



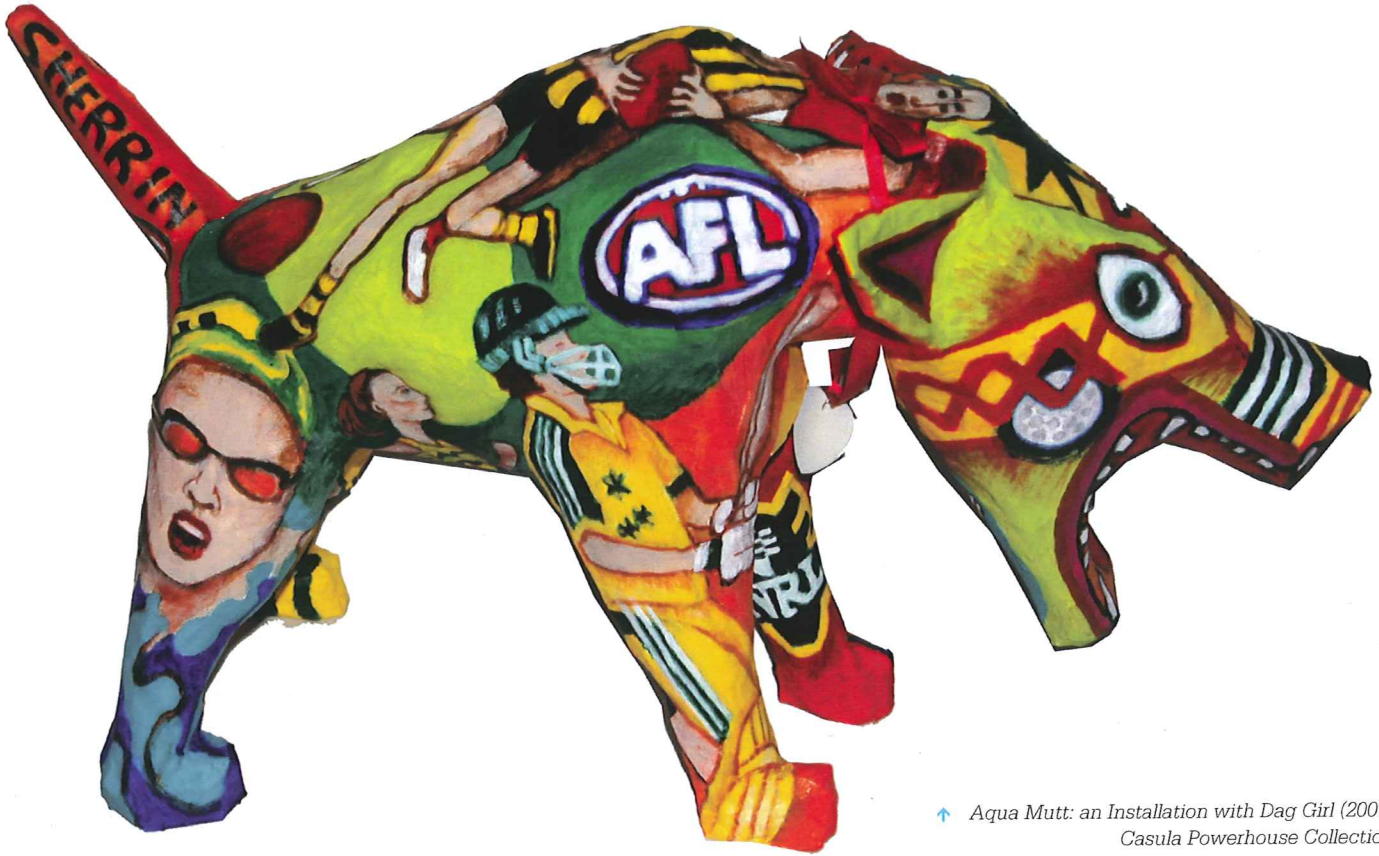
ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Journal

July 2008

ASIAN INSPIRATION





↑ Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl (2007)
Casula Powerhouse Collection

More Than Mere Nourishment I love Pho

Proudly supported by the City of Perth – May 2008

Why is it we always remember the smell, taste and the experience of our favourite foods? Perhaps it is because food is intrinsically linked to expression, defining different cultural heritages, adopting, changing and mirroring the transitions of society. This is exceptionally true of Pho, the Vietnamese beef noodle soup, where history, culture and happiness are all mixed together in a clear broth.

