



# Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl

by mai long

ARTIST STATEMENT . CATALOGUE ESSAY . LIST OF WORKS

#### Exhibition Dates

9 -27 September 2008

#### Launch Date

Tuesday 9 September 6-8pm

#### Opening Guest Speaker

The Hon Craig Knowles

#### Gallery

NG Art Gallery



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COVER IMAGE: *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*

## ARTIST STATEMENT

### Godog\* & the Ascension of Dag Girl

Concerned by Dag Girl's pallid countenance, Aqua Mutt makes her an offering of *Vitamin C*. Unfamiliar with *Vitamin C*, Dag Girl rejects Aqua Mutt as a rogue mutt, and promptly ascends into a state of detachment.

In blissful suspension, Dag Girl entertains fantasies of a watery reunion with her special friend. Maybe she'll try to be part of the world again. But which world, who deified *Phở Dog*, and what is *Vitamin C*?

\* deified *Phở Dog*

Mai Long

August 2008



*The Offering* (three views of object), detail: *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*



# Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl

*Man must rise above the Earth—to the top of the atmosphere and beyond—  
for only thus will he fully understand the world in which he lives.*

*Socrates (1.)*

To take flight from convention requires the courage to command a visualisation that moves the self into a new dimension. Mai Long's exhibition, **Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl** does just that, adopting a position at the intersection of cultural, religious and social mores that signals an understanding of Socrates' words. Ascension, here, is a metaphor for liberation.

In a new move Long uses the gallery site as the foundation for her narrative. Acutely aware of its multiple readings as a former Christian mission in colonial Sydney, her papier-mâché characters surge through the space in a flighty procession. It is a crescendo reminiscent of Renaissance religious painting where architecture was used as an expression of social power and mythology.

But this motley procession of *Aqua Mutt* and *Dag Girl* is far from a flight of grace. Long's "stumbling ascendance" is a journey of discovery that tantalises with technicolour intensity. It is not a static or singular world. The eye is pulled across surreal dogs and malformed girls to arrive at *Godog*, a steroid-proportioned dog-on-wheels, and a cross painted with the graphic clarity of Keith Haring, positioned above an altar. How does one enter Long's world?

Perhaps the exhibition's title offers a clue with its oblique reference to Samuel Beckett's 1948 play "Waiting for Godot", the story of two men waiting for another, perhaps God, who never arrives. It is a hint to Long's wry questioning of the absence of meaning within contemporary society and our compulsion to construct value systems aimed at "enlightening us". It is not the arrival of the mysterious *Godot* that was the revelation, rather the wait itself. Similarly, Long's interest in an acceptance of non-understanding is central to this exhibition.



*Godog, detail: Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*

She uses random text from local newspapers in various languages as a kind of social camouflage, where no one voice dominates. Its surface babel has the poetic metaphor ascribed to religion, the hero-cult and nationalist rhetoric. Take as an example the ancient Javanese site Borobudur. Scenes carved on the structure describing everyday life enter a spiritual dimension. The skin of Long's dogs performs the same transcendental role lifting her absurd architectonic forms to a metaphysical plane.

Site the portrait of Filipino nationalist hero Jose Rizal that is graphically fused with Ho Chi Minh, the last full-blooded Tasmanian Aborigine Truganini and 'Superman' on pendants worn by her *Aqua Mutts* in the genre of leis adorning deities. They equally reference the scapular of Catholicism, contemporary ID cards and Filipino amulets. Collectively they offer an introduction to Long's method for constructing her own world of meaning that is beyond geographic definition.

*Dag Girl* is central to this world. Seven are painted with multiple faces, surrealistically her colonnade of noses develops a gladiatorial quality, and topped with hair of water and crowned by the 'Hail Mary' prayer. The words spiral, fashioned like the protective snake vertebrae headdress worn by Ifugao women in the Philippine mountain province. Five are predominantly orange. This fetish object moves beyond any cultural context.

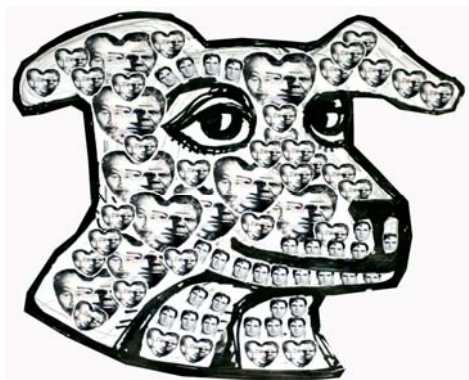
The *Aqua Mutts*, similarly, have another worldly sci-fi quality. Lost in a vacant stare, they describe a contemporary gaze, what Long explains as our inability to "see clearly" today. Completing the exhibition is a superb suite of drawings that, stripped of colour and kitsch, describe the cohesiveness of this body of work.

