



Post-haste

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

BLUE
MOUNTAINS
CITY ART
GALLERY



POST-HASTE

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro have been collaborating for over 20 years and have built their practice solidly in the dual realms of object and concept, with a focus on site-specific interventions, installation, sculpture, video and photography. The exhibition *Post-haste* showcases a significant body of their work from the past decade, as well as new works, occupying the entire Blue Mountains City Art Gallery. The exhibition content has evolved over the two years of COVID-19 with the stay-at-home orders and border closures of 2020 and 2021 meaning halted overseas residencies, delayed film shoots and lack of access to materials. The agility with which the pair adapted to these constant changes, and still produced major new works, reveals their unique practice for what it is – an ability to assess an ordinary object (as subject) and transform it into a work of art layered with meaning. Their practice often involves a process of reduction until a material or object's essence, or language, is revealed.

The brilliance of Healy & Cordeiro is their ability to re-imagine everyday objects into playful critiques of serious issues. They aren't limited by mediums, or even practicalities, when conceiving their works, many of which require substantial involvement from other people to manifest: their imaginations are always working outside the box. They often focus on themes of obsolescence and the residue of consumerism, frequently using the discarded objects of society to reflect back to the viewer the results of over consumption. The works operate on multiple levels, engaging in social commentary, playful irony and dystopian prediction.

Some of the sculptures are overwhelming, not only for their sheer mass and scale, but also because of the implications of the materials. *Par Avion* (2011), for example, is made from a grounded Cessna 172 airplane, cut into pieces so it could be posted from place to place to be re-configured at its destination. Fully installed on site, it measures over eleven metres wide and five and a half metres high. It towers over the viewer, reminding us of the impossibility of flight but also the irony of re-flying a decommissioned plane via the postal service. Is this a sweet gesture of liberation or commentary on excessive overuse of resources?

Given their extensive practice, early discussions led to concentrating on the theme "vehicles of speed" reflecting the duo's use of planes, cars and

helicopter parts to make work, as well as their ongoing research into Paul Virilio's concept of dromology: investigating how the speed at which something happens may change its essential nature. The irony of working with this theme during multiple lockdowns, with restrictions of movement limited beyond our previous experience, was not lost on the artists.

Healy & Cordeiro observe that, "in an epoch where speed means everything, what happens when nature pulls the handbrake?" Reflecting on the forced inertia of the world the artists pose the question "is this the long overdue payment for our over consumption? Suddenly, there is a great pause for thought after a period of great immediacy."

As we open the gallery after months of closure, this stillness is broken, the handbrake released. And as we accelerate towards old habits, *Post-haste* is a reminder that not all is well with the speed of life or the status quo.

Rilka Oakley
Curator, Blue Mountains City Art Gallery



A conversation with Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

Rilka Oakley: Your work is often about mobility and the speed we travel from place to place, and we spoke early on about focussing on “vehicles of speed” for this exhibition. What interests you about these ideas?

Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro: In the physical world, Newton's second law states that Force = mass x acceleration.

Acceleration is the measurement of change in speed over time. You can imagine that the greater the change in speed, the greater the Force. It doesn't really matter how small the weight (mass) is, as long as the acceleration is large enough, the Force produced will be great. A good visual example of this is a stick embedded into a steel hubcap during a tornado or a tiny piece of space junk penetrating an orbiting satellite. Similar examples of the power of acceleration can be seen within social media: ridiculous lightweight ideas such as COVID being caused by 5G technology or QAnon rubbish are given great force by the accelerated nature of its dissemination via social media.

Our works such as *The Drag* (2015) and *Par Avion* (2011) are influenced by novels like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* or Luigi Barzini's *Peking to Paris*. These works use the operatic drama of vehicles of speed to illustrate the will of the individual as manifest through collective technological advancements.

RO: Many of the works in Post-haste are made from used cars, planes and helicopters. What is your attraction to these materials?

C&S: The vehicles that we operate are a physical manifestation of our desires. Cars, planes and helicopters are used to fulfil our urge to move at high velocity. In 2021 we were faced with two opposing images that tell us something about the world we live in now. The first is Jeff Bezos posing in front of his 'space craft' Blue Origin, all sunglasses and flying jacket; the second is 640 Afghans crammed inside a US Air Force C-17 Globemaster III. The former is a photo depicting a billionaire who's surplus of money and lack of imagination compels him to leave a perfectly good

Par Avion 2011, 70 cut pieces from a Cessna 172 airplane, gaffa tape, postage paraphenalia, 530 x 1160 cm. Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artists, 2013, in recognition of Andrew and Cathy Cameron. Courtesy the artists and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Photo: Jessica Maurer.

planet, the latter are fleeing their country to escape the inevitable consequences of Western Hubris.