↓ ...history, culture and happiness are all mixed together in a clear broth.
Image: Hue by Le Thua Tien



Pho is integral to Vietnamese cultural heritage. The famous soup's origins are uncertain, but are influenced by both the French and Chinese. The pho we know and love today began in North Vietnam but gained popularity in the South through migration of North Vietnamese who were seeking freedom in the 1950s. With more than two million Vietnamese fleeing and looking for freedom globally, pho always followed closely, rapidly becoming a global dish that can be enjoyed in almost every city in the world.

I Love Pho used this dish as a metaphor to interpret and reveal a Vietnam whose people and history are as varied and complex as the preparation and cooking of a bowl of pho itself. It combined the work of eight artists and included essays, poems, performances, pho art

workshop, pho tasting and cooking demonstrations. It aimed to create dialogues between visual artists, local communities, and broader audiences exploring the issues of identity, history and diaspora to be shared over a bowl of pho.

The artists involved included Perth-based Khoat Van Nguyen, well known for his sculpture works, Tommy Truong, a hip hop artist and Sydney-based artist Mai Long, who also ran Pho Dog workshops.

I Love Pho was a Kultour event and Casula Powerhouse project supported by the Australian Council for the Arts and the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Mail Long Personal Website
www.mai-long.com
Breadbox Gallery
www.breadbox.com



↑ *Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl (2007)*
Casula Powerhouse Collection



↑ *Aqua Mutt in Asian Waters, detail from Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl* Casula Powerhouse Collection

Mai Long Artists Statement

Tasmanian-born, I mainly grew up in the Philippines, settling in Sydney 11 years ago. Art making was always a friend. After Art History, Asian Studies, Museum Studies, and various other detours, I joined life drawing classes at Hanoi University of Fine Arts in 1994, and later undertook an MA in Visual Arts at Queensland College of Art, finishing in 1997.

In the early days I worked largely in 2D, looking for that space in-between; trying to understand the world and so many competing value systems. I am inspired by everything and everyone around me. Studio time is 'static management'.

The reflective aspect of my practice is very important to me. The distance I gain by publicly exhibiting it, whilst nerve wracking, is a vital challenge.

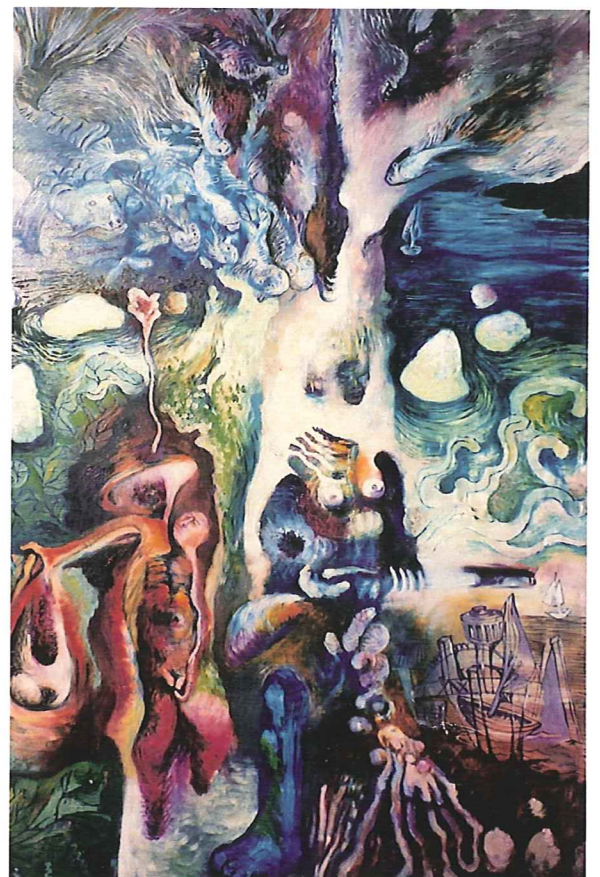
It is an invaluable form of participating in society, of adjusting my reality radar.

