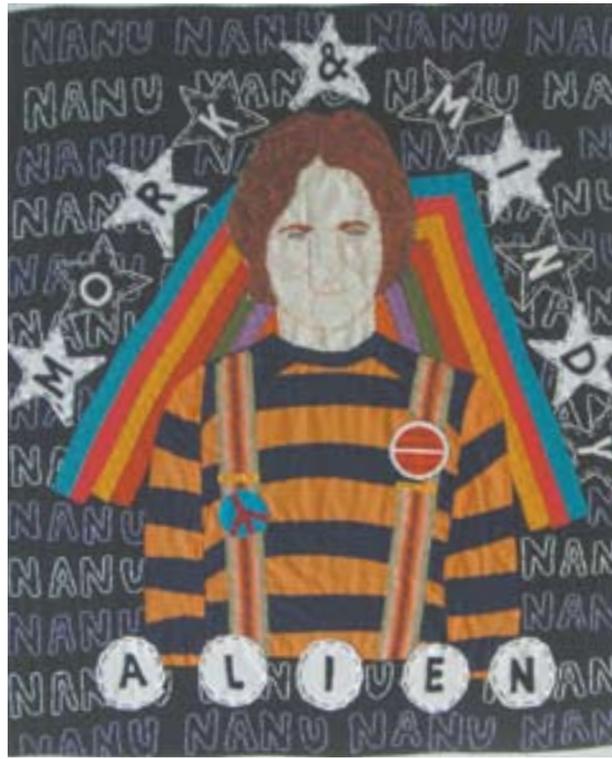
Well I don't think I'll do a hate show next time 'cause I need to give myself a break from all that and besides, it'll be hard to top Robin Williams for hatefulness! I think I'll do a LOVE show next. It's going to be called Perfect Match and it will feature Hollywood couples in love, like Ike & Tina Turner and Liz Taylor and all her 7 husbands. It will be beautiful!

Incredible.

*More of Raquel Welch's work can be viewed at raquelwelch-art.blogspot.com and she is co-editor of *Duke* magazine – www.dukemag.com*

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Chris Fox

INTERVIEW

Rose Vickers

PHOTOS

Courtesy of Gallery Barry Keldoulis

If there is a recognisable signature to a Chris Fox work, it is somewhere between the industrial and the romantic. Or, perhaps, the clinical and the surreal. Or the practical and the fanciful. Difficult to reduce to a singular opposition, there are certain tensions and oppositions that tend to play out around the object.

Sculpture is only one aspect of the kind of contained yet fictitious universe created by Fox in his latest project, Salon Jetpack. A carefully constructed body of supplementary material – of maps, commentary, and even a kind of game plan for city transport - lends an uncanny credibility to Fox's arrangement of industrial machinery. It is a seductive show, and it requires a certain suspension of disbelief as the viewer is cajoled into a promise of immediate escape; to hook up, plug in, and take off.

Fox is informed by stories that derive partially from a sense of social consciousness, and in part, from his own artistic imagination. Rose Vickers sits down with the artist over a very large bowl of small chips to discuss principles of art, architecture and design in his hybrid practice.

.

So, talking about sculpture and hybrid media...I like the way that some of your work, and notably the latest show at Gallery Barry Keldoulis, shuttles back and forth between these fantastical science fiction drawings of architecture models (city planning essentially) and material sculpture. How did that kind of way of working happen?

I think it's always been part of how I make things. I remember making a whole lot of models, when I was eight, that resembled part toy part (pause) sort of, but not quite architecture models, but rather assemblages out of either timber elements I found, or bits of guitar that I used to work with back in the day. It might have come about from my whole family being architects. I've always had that big architectural influence but balanced it with a perception and interest in material.

Did you decide first that you wanted to be an architect, and then fine art kind of fell into it? Or was it vice versa? What did you want to be when you were a kid?



Well, I was just sort of surviving through school really. I went to a boarding school, and that was pretty heavy. I think the only release during that time was in going down to the art department and actually having that total release, to be able to get away and actually have a kind of expression, through making things.

I always thought I was going to be an architect, but fate basically annihilated all other opportunities so that I got into the Sydney College of the Arts. It was really more an act of chance than a strategic move. But within the first year I was just totally engaged in material. I was trying to make as much as I could as quickly as I could and I was exploring with as much material as I could get my hands on.

And all sculpture?