Vehicles can be emblematic of the age. The photograph of Operation Frequent Wind, 1975, in which a South Vietnamese helicopter was pushed overboard from USS Okinawa during the fall of Saigon, taught us that technology alone cannot manifest our personal ideology into reality. The machines we create are embodiments of both our hopes and also our self-conceit. Our work *Mayday* (2021) uses the pathos of a discarded wing as a canvas to announce a cry for help. The scale and materiality of the work makes the work fall somewhere between an aviation accident and an act of vandalism. It is a cry for help to a disinterested audience.

RO: How has the global pandemic changed your practice? And has this affected your original plans for Post-haste?

C&S: How we perceive art and how we see icebergs are pretty similar. It's common knowledge that only a tenth of an iceberg can be seen

while 9/10th of the rest of it is underwater. The experience and the creation of art has a pretty similar ratio. For instance, we are probably more prone to imagining a guitarist smashing a guitar on stage rather than a guitarist sitting at home by herself practicing arpeggios.

The reality of art creation is actually quite lonely. Back in the nineties our friends came up with the phrase of "Art Jail". Art Jail is the experience of having an impending art deadline that negates any other activity. Therefore the declination of an invitation with "Sorry, I'm in Art Jail" is readily understood to mean: there is no fun to be had, I am stuck at home making Work. Lockdown can be seen as an extended period of Art Jail. Consequently in some ways, artists are more suited to working in this environment. Though most Art Jails have a definite end date and this second lockdown is more due to domestic political ineptitude rather than unyielding global forces. This one is harder to swallow for all involved, artists included! Long story short, we've spent our time chipping away in the studio and on the keyboard...



The Drag (still) 2015, Rover P6; 2-channel video, colour, sound, 28 min

RO: There is a sense of a cautionary warning in much of your work – can you reflect on ‘premonition’ and the new COVID-19 reality (lockdowns, grounded flights etc) that we are now living?

C&S: Our work could be said to be cautionary but only because we are examining systems that we ourselves are part of. It’s the easiest thing in the world to tell others what to do without changing your own way of living. For instance, we are experiencing the COVID pandemic because of our constant expansion into wildlife zones. COVID is symptomatic of our inability to reach some kind of equilibrium in relation to our lifestyle and the healthy functioning of the planet. Living in fire prone Blackheath, every dry summer, we are forced to question the suitability of our location of habitation. Our artwork is certainly cautionary, unfortunately sometimes our pessimistic outlook is proven correct.

RO: With all the changes to your schedule, including a postponed residency in Japan, have you rethought the notion of international artists residencies? What other impacts have there been on your studio?

C&S: Art is great, it can make you look at life in a different light. International residencies offer the perfect time to take in new information, watch the world, reflect upon your own perspective. International artist residencies can give the artist a different perspective on life without the associated side-effects of ingesting mind-altering substances. Residencies are great for searching but in the words of jazz-fusion guitarist Rudi Van de Sanio “Perhaps what you seek is inside yourself.”

One of the positive things about the lockdown is the increased number of people we see walking the streets and in the bush in Blackheath. Before



Kitchen / Pantry - Seal 2014, Lego, Ikea foot stool & plant, 103 x 110 x 60 cm



the COVID times, the only people you would see walking were people who owned dogs or holidaymakers. Hopefully the lockdown is making people look at their immediate surroundings with the same inquisitive nature they employ when holiday making. An enhanced appreciation of one's hometown can only be a good thing.

RO: Epicormic Growth – the high school engagement dead smartphone project: tell me about the ideas of painting the landscape onto dead smartphones, and how the juxtaposition of these two ideas makes meaning?

C&S: Humans are always fiddling around with things. Just like primates picking parasites off each other, we like to keep ourselves entertained. When we were kids we used to kill time by smoking carcinogenic cigarettes, these days kids are glued to smartphones instead! Phones have become portals into worlds and we are really stuck in them.

Prior to lockdown it wasn't an uncommon sight to see families or couples sitting at a restaurant table, every member glued to their phone, not interacting with each other or their surroundings. The smartphone has become the default vista of choice. Combining smartphones and landscape painting therefore seems like a pretty obvious marriage: smartphones have become our world.