For me, art-making is a form of navigation and meditation, a search for humour and humanity in complexity; a celebration of chaos. The Casula Powerhouse commission and the I Love Pho project gave direct birth to my mongrels: a loyal friendly character for 'in-between' dialogues. Here I explored some important aspects of my Vietnamese heritage, discovered 3D objects, and installation. After Pho Dogs my mongrel characters Aqua Mutt, Dag Girl, and Godog all came alive.

The workshop experience is new to me and a great "walk through life" process in a microcosmic environment with participants as a bear turns into dog — a metaphor for transformation and multiple identities. It is tremendously meaningful for me to be part of the world through an art making process.

My September 2008 exhibition *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl* will show at NG Art Gallery. One of my longer term future goals is to create an outdoor mongrel forest.

Mai Long
19 June 2008



↑ *Hometurf*
Mai Long

← *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*
Casula Powerhouse Collection





Pho Dog Workshop KULCHA

24 & 25 May 2008

Mai Long

Workshop Facilitator
www.mai-long.com



I Love Pho is a Kultour event and Casula Powerhouse project supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, the City of Perth and the Office of Multicultural Interests; curated by Cuong Phu Le. The Pho Dog workshop was run alongside this event, and supported by KULCHA and the City of Wanneroo

"Pho Dog is my mythical breed of mongrel. Pho Dog... is symbolic of the half-breed, the Asian-Australian hyphenation, and all other hybridized and evolving identities... Pho Dog is a character that contemplates difference and tries to understand it in the broader context of human nature and complex political histories – a tribute to the idea that things will never fit into neat little boxes... Pho Dog is the ultimate mongrel, a hero embodying many facets and forms, and is a central character in the game of survival."

Mai Long
Artist Statement, June 2006

"The Pho Dog workshop is about transformation, dual identities, multiple realities, notions of perfection vs imperfection, and chance; not about making the perfect dog. On a broader level it is about finding an individual self: the mongrel that develops with all its so-called flaws within any given social structures - represented by the mass-produced generic calico bear. Pho Dog is inspired by the diasporic qualities of Pho."

Mai Long
Workshop Facilitator
February 2008

"The exhibition I Love Pho uses Pho as a metaphor to interpret and reveal a Viet Nam whose people and history are as varied and complex as the preparation and cooking of a bowl of Pho itself. The exhibition also aims to encourage people to re-examine the role of food in our multicultural society beyond its usual stereotypes and instead as a reflection of Australia's changing culture."

Cuong Phu Le
Curator of I Love Pho February 2008
interview for Trouble Magazine



FREMANTLE AS AN ARTY PLACE

www.freofocus.com

Sydney-based, this was my first visit to Perth. Fremantle had a great vibe. Arriving by easy train, the striking view of the port was what excited me first. Heading down the main street after a coffee near the station, I turned the corner and suddenly came across an entire oasis of people and buzz. Coffee shops, coffee shops, coffee shops, happy families, engrossed conversation...and then I found the markets were fun to have a squiz at. The historic buildings, layout of the street, and relaxed atmosphere just take you someplace else; the energy of those enjoying the place seemed so very now. Before the workshop was due to start made a point to breath in some pure ocean air and stand on a sandy beach. I found my way there via the esplanade was then fully prepared to face the bears.