Yep. A lot of the projects in that first period were driven by materiality and intuitively working with the material – I was doing a lot of lathing of timber, which was super organic, not too much layering conceptually except for (Fox assumes a laid back Canadian surfer accent) “connecting with nature”. It’s a natural instinct when you’re starting to explore form, I think.

Was that kind of link with nature and that kind of thinking something that informed the work you did in Vortex? The piece Shawn Gladwell wrote an essay on.

Yeah, Gladwell did write an essay on that, he wrote about a few other early works. In a way that was mainly a bridging project, it was talking about the infinity spiral and the internal shell and the way of interpreting it. It’s about this geometrical progression which eventually is infinitely growing smaller and at the same time infinitely growing bigger.

Do you feel like your work has moved in a different direction from that period? It seems to have become a little more mechanical.

Following those early works which involved a direct connection with material, I’ve probably developed a more direct reference to site. So with the stair or vortex imagery, it became more and more about architectural sites, and then the gallery site that I was working with. I started pulling and extending the material from the site; the cable work and the timber from the rafters. So they are projects that were about the extension of architectural space and also this idea of an architectural tumor. Part folly, part architectural intervention.

It got to a point where I felt like I was cornering myself because I was bound by the site continually, and the materials of the site, and that was sort of forming this frame. I wanted to start making things that were more related to a narrative that could come over the top, almost where... where that could be the site. I started moving into this idea that the story behind a project could become the frame or the site that I could work off.

That’s almost how I need to work. I need to construct a frame to work within. The majority of the time it’s free form, a narrative that I build on and work towards. The shift was much the same thing really. It was a way of thinking. There was a big jump, I sort of fell into a new direction.

Talking on ‘narrative in art’ – the catalogue for Salon Jetpack, with the historical referencing it detailed, you could almost write a small novel on that project. Maybe you should.

Yeah sure, there’s a lot more opportunity to flesh that whole story out – probably more than the other projects in the last five years. I think it’s a combination. It did come as a spark, a vision of this idea of transport. But I think it has probably come from the greater perspective of studying architecture,

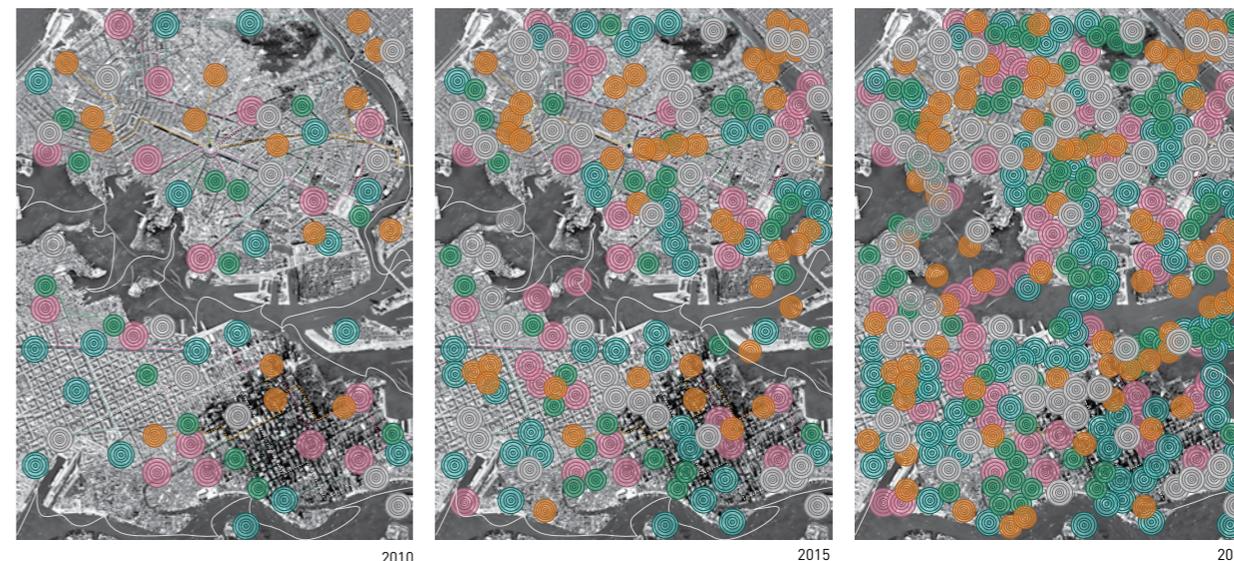




and thinking about city planning and ideas of transport. Probably the most interesting part of architecture is the bigger scale issues, of how a city moves and grows. And how not only transport determines the way in which a city grows, but also the way in which urban centres are determined, and coastline and topography and all of those things.

