

Mai Nguyen-Long
Media Release

True Blue Doggie Morph

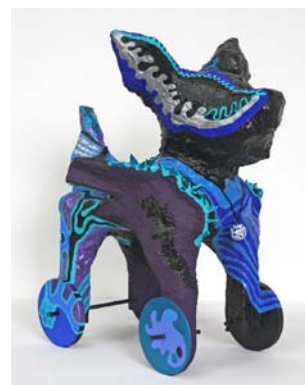
NG Art Gallery — July 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long *Wheeled dog on wheeled black block* Variable 45cm x 113cm x 45cm 2010

three little queen street chippendale nsw 2008 tel 9318 2992 ng@ngart.com.au www.ngart.com.au
ng art gallery tue — sat 11am — 10pm **mission** tue — fri 11am — 10pm sat 9am — 10pm


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Mai Nguyen-Long *Wheeled dog with shard face and angel hip, Wheeled buff dog with shards across arse, Large wheeled dog with teeming shoulder soldier conglomeration* Mixed media Various sizes 2010

ABOUT THE ARTIST - MAI NGUYEN-LONG

Mai Nguyen-Long is a Sydney-based visual artist whose work is grounded in the exploration of identity within shifting contexts. Through her two dimensional and object based work, we are offered a generous insight into her experiences regarding assimilating the politics of identity, cross-cultural misunderstandings, and displacement.

Tasmanian-born and of Vietnamese heritage, Mai grew up in a number of different cultural environments. After moving from Hobart to Canberra, she spent time in Papua New Guinea, The Philippines, PR China, and she was later amongst the first Australian artists to return to live in Hanoi after the United States lifted their trade embargo. It is evident that Long's work dapples in everything associated with the term 'fractured identity' and the question of what it means to be human in varying socio-political contexts.

Using the dog as a metaphor for an identity in limbo, her sculptures express her personal alter ego. She talks of the common dogs she observed in PNG and the islands of Indonesia, of a Vietnamese sacred dog, controversial dog meat restaurants, and how the 'mongrel' became a logical symbol for her to explore and explain her disparate heritage.

Boasting a long list of both solo and collaborative exhibitions, Long's work has garnered much critical attention. Long's formal training has fused with her own personal understandings of art to create a unique stylistic agenda somewhat influenced by the hand-made, and festival / folk art aesthetics. Working primarily in the three dimensional realm, Long produces tantalizing imagery that lingers between the physical and metaphysical.

In NG Art Gallery's September exhibition, *True Blue Doggie Morph*, sculptural pieces engage in a dialogue with her paintings and collages. She explores the idea of home from a deeply personal and psychological space where toy-like dogs on wheels embedded with strange objects dually attract and repulse, and suggest both comfort and danger. As a group, the works convey a sense of fragmentation, and morphing forms (many which are 'blind') juxtaposed with locked up block shapes, which speak of the tension between the desire to belong and be safe – to lock away ugly and painful pasts - versus the will to be free and grow.

Simultaneously playful and complex, these artworks demand the viewers gaze. On closer inspection nothing is as it seems. What becomes apparent are the perpetual difficulties of communication and understanding across divides, and how misunderstanding can create dark chasms of isolation and disconnectedness. Long's practise not only showcases a rich understanding of the potential of the art 'object' to generate layers of meaning, but also illuminates a personal journey through time and space.

True Blue Doggie Morph will be formally opened by Jackie Menzies OAM - Head Curator of Asian Art, The Art Gallery of New South Wales on the 14th of September from 6-8pm.



Mai Nguyen-Long *De/coupling shape 2* Mixed media Various sizes 2010

TRUE BLUE DOGGIE MORPH

Opening reception Tuesday 14 September | 6 — 8pm

Exhibition 14 September — 2 October

The playful atmosphere created by outsized toys on wheels, building blocks and pictures is soon dispelled as one is drawn into the surreal blue-blackness of Mai Nguyen-Long's passionate engagement with life's most important issues. Long has created a new world for her mythic mongrels. The meticulously created works of this current installation, 'true blue doggie morph', carry multiple layers of meaning, reflecting personal aspects of the artist's past and present, as well as delving into universal concerns of war and identity.