Post workshop it was time for a drink and a cheap but delicious dinner at the markets – the meal was accompanied by the most interesting and friendly conversation!

KULCHA AS A VENUE

www.kulcha.com.au

KULCHA – Multicultural Arts of Western Australia - is a great venue on South Terrace, Fremantle. Heading in from the train station you can't miss it and the impressive open-air balcony beckoned me upstairs. It opens up to a large music/dance/bar venue. On the weekend of my workshop was a fantastic display of photographs by an artist of Thai origin. Although the venue was not

set up for a visual arts workshop, Sian Brown of KULCHA muscled up tressle tables and the assistance of Tanya and Tepi. Everyone pitched in and within the hour the place was ready for the 17 workshop participants. Chopsticks, paint brushes, scissors, brown packing tape, plastic takeaway containers for PVA glue, newspaper... the calico bear was set to start it's exciting journey into mongrelhood.

WAS I HAPPY WITH THE WORKSHOP; & WHAT DID CHILDREN & ADULTS GET OUT OF IT?

Facilitating the workshop was great. Every workshop I have done has been different. This is primarily driven by the participants. This was the first time I actually had a full-on age range of participants including young boys and girls, mums and dads alike. As the workshop got underway, the room was a-buzz with the rip of unrolling packing, following the decapitation of the bear. Soon after, legs and arms bound to chopsticks, as the bear began it's journey into an unique mongrel-hood. The best thing about the workshop was the energy it created within itself through the participants, the KULCHA staff, and the assistants. The workshop is designed to be a fastpaced messy affair, in the hope that it will release the participants from any desires to create a perfect artwork, but rather to just get into it, to keep busy, and to stand back and appreciate the surprise they have miraculously concocted at the very end. The other great thing about the workshop is that I got to explain concepts and ideas that would otherwise perhaps be less tangible. I get everyone to travel through a transformation

process by taking a bear and turning it into a mongrel. It relates to any form of transformation that happens to individuals during their lifetime (migration, adolescence, etc), and the dual identity of the work at the end, i.e: a perfectly imperfect mongrel (with bear hidden inside). It also practically demonstrates that to break something (the bear) is not necessarily the end of a life and hope, but can be the beginning of a new life and energy. And, it's just FUN, and fun is good medicine for everyone. What I loved most was to observe everyone go through this process together. Day 1 in for group is the 'hard' day. Hard days are important because we do get through them, and this is what gives us strength to keep progressing and learning. The difficulty with Day 1 is the "structuring up" - tape binding and using the chopsticks to support the body and making them do exactly what you want them to do... BECAUSE YOU CAN'T! And the sooner the participants just relax into that concept, them it begins to work. Slowly that begins to happen.

It was at this stage of Day 1 that the parent-children network was really the most active, I would say. I saw some dejected looking faces round the room, some sad little bodies as

they slouched back into their seats, seemingly crippled by the challenge. It was great to observe the parents coax them out of this stage, or myself or Sian, Tanya, or Tepi. Getting them through that was the most wonderful thing. I always worry about the participants at this stage – it makes me nervous. I take it really seriously, like a metaphor for that make or break crisis of your life.

Day 2 was generally more relaxed and without the ripping sound of packing tape echoing in the venue, Sian played a great selection of world music. The adults and children alike, decorated by collage effect, to represent the multicultural reality of Australia and the multiple cultural diversities within these cultural groups themselves. Just as there are many ways of being Australian, there are also many ways of being Vietnamese – we all work together to create a richer cultural fabric. I provided a range of bright colours, coloured paper, and interesting fabric to try to create a folk-art reference. The spirit of Pho Dog is "bright colours" and "celebration of chaos": Cultural diversity appreciated in a humorous light.

Mai Long
28 May 2008

"Pho Dogs"



→ Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl (2007)
Casula Powerhouse Collection

Project Description

PAPIER-MÂCHÉ SCULPTURE WITH WIRE ARMATURE

Drawing inspiration from Tasmanian born artist Mai Long's recently exhibited body of work 'Aqua Mutt and Dag Girl', your task is to design and create a dog character that visually communicates something of the uniqueness of who you are; your values, beliefs, interests.