Salon Jetpack works with an idea of physical movement, as mobility being an architecture of identity, and the way that living in an urban environment and the ability or the inability to get around – in a place like Sydney in particular - can be so central to identity. Sydney is a city that generally has pretty crap public transport; you look at the options that people take to actually get around and it says a lot about their priorities, their identity and their lifestyle.

Yes, with Salon Jetpack ‘identity’ was pretty crucial in terms of identifying the types of tribes or clans that I wanted to work with and in turn the depth of the character or the depth of the culture of that particular city. It started to be very reductive to make these polarized segments of the community. The idea is that you identify with this particular clan and then that becomes your marker.



The way the maps detailing the spread of the Jetpack Salons join up, it almost looks like a disease to me, a viral thing. As if, as the transport gets worse and worse, the scalp of the Jetpack user becomes more and more eroded, like mapping the root of a physical virus. If you were putting that much peroxide in your hair, you would end up with quite a serious health problem.

The first thing is that it's incredibly inefficient on fuel; the Jetpack runs out within 30 seconds so there's the issue of energy use. There's this idea of fuel hungry consumers being obsessive about this particular mode of transport, which is endlessly needing to pit stop. It's also looking at how society, particularly in a city like Sydney, moves between these different focuses... the social networks, now mainly online, have grown over the last five years in a way that has totally transformed most of us communicate. It's talking to this question, whether it's a just a facebook analogy or whether it's more about the how we connect or plug in to the city, 'are we becoming more and more disconnected, and do we have a real sense of community?' It's putting a lot up in the air.

So to speak.

[Laughs] Yes, very punny. I suppose I like this fanciful idea of just flying around the city but there is a darker undertone that is held back in presentation. The objects are quite seductive and perhaps this is something that needs to be worked on with the additional material to communicate this other layer.

The whole show feels shiny like an Apple Mac. There is a compelling tension between the surface of the object and the perhaps more sinister implications of its function. Raising issues of gender perhaps, the object evokes two quite different spheres of design; fashion and city planning. Fashion is typically associated with the feminine, more ethereal, idea driven economy, and in Salon Jetpack this is put into the context of a mechanical design with a city planning function. It's harder and typically associated with the masculine – motorbikes and tinkering with things, the making of the object, and making things function. It may be a personal reading but it made me think twice about where fashion fits into a global economy.

That's great – I instinctively make very “masculine cock projects”. I think the fashion element was a result of just trying to really hone in on the narrative.

I got into the idea of making this to come across as though it had already been in the share network system, so it didn't come off as a proposal for a council project or council showroom. I really got into the character making of the object. Even during the opening and the first few weeks, I felt really unsettled because of that. It was very different to the mechanical industrial Fox aesthetic. It was a different territory but I do think it starts to open the objects up more.

Perhaps it even takes away from them being 'cool', per se, in the art world. By putting something out there that's on the surface quite image based and superficial it challenges people to think about why you've shifted into making these kinds of things and perhaps question that there might be more to them.

Definitely and the reaction to these pieces was great. On the opening night everyone was like, 'they're so awesome, they're so shiny'. I felt really unsettled with that. I was quite depressed, though I realize now that that is actually a great reaction. It means that people are engaged in an immediate connection with the object. Then there's the reading that you come out of that with and I think that's a really positive thing. I suppose it's about entering new territory as an artist.

It reminds me of Murakami's Oval Buddha. I was reading some interviews with him when he was making that, and he was saying how he wanted everyone to feel like they want to have one.

Yes, although I think I may be trying to tread a finer line, something less extreme. It's almost more like, whether you should get the ipod phone plan or whether you should go the whole three year contract or seven year contract with the jetpack. It's seductive but yes, you know, you're not sure whether it's got enough download capacity, or...

Ha! Yes, and people do spend a lot of time thinking really seriously about these things.

Most of their time, I think. It's something that we all could be more observant of, the extent to which we are caught up in this tradition of consumerism. It's exacerbated not just because of the built in obsolescence of the object but the idea of physically feeling inadequate in society, something alleviated by the purchase.

Yes, it's a little bit cyborg-ey. Even at that surface level, the idea that we feel more complete with this particular new piece of technology, whatever it may be. The Jetpack is like a prosthetic limb.