Walking away from this exhibition one feels they have exited a magical, nonsensical world reminiscent of "Alice in Wonderland". There is a semblance of reality: fragments of text understood, comic-strip narrative and overriding humour, Long leaves us questioning our *own* constructed world and invites us to rise above the known, to ascend as Socrates suggests.

1. <http://www.skygod.com/quotes/quotes.html>

**Gina Fairley**

June 2008



Left: Sample of image adorning *Godog's* skin, and on the necklaces worn by *Godog* and the *VC Aqua Mutts*  
Right: Sample of necklace worn by *VC Aqua Mutts* 1 to 18, detail: *Godog* & the *Ascension of Dag Girl*



*Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl - detail of installation mockup*



**1. Godog**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh, wood, and recycled materials; furniture wheels; mixed media  
190 h x 157 l x 82 w cm (or 60 w at back; 65 w at front)  
2008



**2. The Offering**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh; mirror pieces  
85 h x 51 l x 34 w cm  
2008



**3. The Fantasy**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
54 h x 64 l x 15 w cm  
2008



**4. VC Aqua Mutt (Friend of Dag Girl)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh  
71 h x 66 l x 44 w cm  
2008



**5. The Cross**

acrylic on canvas  
*white dogs on black:*  
(8 pieces x) 30 h x 30 w cm  
*black dogs on white:*  
(8 pieces x) 30 h x 30 w cm  
2008



- 6a. The Burner 1 (Matches in Dog Bowl)** *(on left)*  
**6b. The Burner 2 (Matches in Dog Bowl)** *(on right)*

acrylic paint, boxes of matches;  
 displayed in steel dog bowls  
 (not physically attached)  
 21 h x 22 l x 21 w cm  
 2008



**7. Dag Girl Ascending (One)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 35 h x 18 l x 20 w cm  
 2008



**8. Dag Girl Ascending (Two)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 51 h x 18 l x 28 w cm  
 2008



**9. Dag Girl Ascending (Three)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror bits; wire hook for suspension  
 42 h x 16 l x 20 w cm  
 2008



**10. Dag Girl Ascending (Four)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 49 h x 29 l x 29 w cm  
 2008



**11. Dag Girl Ascending (Five)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 50 h x 24 l x 36 w cm  
 2008



**12. Dag Girl Ascending (Six)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 52 h x 26 l x 27 w cm  
 2008



**13. Dag Girl Ascending (Seven)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
 mirror pieces; wire hook for suspension  
 51 h x 21 l x 29 w cm  
 2008





**14. Dag Girl's Vision (One)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
wire hook for suspension  
44 h x 21 l x 26 w cm  
2008



**15. Dag Girl's Vision (Two)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
wire hook for suspension  
58 h x 24 l x 31 w cm  
2008



**16. Dag Girl's Vision (Three)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
wire hook for suspension  
72 h x 27 l x 40 w cm  
2008



**17. Dag Girl's Vision (Four)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
wire hook for suspension  
52 h x 20 l x 29 w cm  
2008



**18. Dag Girl's Vision (Five)**

acrylic paint on papier-mâché with avian mesh;  
wire hook for suspension  
55 h x 21 l x 31 w cm  
2008



**19. VC Aqua Mutt 1**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
50 h x 39 l x 23 w cm  
2008



**20. VC Aqua Mutt 2**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
66 h x 50 l x 23 w cm  
2008



**21. VC Aqua Mutt 3**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
73 h x 59 l x 23 w cm  
2008



**22. VC Aqua Mutt 4**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
71 h x 53 l x 27 w cm  
2008



**23. VC Aqua Mutt 5**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
73 h x 51 l x 40 w cm  
2008



**24. VC Aqua Mutt 6**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
48 h x 48 l x 32 w cm  
2008



**25. VC Aqua Mutt 7**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
64 h x 53 l x 29 w cm  
2008



**26. VC Aqua Mutt 8**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
60 h x 61 l x 22 w cm  
2008



**27. VC Aqua Mutt 9**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
78 h x 55 l x 36 w cm  
2008



**28. VC Aqua Mutt 10**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
62 h x 50 l x 21 w cm  
2008



**29. VC Aqua Mutt 11**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
82 h x 67 l x 19 w cm  
2008



**30. VC Aqua Mutt 12**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
55 h x 52 l x 18 w cm  
2008



**31. VC Aqua Mutt 13**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
50 h x 39 l x 24 w cm  
2008



**32. VC Aqua Mutt 14**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
56 h x 38 l x 25 w cm  
2008



**33. VC Aqua Mutt 15**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
55 h x 48 l x 24 w cm  
2008



**34. VC Aqua Mutt 16**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
75 h x 63 l x 29 w cm  
2008



**35. VC Aqua Mutt 17**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
76 h x 68 l x 26 w cm  
2008



**36. VC Aqua Mutt 18**

acrylic paint on  
papier-mâché  
with avian mesh;  
mixed media  
55 h x 48 l x 23 w cm  
2008



