

METAMORPHIC MONGRELS 2012

SUPPORTED BY

Festivals Australia & Community and Cultural Services Wollongong City Council - Viva la Gong
Visual Artist & Metamorphic Mongrels Facilitator: Mai Nguyen-Long

Summary

Metamorphic Mongrels is a fun, messy, fast-paced workshop: a 'doing' activity created around ideas of destruction, rebirth, transformation, and the complexities of identity. Participants behead a calico bear and create their own unique mongrel using techniques of papier-mâché, painting, collage, and other decorating techniques.

Metamorphic Mongrels are ritually created using a set variety of materials, including chopsticks, recycled plastic bottles, packing tape, and newspaper. Session 1 focuses on 3D reconstruction and modelling, and session 2 is concerned with decorating.

Metamorphic Mongrels was originally inspired by Southeast Asian festivals and folk arts, especially votive objects. The workshop was initially designed for a project that explored the traditional Vietnamese noodle soup "Pho". "Pho Dog" became a *papier-mache* mongrel character who questioned perceptions of cultural authenticity, politics, and personal memory.

Metamorphic Mongrels mirrors processes of colonisation, migration, assimilation - and many other forms of adaptation and change. It is about notions of loss, violence and healing.

RANDOM MONGREL PERKS FROM THE FACILITATOR'S DIARY

🐾 The mongrel transformation ritual is inseparable from personal mythologies: life constantly requires us to adapt and transform. A creative process is as important as the outcome.

🐾 A beheaded bear does not despair but embraces a new adventure: those times when life seems to end, we must constantly find new meaning and hope.

🐾 The mass produced calico bear somewhat uncomfortably melds into a 'unique' mongrel: being 'just like someone else' is difficult and arguably impossible. Finding yourself is a challenging journey but full of worthwhile surprises.

🐾 Making art is a lifetime process. These mongrels can be preserved as is, or further embellished or remodelled into the future. With loving stitches, the mongrels can even be reverted back to bear-hood: we are all part of each other in this world, and live a symbiotic existence.

🐾 Mongrel is everything.

🐾 The regimented pace of the workshop session 1 discourages creative paralysis: sometimes when rattled with confusion and self-doubt, the best solution is to just keep moving.

🐾 Celebrating worlds otherwise deemed lesser or invalid somehow reassures us of our own value and right to life: mongrel is good.

🐾 If a calico bear can be transformed into a mongrel dog or other marvellous mongrel creature in 4-6 hours, imagine what can be achieved in a lifetime: opportunity and the nurture of individual voices build a healthy vibrant community.

🐾 Sharing, skills transfer and enthusiasm are priceless: previous participants have sourced their own calico bears and introduced others to this transformation game; or found other disused toys and objects, re-moulding them into new forms.

🐾 Mongrel is everywhere.

FOR WORKSHOP IMAGES: <http://www.mai-long.com/workshops/>