The presentation of dogs and building blocks on wheels suggests a moving on and potential for change, as does the initial transporting effect of 'true' ultramarine and aqua blue. A counter point to these aspects are black boxes and squares that function like full stops. Black boxes and squares, combined with metal locks and wheels that only go in one direction, signal forbidden realms, secrets and unavoidable consequences. Alternatively, they provide opportunities for reflection before returning to the endlessly fascinating composite creatures, many with wings, which suggest another abode, also referred to in the wall works.

As one examines the dogs, other colours, confrontational imagery and ironic textural references become evident. Long employs mythical composite creatures as vehicles to convey her angst relating to issues about identity and trauma. Of particular concern to the artist is the confusion that occurs when political correctness goes haywire. Angry sexed up dogs and painted de/coupling images address her feeling that a perceived victim-hood can become in itself a warped sense of belonging, and over-simplified into an individual's sexual / social capital. Everything in this exhibition is painstakingly composed of reconstructed elements thereby paralleling psychological states. Both two and three dimensional pieces are, in effect, transformed landscapes of imagery drawn from a wide range of sources.

Inspired, as the artist states, 'by childhood memories', especially toys on wheels made by her father, this complex work weaves personal, national and universal themes into a space where things are never quite what they seem and certainly not as simple as ABC.

Dr Ann Proctor, Art Historian, July 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long *Wheeled blue dog with morph wings and belly shards* Mixed media Various sizes 2010

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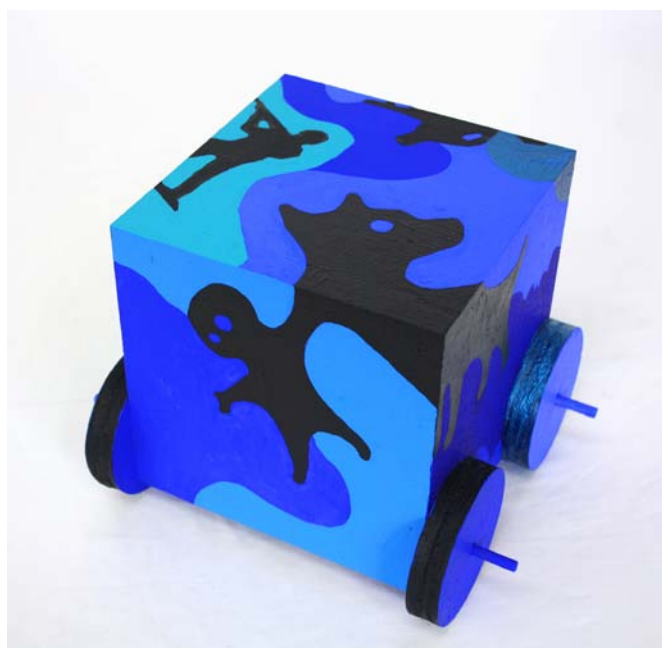
Mai Nguyen-Long Black dog with morph wings atop circus block, Small dog with belly shards & morph wings atop blue/black block, Wheeled flat top dog with branched tail & morph wings Mixed media Various sizes 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long *Large grottoed dog on wheeled tray with bottle carcass, Large wheeled dog with teeming shoulder soldier conglomeration* Mixed media Various sizes 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long *Wheeled black dog with morph wings & belly shards, Small dog on castor wheels* Mixed media Various sizes 2010



Mai Nguyen-Long *Small dog with belly shards & morph wings atop blue/black block, Black block with lock topped by black block no lock, Wheeled black block with lock and teeming top, Wheeled block with dog looking back Various works 2010*



Mai Nguyen-Long *De/coupling shape 4, De/coupling shape 5* Mixed media Various sizes 2010



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THE WORK IN PROCESS — MAI NGUYEN- LONG

Sketches and models



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THE WORK IN PROCESS — MAI NGUYEN- LONG

Colour Studies



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