**37. VD-1**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
(RCTI) 77 h x 57 w cm 2008



**38. VD-2**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
(RCTI) 77 h x 57 w cm 2008



**39. VD-3**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
(RCTI) 77 h x 57 w cm 2008



**40. VD-4**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
(RCTI) 77 h x 57 w cm 2008





**41. HD-1**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**42. HD-2**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**43. HD-3**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**44. HD-4**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**45. HD-5**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**46. HD-6**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**47. HD-7**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**48. HD-8**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**49. HD-9**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**50. HD-10**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**51. HD-11**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008

**52. HD-12**

Charcoal on Stonehenge  
57 h x 77 w cm 2008





**53. Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl** Charcoal on Stonehenge 112 h x 171 w cm 2008



**54. LVD-1**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**55. LVD-2**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008





**56. LVD-3**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**57. LVD-4**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**58. LVD-5**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**59. LVD-6**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**60. LVD-7**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008



**61. LVD-8**

Charcoal on Stonehenge (RCTI) 112 h x 76 w cm 2008





## BIOGRAPHY

### Solo

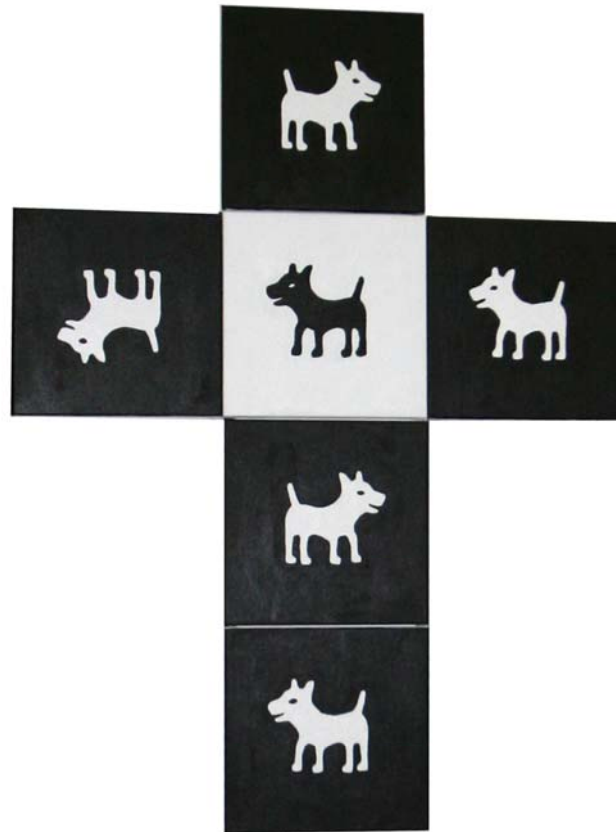
2008	Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl - NG Art Gallery	Chippendale NSW
2007	Dag Girl & the Baby in the Box - SLOT	Redfern NSW
2007	Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl - Incinerator Arts Complex	Moonee Ponds VIC
2004	Toy Box - SLOT	Redfern NSW
2003	Mai Long Sydney Paintings - Ray Hughes Gallery	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

2008	Salon Des Refuses 2008 – SH Ervin Gallery; Tweed River Art Gallery	Sydney; Murwillumbah NSW
2008	Pooch – ASpace on Cleveland	Surry Hills NSW
2007	Fragile Planet – NG Art Gallery	Chippendale NSW
2007	Pocket Sculptures - ASpace on Cleveland	Surry Hills NSW
2007	Political Football – The Artist's Garden	Fitzroy VIC
2007	Cropped - SLOT	Redfern NSW
2007	Canine Capers – A-Space on Cleveland	Surry Hills NSW
2006-2008	I Love Pho – Casula Powerhouse Project at Liverpool Regional Museum, Footscray Community Arts Centre, and Breadbox Gallery	Casula NSW , Footscray VIC, Perth WA
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 Powerhouse	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: Australians & the Vietnam War – Casula Powerhouse	Casula NSW
1998	Annual Group Show – Gallery 4A	Chinatown NSW
1997	Vietnam Voices – Casula Powerhouse	Casula NSW
1997	Then and Now – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD
1997	Humid State - Queensland College Art Gallery	Seven Hills QLD
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 - Brisbane Exhibition Centre	Southbank QLD
1996	Editions – Bellas Gallery	Fortitude Valley QLD

## NOTES

- ♦ RCTI = Reproduction Cropped to Image
- ♦ All drawings are on *white* stongehenge paper, except cat #s 46 & 51 (*HD-6* & *HD-11*) - on *cream*



Above: *The Cross*; Left to right: *The Burner 1 (Matches in Dog Bowl)*; *The Fantasy*; *The Burner 2 (Matches in Dog Bowl)*, detail: *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*

## THANK YOU

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