

**Interview by National Association for the Visual Arts Australia with Christian de Vietri  
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*Last year you were included in Primavera 2006 curated by Aaron Seeto at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. What was it like to be included in such a large curated exhibition?*

The scale of the exhibition was not apparent to me until a couple of days before the opening when Aaron and I began to install the works in the space. I wasn't aware of Aaron's vision for the show prior to that nor of what the other artists would bring to the show, so it was a bit like 'show and tell' to begin with. For me, this way of connecting with other people through art and through a shared experience of public exposure is the most interesting aspect of participating in a curated show like Primavera.

*Can you describe your work in the exhibition and how you feel it related to the other artworks in the show and the exhibition as a whole?*

I showed four sculptures in the exhibition - Simon, Raphael, Tim, and Six Degrees of Separation. I can begin by talking about Simon, Raphael, and Tim; three works that can be viewed together. The idea began from my fascination with different kinds of buskers I kept seeing while travelling. I began to think about the strange ways in which we relate to the icons we manifest, and the ways in which icons live and change through processes of simulation. I wanted to create a series of objects that layer time, aesthetics and degrees of intentionality, as a means of questioning our perception of simulation and its cycles. I also wanted to give permanence to the busker phenomenon, by making them into icons, in a sense setting the simulation clock back to zero.

They are sculptures of three archetypal street performers - man as classical sculpture, man as sarcophagus, man as robot. Even though each costume appears individually conceived, the different elements of their image are drawn from my surveys of many street performers, which have come together to represent each archetype. Simon stands on a garbage bin and has a white cloth loosely draped over him, and he strikes a monastic pose. He is a classical sculpture but not any one in particular. Raph tries to be a typical Egyptian sarcophagus of some sort, tightly covering himself in gold Lycra and wearing a fancy dress pharaoh mask. Clips at his back hold his illusion together. Tim is standing on a milk crate with his robot costume gloves, his battery-covered silver costume, and his beanie wrapped around his head to give a kind of half-man half-robot effect. He is The Terminator, the Cyborg, Robocop, C3PO all in one half-assed mess of techy-crap.

I sculpted each figure by carving or casting techniques, and they are each re-made in the material they are imitating - marble, gold, aluminium. It was a multi-layered creative act, because I conceived the sketchy costumes as well as the complex recreations of these costumes as sculptures, so there is an oscillation between varying degrees of craft and resolution occurring within the one form - the vagueness of the costume is rendered in a very specific way. This raises questions of intentionality. The costumes are deliberately lacking considered effort, but even this sense of haste and lack of professionalism is given permanency. Simon's bin for example could have been the closest object around to stand on, and therefore didn't become part of this image for any other reason than chance. He perhaps did not intend to have his running shoes pointing out from his costume, but my intention was to recreate this lack of focus; the parts that show the representation to be merely an attempt to simulate.

Time plays an interesting part in the sculptures because it becomes compressed and objectified as the three-dimensional gap that exists in between the original referent (ie. classical marble sculpture, Tutankhamen's sarcophagus, The Terminator/ Cyborg/Robocop/C3PO, etc.), the buskers' simulation of the original, and my act of recreating this as sculpture. What the viewer perceives is the static spectacle of an object going through a crisis of identity.

It is a new iconographic starting point, and it is supposed to illicit an alternative ontology in which to understand the original referents and the systems by which they replicate. The figures are becoming what they are pretending to be, but the vagueness of their simulation has returned to the original material as well. The uniqueness of the original icon has been broken down through various layers of simulation, and this decay is being reinserted into the fabric of tradition and institution by its materialisation as a unique piece of sculpture shown in a museum. The start of a new cycle for these icons was appropriately begun at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Within the larger context of the exhibition, I think my sculptures related to Rob McHaffie's paintings. Rob paints meticulously, but he seems to select the subject matter for his paintings with nonchalance. Random found objects are put together pictorially in a cool and playful way. In "On a date without a lot to talk about" he painted a sculpture that he made from bits and pieces of material that was lying around his studio. He is playing with temporal shifts in creative processes - the selection of the subject matter that is quick and easy and quite random, and the painting that is very deliberate and time consuming. In different ways, we are perhaps both paying homage to banality or randomness.

As for how my works relate to the exhibition as a whole, I'm not sure. There did not seem to be a clear prevailing theme for the exhibition, so I guess my work in the exhibition reads as just one out of many ways of dealing with contemporary culture.

*Your recent work deals with functional objects, drawing on their metaphoric potential. What are you trying to achieve through the use of this strategy*

I am interested in uncertainty. I deliberately considered objects that are well known as a starting point, ones that are often used in public or domestic space - a fridge, a washing machine, Ikea furniture, security poles - and from there, I crafted deviations of these forms; perverted variations that still retain elements of their original identity. On the surface I wanted the viewer to trust their recognition of the object but sense also that their perceptions are being sabotaged from within.

*From your perspective as an artist, what do you see is the key role of the curator?*

I think that the key role of the curator is to make new connections between artists, their work, and society, while preserving the integrity of the work of art and the artist's vision. Once the artwork is out of my studio, out of my hands, I think that it is the role of the curator is to extend the possibilities for the artwork to reach people and help in creating contemporary culture. I also think that the curator has a responsibility not just to identify but to create new trends, new frameworks, and new contexts in which art can be accessed.

*What do you feel is the value for artists in being included in curated projects as opposed to solo or un-curated group shows?*

I guess the value for the artist being in curated group shows is that the curator, in most cases, is not motivated by making a direct financial profit from your work. This allows for other criteria of exchange to emerge - cultural, personal, social, political, and so on.