



## **aqua mutt:**

**an installation with dag girl**

**by mai long**

**ARTIST STATEMENT . LIST OF WORKS . MUTT CHAT**

Exhibition Dates: 22 August-16 September 2007  
Launch Date: Saturday 25 August 2-4pm



The Atrium Gallery  
Incinerator Arts Complex  
180 Holmes Rd, Moonee Ponds VIC 3039  
(Melway 28 D7)  
Open: Wed to Sun 11am-4pm  
Phone: (03) 8325 1750  
[www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/incinerator](http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/incinerator)



Wine by  
The Cups Estate  
Mornington Peninsula



[www.mai-long.com](http://www.mai-long.com)

COVER IMAGE: Left to right: *Aqua Mutt Expanding*, *Aqua Mutt in Moonee Ponds*,  
*Aqua Mutt Holding Water Centre*: *Dag Girl Riding Aqua Mutt*, detail: *Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl*

## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

Aqua Mutt and Dag Girl are my friends. Together, they usher an absurd journey of nothingness and confusion gently out of a closet – shining a window of light on a murky darkness.

Aqua Mutt is like a baffled citizen, trying to find a balance of understanding between differing interest groups whilst 'keeping its head above water'. Thoughts and visions swing from one deletion to the next. Aqua Mutt aspires to be culturally fluent in many different value systems, but is on shaky ground as is uncertain of whose voice is speaking when. Dag Girl is like a girl identity who just wants to be loved and accepted. She knows she doesn't really like herself, but in amongst her personal failings and obsessions, only manages to address specific short-term solutions. Although in a state of detached denial, she is needy of Aqua Mutt in this process, and in being so can inadvertently hinder all their attempts at progressive thinking.

Papier-mâché, primary colours and oddly molded forms call back the open possibilities of childhood. But this is not nostalgia. Would it help fix something 'wrong' if we could see things through the eyes of another, perhaps the eyes of a child - is to love and embrace everyone, including ourselves, really so impossible?

How do we wade through our personal fears, desires, ignorance, and wisdoms to positively contribute to a brave and intelligent self, a brave and intelligent Australia? Is individual disempowerment and apathy due to our own lack of faith that we can make a difference if we try hard enough. If we could, what difference would we choose to make?

*Mai Long July 2007*

### 1. Aqua Mutt Expanding

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
94h x 110l x 42w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**The** big ships started it all - goin' round the world, carving up places, spreading the word, exciting new developments – pure progress and expansion. A good thing.

**But** it kinda meant carving up *other* people's places...and did all those people *have* to change? How could that have been good for *them*, this colonisation...?

**Well.** We all gotta learn, relearn, adapt, or drown – don't we?



### 2. Aqua Mutt in Moonee Ponds

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
67h x 80l x 47w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Bombers** are the go – you know – those guys in the same colours as the river rowers out there.

**But** my other mates just didn't get it - all they see is some kind of bizarre ritualistic fiesta; can't figure out what the black is all about – like they say isn't red and gold the lucky combo?

**Well,** I guess black is the new gold. Go the Bombers!



### 3. Aqua Mutt in Flood

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
72h x 86l x 42w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**When** the waves came I saw the mosque topple over. Why the mosque?

**But** why the church?

**Well...** Both the mosque and the church, and all the fancy cars, houses, and little sheds were washed away too.



### 4. Aqua Mutt in Flower Garden

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
107h x 90l x 31w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Flowers** flowers oh such joy. Gladis are the best my possums, and don't you forget it.

**But** the lotus grows out of mud, and exits with enlightenment. What's so great about gladioli?

**Well.** Hey. Maybe they're already enlightened. Anyway, both come in pink – so how different can they really be?



### 5. Aqua Mutt Holding Water

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
88h x 95l x 43w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Hey** I went to this place where they serve you little cups of tea non-stop. I don't know what's in the tea but I was constipated for 2 weeks! Convenient...

**But** I'm happy to be drinking 8 glasses of water a day again, just like my GP recommended...now I'm having trouble holding my darned pee.

**Well.** Still. My system will be flushed out soon, and I'll be good as 18 again. Youth is everything.



6. **Aqua Mutt in Dodgy Water**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and fabric  
49h x 45l x 47w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

I swam in the river all arvo. It was great.

**But** look at you – you’ve copped a bloody virus...and I dunno...I mean, hangin’ with those locals!

**Well.** Yeah. But these shakes are sure gettin’ me some divine insight. Transformation is nigh.



7. **Aqua Mutt Exploding**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
71h x 54l x 42w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

**Girt** by sea we’re protected from all those unsavoury influences; those ‘neighbours’ up yonder. Gotta keep that navy and border control fully operational.