The whole notion of the machine and a lot of the stuff I make, it seems so abstract. The idea of the cheese-making press and the soup-making machine ... but it really doesn't seem so far from what we're actually doing.

Perhaps that is a result of the way in which I physically make them. Although they are quite foreign and alien looking, they are also almost familiar. In Salon Jetpack even though we haven't actually seen that object before, we've all seen head pieces. And there's the way in which many of the component parts are actually used automotive parts or chemical equipment, and not super Sci-Fi, moulded, foreign objects. And a lot of people could actually recognize a lot of the parts, so there was this familiarity with it, this built in nostalgia.

Do you reckon that you could build a motorcycle now?

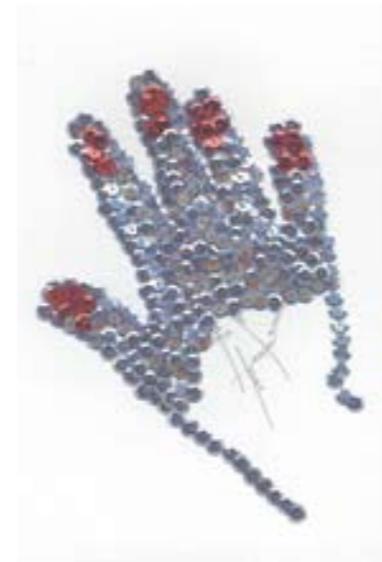
I don't know... I don't think so. I can only build these incredibly complicated objects that do nothing. I had to fix my washing machine on the weekend and I was stressing out that I actually finally had to run fluid through a hose. It was stressful.

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Sarah Contos

INTERVIEW
Marcus Brown



Sarah Contos is a space explorer. By no means has she actually set foot off this planet, but her work is the result of a series of expeditions into the gaps between the ethereal and the erotic, the mythic and melancholic, the natural and the supernatural, the disembodied and the whole.

PVC, chains, sequins, low light: Contos' list of materials smell of sex, loss and longing. She's not afraid to bare all about it, though it's with a wry smile across her face.

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The body, or perhaps more accurately the disembodied, seems to be a primary focus of your work. Has this always been the case, and if not, what drew you towards it in your current work?

I suppose the body for me is the vehicle we use to house all the interesting emotions, thoughts and desires that makes us human. My time working in the theatre has informed this as that's really what actors do – use the body to take the form of another's character. So I suppose I use the form of the body as a mouthpiece or metaphor for the psychological agendas that are hard to represent on a 2D surface.

It seems that you choose not to represent the body as whole, or in some other cases, to distinguish it by adorning it. Do you like to feel at a distance from the body, in a conceptual sense?

I'm not really interested in portraying the body in a realistic way, instead I enjoy the play of projecting wishes or feelings or experiences onto certain parts of the body and then adorning them as an act of offering or manifestation for that part of the body to be activated.

Especially if they are adorned with glittering or shining things. Kinda like a bloody sacrifice of a virgin to please the gods, but I'm doing the opposite with rhinestones and glitter.

Your representations of animals and humans contrast starkly; the animals in your work appear full of character, almost embodying some kind of human presence. While the humans are barely there – unattached or hidden parts of humans pervade your work, yet are not represented as part of a whole. Why is that?

They are one and the same. I use animals or objects even, as a facade to suggest an inner dialogue that is more complex to represent than just a smile or a frown. I also like the element of a ghost or trace of human in something which is not human as it gives this other worldly quality which is much more exciting and harder to understand and therefore more intriguing and frightening.

Perhaps it's like a form of shape-shifting, taking on another body to access inaccessible places.



Getting deep here, but do you see humans as animals, or are your manipulations of the body to emphasise that we are far more than just that?

I have a fascination with Plushies. In fact I have been having a relationship (platonic) with my stuffed toy Squirrel for over 10 years and since this is the longest relationship I have had, it has started to inform my work, not only in the subjective sense but also by its form (Squirrels are both male and female). Sometimes having a relationship with a stuffed toy, or a pet or even with a dead person can be far more rewarding and educational than with a human.

What's with all the cats?

A multiple of reasons; one is my kinship with cats (particularly the snow leopard) Like Naboo's familiar, Bollo, they are my familiar. Cats also obviously represent a myriad of things from the evil to the erotic and I like this duality.

But the cat thing mainly comes from being love sick from my cat in Perth, my heartbreak over the snake bitten Boo and my present unfulfilled wish to have a cat in Sydney.