When completed, your dog will join the pack to create a collaborative installation. Your dog will represent you amongst the group. Each dog will be unique, having its own form and characteristics which you have explored and given shape to. The work will visually explore the sometimes contradictory idea of staying real to yourself, while being a part of the group.

Other influences: Mambo and popular culture

Explanations

- faux:** /fo/ • adjective made in imitation; artificial.
- real:** /reel/ • adjective 1 actually existing or occurring in fact; not imagined or supposed. 2 significant; serious. 3 not artificial; genuine.

Materials

Newspaper, paper pulp, acrylic paint, varnish, wire mesh, glue (mix-a-paste or similar).

Arts Ideas



↑ Aqua Mutt in Asian Waters, detail from Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl Casula Powerhouse Collection

↓ Aqua Mutt: an Installation with Dag Girl (2007) Casula Powerhouse Collection

CREATE, INTERPRET, EXPLORE, DEVELOP, PRESENT

- Brainstorm 'who you are'; values, beliefs, interests. Collect images from magazines, newspapers and the internet that directly relate to your brain storm to create an image and text collage.
- From a variety of images, create initial observation sketches for your dog. Interpret these drawings through detailed sketches of the front, side and back views of your dog.
- Using collected images, create a number of drawings which visually communicate something of your 'character'. Select, crop, combine and enlarge elements of your original drawings to create design work which will be painted onto the surface of your dog.
- Create final 2D sketches of your 3D design concept (front/side/back) in colour pencil.
- Consider Mai Long's use of colour when developing your final colour scheme in acrylic paint.
- Present the final collaborative work to the college community at the Art Expo and through local gallery and council exhibitions.

Arts Skills and Processes

ARTS SKILLS, TECHNIQUES, PROCESSES, CONVENTIONS, TECHNOLOGIES

- Making reference to your design work, create a 3D armature in fine wire mesh and cover in papier mâché.
- Add details such as eye sockets, eyeballs and nose in paper pulp.
- Paint your design in acrylic paint onto the surface of your dog, finish with a coat of varnish.





Staying real...fighting the faux vs Going with the faux

“Pho Dogs”

Phase of Development: Early Adolescence

Teacher: **Mrs Yvonne Wiese**

Corpus Christi College

Arts Responses

RESPOND, REFLECT, EVALUATE

- Complete a weekly progress and process journal throughout the project. Use these reflections to help you write an evaluation of your work and an artist's statement at the end of the project.
- Complete a self evaluation that describes; the processes you have gone through; the choices you have made; the reasons for them; what they led to in the development and making of your art work. Comment on the level of success you have experienced in creating your piece.
- Write an 'artist's statement' (information and guided writing model provided).
- As a group, develop a 'collaborative artists' statement' which will be displayed with the work in the form of a 'didactic' panel.

Arts in Society

VALUING, ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE, AUSTRALIAN ART, HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXTS

- Select one of the images of Mai Long's 'Mutts', describe what you see. How have the art elements and principles been combined, that is how has the artist used things like colour, line and shape?
- Write a brief description of the character of this mutt.
- Write down a list of questions you would like to ask the artist about these works. As a class you will work together to refine a list of questions to email to the artist. Some things you might like to ask: What artists may have influenced her work? Has her cultural background effected the art that she makes?
- Based on your writing, reading and Mai Long's responses to your questions, why do you think the artist created this body of work? What idea/s is she trying to communicate with you the audience?
- Look at the artist's website and other sites which feature her work. Discuss how the artist 'markets' her work through exhibitions and the internet. Consider what opportunities you have to present your own work to an audience?

Websites

www.mai-long.com/index.html

www.ngart.com.au/artists_long.html



← *Godog & the Ascension of Dag Girl*
Casula Powerhouse Collection