**But** if we hadn’t got here in time, we too would’ve been locked out what with our contagious stiff-leg disease and all.

**Well,** timing is all isn’t it.



8. **Aqua Mutt in Soup**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
71h x 32l x 29w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

**Those** Vietnamese are so into their *Phở* soup. What a great tradition.

**But** hey what is this ‘roo doing bastardizing my sacred recipe?!

**Well.** One man’s corruption is another’s entrepreneurship. Get over it mate.



9. **Aqua Mutt in Mythical Waters**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
91h x 74l x 29w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

I can’t believe some people still believe in mythical sea creatures – must make them fatalistic.

**But** fatalism ain’t all that bad – helps keep the poor poor.

**Well.** Yeah but most of us need to ascribe some form of meaning to our lives – don’t we?



10. **Aqua Mutt on Oil Rig**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
94h x 81l x 44w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

**Rigs** mate – what a great invention. Have oil, get rich. It’s a simple formula and we all need it.

**But** I reckon they’re ugly, and what happens when not everyone can get at this oil thing? I guess the oil guys just get richer and richer, isn’t it?

**Well.** If its not oil making one group rich, it’d be something else making another group rich.



### 11. Aqua Mutt Posing

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
67h x 54l x 28w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Bloody** hot and humid as all hell. But everyone was wearing jeans and synthetics. I was the most practically dressed of all – trendy beach boardies and sunnies.

**But** I didn't feel quite right, stuck out like a sore thumb.

**Well.** I couldn't have blended in anyway; Like a white king in a sea of asians; I was a mongrel in a pack of purebreds.



### 12. Aqua Mutt in Asian Waters

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
67h x 65l x 34w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Wow.** Look at these cool Vietnamese and Japanese representations of water!

**But** aren't they just "Asian" mate. What's this Japanese this and Vietnamese that.

**Well.** Yeah. Like Australia is little London.



### 13. Aqua Mutt in Drought

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
74h x 56l x 33w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**The** ground was parched and dry; there was only but a dead tree, the ghost of a small child; no living cows. It's been like that for decades...

**But** if their governments weren't so corrupt then it wouldn't be that way.

**Well.** There are no states, no nations, just one world, one us...isn't there?



### 14. Aqua Mutt Boozing

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
45h x 44l x 20w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Geez** that country! Alcohol was banned – I couldn't find a bloody pub anywhere...and someone said Aussies are hedonists!

**But** was good to be off of -ff -ff the fricken' wagon for once. Now I'm back in booze heaven.

**Well.** Hic. Hic. Gotta lubricate my sociability.



### 15. Aqua Mutt Surfing

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
71h x 58l x 30w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Wow.** Surfing is so popular now. It is huge in Japan, and here we got guys and girls, oldies, grommets, lidders, stand ups, and kooks alike – every man and his dog out there.

**But** it is way too crowded. Even on crap days

**Well** we've got a supply and demand issue. Try a theme park.



### 16. Aqua Mutt in Soap Bubbles

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
38h x 47l x 19w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

I sure missed me long hot soapy showers.

**But** the older sailor said soap ain't good for you and pure ocean water is best. But maybe we just gotta fork out more for a better brand – especially those sensitive skin types.

**Well** anyway, the days of long hot showers are over - so I've heard.



### 17. Aqua Mutt Whaling

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
31h x 26l x 20w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Whaling!** It used to be a fine heroic activity so the silver-haired lady told me.

**But** people are now worried about the whales, their survival, their feelings.

**Well.** But like how can we stop people from doing things we don't think they should do without hurting *their* feelings; *their* sense of survival.



### 18. Aqua Mutt with Sea Gypsies

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
29h x 35l x 18w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

I traveled with sea gypsies. It was amazing. They are so knowledgeable about the ocean and the environment.

**But** I felt sad for them because their nomadic life prevented them from being heard, even when the tsunami directly affected their food supplies and resources.

**Well.** I'd rather be sea gypsy than a land-locked farmer in a drought.



### 19. Aqua Mutt Dammed

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
37h x 32.5l x 17w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**Check** out that dam! See what teamwork can do.

**But** the little animals got flooded out. And do you know what they actually paid the workers? Did you hear what the project managers got? The foreign investors?