Was becoming an artist the result of a clear path to you, or was it the accumulation of a few profound moments that pushed you down this path?

In Perth I lived in this great warehouse/gallery called Jacksue in early 2000 and living and working amongst these creative sorts really influenced my somewhat sheltered world. After doing the theatre thing in Amsterdam and becoming tired of the actors and directors, I returned to art and am a bazillion times happier for it. I feel better about life when I'm making things. Also I'm not very good with numbers.

The title of your first solo show is "Great Expectations", is it your interest in the dark side of Australiana that has drawn you towards this Dickensian vision?

I've always had a soft spot for the Victorian era in general. I love its prudish and restrained exterior hiding its erotic and dark core tendencies. Great expectations has always been a favourite for this reason but it's really the Miss Havisham character that gives the novel that sinister edge. There's been a myth flying about that the character was based upon a resident in Newtown in the mid 1800's, Eliza Emily Donnithorne who suffered the same fate as Miss Havisham of being left at the altar and then spending her life without sunlight and wearing her wedding dress in vain hope that the groom will return. It's a very romantic image but also very melancholic. It's the fetishistic, the erotic and the solitude I'm looking at in the show, but it's all done with the blackest humour as it's a beautiful image of love but it's certainly not a great expectation I would like to manifest.

Sarah Contos' debut solo show, Great Expectations, begins on 30 September at Firstdraft Gallery

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White Rabbit

GALLERY PROFILE

Nick Garner



• *Twelve Month Flowers –
The Seventh Month Orchid*
by Chen Lingyang



• *Happy Ballon Men* by He Jia
• *Asking God and Red Memory –
Smile* by Chen Wenling

Contemporary Chinese art has found a seriously seductive modern new Australian embassy. From the outset seeing only a glimpse of the growing Neilson Foundation's collection at its new home in Chippendale is an impressive curatorial achievement, if in scale alone. White Rabbit, an accommodating 2,000sqm four-story warehouse conversion behind the old Carlton United Brewery, is the public face of the collections 400 plus works of around 160 artists. For one of the biggest collections of its kind and having the gravity of changing how we view China and the art of its people everything seems appropriately scaled.

Paris Neilson leads me through the gallery – Ai Wei Wei's work *Oil Spill* I've seen reproduced before, fired in huge kilns, she tells me of the work forces that some of these artists have working with them. I think it's a little bizarre, there's an image brought to mind of thousands of people in revolutionary jackets glazing ceramic oil slicks, some a metre in diameter. The collection's works have all been made since 2000 and as we go through we're seeing the results of a transition that she explains to me has happened since the prolific expansion of modern Chinese art about 20 years ago. Where in the 80s and 90s the focus was more on Mao and the Cultural Revolution the concerns of these artists and their younger contemporaries post 2000 speak to similar but broader themes – of humanity, commercialism, public policy and the power of the media.

While the themes of the gallery's works show the breadth of the issues personally, politically and culturally driving these artists, the collection also covers a broad spectrum of materiality. From large foyer installations by Wang Zhiyuan (who has assisted the Neilsons with the collecting) to sculptures of all kinds, paintings, drawings, photographs, videos and dioramas with smoke machines the list goes on. Standing behind the life-size fibreglass and silicone mannequins of *Zhou Xiaohu's Renown* (2007) "verisimilitude" comes to mind but there's more to the collection than that – everything seems coated in a layer of shine, from the works steeped in past traditions to those spinning at a convulsing rate, presumably into the future, there's a gloss and finish uncommon to the Australian eye.

The distress of this surface shine might be due to the fact that Chinese art schools, in which most are trained, demand a mastery of practical skills unseen and relatively unheard of in Australia. This can kill the creativity of some of the students Paris explains but to combine that practical efficiency with 'the spark' has made the works on show unusually enticing, for a lack of a better word.

The gallery is looking to do a rehang of its collection in January/February and just to keep you extra cosy they have opened a tearoom in the foyer (selling beer if tea isn't your thing – not coffee though) and is looking towards intimate events such as book clubs and screenings of Chinese films in the not too distant future.

30 Balfour Street, Chippendale NSW
Thursday – Sunday, 10am – 6pm, Free Entry

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•|• *Brother and Sister No.3*
by Huang Yan



- | *Standard Times*
by Gao Xiaowu
- | *Dream City No.1*
by Gao Xiaowu
- | *Never Growing Up*
by Yu Xiao





Costume Dramas

INTERVIEW

Jasmine O'Loughlin-Glover

Andy Moller is a spectacular little Melbourne-based, Sydney-born, gem. His outlandish outfits never cease to amaze – be they his ball-bearing take on the lumberjack or, in the case of this outfit for Costume Dramas, his sartorial ode to one of Australia's best known artists, Ken Done. So I set out to discover his secret to looking infinitely more interesting than most.

