

Tracy Luff, Point to Point, cardboard, steel & wood, 228x23x23cm 2011



Tracy Luff, True Self, cardboard, steel & wood, 56x20x20cm 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long, *Transgressing the Carp*, oil on canvas, 175x360cm 1997

Tracy & Mai express special thanks to: Marjorie Ho, Juniper Greve, Andy Miller, Jennifer Lamb, Jill Morgan, Ross Luff, Stuart Horstman, Tony Twigg, Gina Fairley, David Horstman

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## SWITCHING / SHIFTING Tracy Luff & Mai Nguyen-Long

Tracy Luff *Switching* and Mai Nguyen-Long *Shifting* present solo exhibitions by two very individual artists whose bodies of work appear very different, because they are. However, both Mai and Tracy each make art that is essentially a personal expression of the artist, thus both make art that opens up dialogues with their viewers. *Shifting* and *Switching* will stimulate many conversations.



Tracy Luff, *The Cycle of Thick & Thin*, cardboard & steel, 130x98x50cm 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long, *Black Dog on Circus Block*, papier mache, wood, broken glass, acrylic paint, 85x35x35cm 2010

**Launched by Andy Miller**

Senior Program Manager, Programming & Innovation, Arts Victoria

**6-8pm Thursday 3 March 2011**

Exhibition Dates 3 March – 3 April 2011

**East & West Art**

**665 High Street Kew East Victoria 3102 Australia**

Gallery Hours 11am - 5pm Mon-Fri & 11am - 3pm Saturday

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**Catalogue essays by Jennifer Lamb**

Director Goulburn Regional Art Gallery 1983-2007



## SWITCHING : Tracy Luff

The sunflower follows the sun as it traverses the sky from east to west; each sunflower has a multitude of seeds intricately arranged in a spiral pattern; each tiny seed contains the potential of a mature sunflower of human height.

Physically, emotionally and spiritually, Tracy Luff has traversed from east to west; she was born and grew up in Malaysia, coming to Australia in her twenties. Her art education and practice has only been in the west, in Australia, but her formative years, the nucleus of who she is, were shaped by her life in the east, in Malaysia, and her Chinese heritage.

As an artist, Tracy is constantly switching between these cultures. The introversion she perceives as her Asian-ness is mirrored in the inward focus of the intricate evolution of discarded cardboard into an artwork; hence, the extroversion of her Aussie self is the completed artwork extolling its aesthetic delights to the world out there. As the sunflower swings from the east pole to the west pole, so she as an artist swings between the poles of her twin cultures. However, there is a merging: as the sun fills the noon day with its full radiance, so her two cultures come together in the full blossoming of each artwork; as with *The Cycle of Thick and Thin*, the movement to and fro, and the coming together is a delicate balance.



Her artworks also explore beyond the duality of cultures within. In each static work there is an evocation of imminent movement, reminiscent of Brancusi's *Birds of Flight*. The thrill of static movement camouflages the mundane nature of the art material, and it is a jolting switch in the viewer's perception to realise this dichotomy. The sheer grace of each sculpture belies the tediousness of its creation, from cutting discs of cardboard and layering them into the rhythm of the sculpture, whose manifestation now suggests ancient landforms, growing or eroding layer by layer over the aeons.

Each work, so monumental in its presence, is infused with the energy of the duality that is Tracy Luff.

Tracy Luff, *Eastern Sun*  
Chinese ink on magnani paper, 76x56 cm 2011

## SHIFTING : Mai Nguyen-Long

In 2009 Mai Nguyen-Long burnt one of her major works *Godog*. The burning, undertaken with respect and ceremony, was as destructive as fire can be, but it was also cleansing, a germinating of new life from the old, allowing the artist metaphorically to wipe her slate clean and start again – with a black slate. Black is often seen as a negative, but the burning transformed it to a positive, replete with potential; in the past, however, Mai had used black to signify a blind spot. Meanings are so variable: no meaning, nor person, can be limited or categorised within a boxed space; all flow as do the rhythms of the oceans, and the blood of life – from Australia to Asia, and beyond.



Mai's imagery has always been imbued with her wealth of experiences through different cultures, philosophies and value systems as well as day-to-day happenings. Initially her work was 2-D, an image of a carp - appreciated in Asia but feral in Australia - predominating within other imagery, often visceral or distorted beyond recognition, increasingly abundant. In the past five years she shifted to 3-D, a more tangible organic format to accommodate her burgeoning imagery, embellishing her mongrel dog manifestations - *Pho Dog*, *Aqua Mutt*, *Godog* and the *Doggie Morph* - in a kaleidoscope of personal and universal visual references. When *Dag Girl* joins the dog/mongrel/mutt, the two search for meaning like Vladimir and Estragon in their fruitless search for Godot; it is the search that has the meaning rather than the meaning itself.

Mai's art traverses an arena of emotions: from Guernica-like trauma to Aussie humour, and everything in between. The excitement of her artmaking is its cacophony of imagery and the multitude of interpretations that are possible, with each viewer responding via his or her own 'baggage'. Thus meaning, without even trying, shifts from the artist's original intent through the gamut of each and every viewer's personal interpretation. Transcending the babel, Mai Nguyen-Long chairs the lively debate, enriching our own world of understanding.

Mai Nguyen-Long, *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl HD-2*  
95x76cm framed, charcoal on stonehenge paper 2008