**Well.** There will always be winners and losers.



### 20. Aqua Mutt in Illegal Waters

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
36h x 31l x 13.5w cm  
2007

#### *Mutt Chat*

**There** are these fishermen and they go far far out to sea to fish! But like sometimes they get in illegal waters...and end up getting their boats burnt. Bummer.

**But** I reckon they should get a real job and then they could just buy canned tuna. And if they worked really hard they could buy computers, cars, nice houses...

**Well.** But you try. You try buy a house in Sydney.



**21. Aqua Mutt Swimming in Cyberspace**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
145h x 138l x 53w cm  
2007

**Mutt Chat**

**Google** can get you incredible sea creature representations from different cultures, taken right out of their cultural contexts. It's amazing to see, and be inspired - how all these people had their own way of seeing, all equally beautiful!

**But** hey do you think 'ownership' is an issue?... and what about copyright - must be a nightmare!

**Well.** At least it creates new (copyright) jobs.



**22. Dag Girl Riding Aqua Mutt**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
30h x 27l x 15w cm  
2007



**23. Dag Girl Learning to Dance**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and  
internal ceramic plate base  
38h x 35l x 19w cm  
2007



**24. Dag Girl's Nightmare (The Golden Penis)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and fabric  
29h x 32l x 33w cm  
2007



**25. Dag Girl Being Evil**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
40h x 35l x 35w cm  
2007





**26. Dag Girl Learning to Surf**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and  
internal ceramic plate base  
45h x 56l x 23w cm  
2007



**27. Dag Girl Drinking Responsibly**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
67h x 37l x 40w cm  
2007



**28. Dag Girl Surfing**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and  
internal ceramic plate base  
26h x 36l x 19w cm  
2007



**29. Dag Girl Dreaming of Aqua Mutt**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
49h x 30l x 20w cm  
2007



**30. Dag Girl Spinning Out**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, and  
internal ceramic plate base  
33h x 29l x 30w cm  
2007



## BIOGRAPHY

### Solo Exhibitions

2007	Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl - The Atrium Gallery - Incinerator Arts Complex	Moonee Ponds VIC
2004	Slot (a window space gallery)	Redfern NSW
2003	Mai Long Sydney Paintings - Ray Hughes Gallery	Surry Hills NSW
1999	Food Hall: Sweet After Taste - Regent Street Gallery	Redfern NSW
1998	Myopic Macros – Sutton Gallery	Fitzroy VIC
1998	Mai Long New Works – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD
1996	Mai Nguyen Long – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD
1996	E Chong: A Bilingual Installation with Incorrect Translations – Hanoi University of Fine Arts Gallery	Hanoi, Vietnam
1996	Transit Lounge (Arrivals –Departures)-Australia Centre Gallery	Manila, Philippines

### Selected Group Shows

2006	I Love Pho – Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Project at Liverpool Regional Museum	Casula NSW
2000	Ba Chi Em: Three Sisters - Cabramatta Library, Cutcliffe Gallery, and NSW Parliament House	Cabramatta, Newtown, Macquarie St NSW
2000	Viet: Celebrating 25 Years of Vietnamese Settlement In Australia; 3-26 Nov – Casula Powerhouses Arts Centre	Casula NSW
2000	Thinking Aloud – Ray Hughes Gallery	Surry Hills NSW
2000	Feature Artist: Rural Mental Health Conference 2000	Port Macquarie NSW
1999	Guest Artist Vietnam-Australia Cultural Exchange Projects -Carnivale	Sydney NSW
1999	Vietnam Voices – Casula Powerhouse and Arts Centre	Casula NSW
1998	Annual Group Show – Gallery 4A	Chinatown NSW
1997	Then and Now – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD
1997	Humid State - Queensland College of the Arts Gallery	Seven Hills QLD
1996	Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show '96: National Survey of Visual Art Graduates from around Australia in 1995 - PICA	Perth WA
1996	Diverse Alliances - Ecole D'Art	New Caledonia
1996	Ang de Latang Pinoy (Yes, the Filipino Can!) – Hiraya Gallery	Manila, Philippines
1996	Feature Artist: Schizophrenia Awareness Week - Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre	Southbank QLD
1996	Sharing the Stone – Hanoi University of Fine Arts	Hanoi, Vietnam
1996	Editions – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD

### Residencies

1996	Hanoi University of Fine Arts: 2 months - Queensland College of Art Inaugural	Hanoi, Vietnam
1996	Manila Studio: 2 months - Queensland College of Art Inaugural	Manila, Philippines

### Collections

Art Bank, Australian Embassy Hanoi, Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Queensland University of Technology, private collections.

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