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Hi Andy, this is quite an eye-popping ensemble – what inspired it?

Ken Done.

Is it actually head-to-toe Ken Done?

Yes, every piece is part of my Ken Done collection. I collect homewares, fabrics clothing and accessories.

How do you feel about Ken Done?

As I am sure many other people growing up in the 80's and 90's do, I feel I have a strong affinity with the bright, technicolour, pop Done paintings. Looking back, as a kid, Ken Done's 'art' surrounded me in one way or another, be it a mug, a t-shirt or a sofa cover. Ken Done and his works transport me back to that time – a time of playfulness, ignorance (as a kid), and my own feeling of national pride.

To me, Done's artworks sit on that knife's edge between 'art' and tourism/commercialism – although leaning a lot further towards the commercial side. Is it more the gimmick-value of his prints that you are drawn to, or do you genuinely think his artworks are special in their own right?

Firstly, I agree with your 'spin' on Done's later approach to art making. I also think the attraction to Done apparel has a gimmicky quality to it because of its jovial and colourful nature, its simplistic tone and subjects. However, I think they had their place in time as a device for defining a national identity. In my view he was really embraced by Australians, his artworks being the visual representation of the quality of Australian life (specifically Sydney) of the 80's and 90's and up to the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Olympics, which was then projected to the rest of the world.

For me, this makes his artworks richer than just a gimmick. Knowing that Done had also trained in the traditional master's way of art – and was thus capable of depicting lifelike scenarios through drawing and painting – yet made a conscious decision to make a 'mass-market', non-traditional and contemporary style of art, which brought art into the heart of the non-academic, is something crucial and in that respect special. Perhaps it also sits at a point where his artworks depict the (good parts of) European Australia, along with an essence of an inherently indigenous style of art making and storytelling, which forges an unified new image that, to me, represents my idealised Australian piety.

Where do you wear an outfit like this?

I wear this outfit to work.

Is this typical of your everyday dress? What inspires you on a day-to-day basis?

I have strong days and soft days depending on my tolerance level for hecklers. This is a pretty typical (minus the pillow case over head) look for me. I'm inspired by friends, good fashion, craftsmanship, and a willingness to push the boundaries.

On an energetic day I could stand confused in my wardrobe for about two hours (no joke) contemplating what to wear, and although that sounds ridiculous, it is something that I enjoy – the process of dressing. On the other hand, if I've got somewhere to be or am just not in that mind-frame I'll throw on some jeans and a singlet and some trusty boots.

You're based in Melbourne now, but originally from Sydney. Has your fashion sense changed with the geography?

If you are asking if I went through a 'black clothes' phase, then yes, I did. But it was temporary. I am influenced by my surroundings, but moving from Sydney to Melbourne is not like moving from Helsinki to Hawaii! On a cultural plain it has relatively remained the same. It gets a little bit colder here so I have probably more coats and furs than if I were in Sydney, but I also moved to Melbourne with only about 10% of the clothes that I now own. In conjunction, I also moved when I had just turned 19 and I think that 'age' and 'new knowledge' are factors that have evolved my fashion sense more so than geography.

What do you see as the differences and/or similarities between the fashion of the two cities?

Generally, some would say Melbournians dress in darker tones and sharper colours; it makes sense - it gets colder, the sky is more grey and can be quite a dreary environment, however in Summer I don't feel as though there is a difference between the two. Again generally, not one city is 'better dressed' than the other.

Who is your style icon, and why?

Without sounding like a tool, I am my own style icon. (That didn't work, I totally sounded like a wanker!). I don't really know any 'fashion philosophies' of any great fashionisto like Mr Lagerfeld or Hedi Slimane, and it's not my mum or my dad. I just use my own intuition when I pull the jumper over my head or the short shorts up my bum. I have a problem with conservative society and it feels as though 'it' has a problem with me. I guess I just enjoy fuelling that fire and making bogans and the 'uninspired' squirm. But most of all I just dress how I feel – being serious, taking the piss, discreetly, or O.T.T. Sometimes it clashes and other times it fits into a mould but I know I'm always doing and dressing the way I want to.

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