And even when we unglue ourselves from these devices, they are used to document our instafamous lives. The natural environment is merely used as a backdrop to advertise our glamorous lives. Of course being stuck

to a smartphone is not solely the oeuvre of adolescents, there are plenty of Gen X-ers and Boomers that can't get off the things, though the combination of smartphones and landscape painting feels like a very Blue Mountains teenage experience.

RO: Many artistic practices are collaborative, but in your case there's a constancy and a partnership in the creative process. Can you tell us something of how this works in practical and conceptual terms, and perhaps some of the challenges of working together so intimately?

C&S: Artistic collaborations are not surprising. What is surprising is how few artistic collaborations are actually declared! There are too many ghostwriters out there.

Making artwork together is easy! Hell, people even bring up children in pairs, how hard can it be? We navigate each other's energy levels, natural talents and strengths meld together to create a Voltron-like unit: greater than the sum of its parts.

August 2021

LIST OF WORKS

Same Day Service or Sooner 2008
police box, 230 x 120 x 120 cm

Breakfast Bar / Kitchen – Chimpanzee
2011, Lego, Ikea bar stool, plant
140 x 65 x 58 cm

Origami Aeroplane 2011
CSOA001 cut and folded metal from
Cessna 172 aircraft, rivets
7 x 12 x 30 cm each

Par Avion 2011
70 cut pieces from a Cessna
172 airplane, gaffa tape, postage
paraphernalia, 530 x 1160 cm
Collection Museum of Contemporary
Art, donated through the Australian
Government's Cultural Gifts Program
by the artists, 2013, in recognition of
Andrew and Cathy Cameron.

T+64_red 2011
Lego, 130 x 111 cm

Autoflake WG22 2012
toy cars, magnets, 90 x 196 x 4 cm

Tapestries of Disaster (series of 8)
2012-2013, cotton cross stitch
various dimensions

Bedroom 3, Baby's Room – Lion 2014
Lego, Ikea changing table, change mat
& plants, 183 x 70 x 125 cm

*Downstairs Entertainment Area –
Manta Ray* 2014
Lego, Ikea bathroom shelves, light &
terrarium, 112 x 220 x 175 cm

Garage / Tool Shed – Doe 2014
Lego, Ikea trestle with shelf & plant
130 x 150 x 70 cm

Kitchen / Pantry – Seal 2014
Lego, Ikea foot stool & plant
103 x 110 x 60 cm

T+85 White & Orange 2014
Lego, 120 x 125 cm

The Drag 2015
Rover P6; 2-channel video,
colour, sound, 28 min
Videography: Gotaro Uematsu
Talent: Miles Van Dorssen

We Hunt Mammoth 2015
121 components (entire Honda), jute &
bamboo, dimensions variable

A Stranger Comes to Town 2017
giclee on Hahnemühle
105.5 x 85 cm 1/5

Auto Safari (series of 6) 2017
Giclee print on Hahnemühle museum
etching paper
43 x 59 cm each (framed)

Homecoming Queen 2017
High definition video, 11 min

Wish for the Skies 2018-2021
pine, acrylic tubing and tracing paper
with drawings by community members
400 x 400 x 300 cm

Bekkako 2020
Kiowa utility helicopter engine cowl
assembly, acrylic gouache, polyester
line, 107 x 60 x 14 cm

Daruma 2020
Kiowa FWD helicopter shell assembly,
acrylic gouache, polyester line
157 x 125 x 14 cm

Daruma Tosa 2020
Iroquois aircraft panel, acrylic gouache,
polyester cord
70 x 70 x 33 cm

Fugu 2020
Kiowa helicopter cabin shell assembly,
acrylic gouache, polyester line
90 x 120 x 8 cm

Fukusuke 2020
Kiowa helicopter fuselage doors, acrylic
gouache, polyester line
140 x 210 x 20 cm

Gashadokoro 2020
Kiowa utility helicopter fuselage fairing,
acrylic gouache, polyester cord
180 x 115 x 20 cm

Gojo-ohashi 2020
panel of Iroquois aircraft, acrylic
gouache, polyester cord
170 x 68 x 10 cm

Koinobori 2020
intake cowling, acrylic gouache,
polyester cord, 210 x 85 x 50 cm

Momotaro 2020
Iroquois aircraft panel, acrylic gouache,
polyester cord
85 x 62 x 5 cm

Nami Usagi 2020
Kiowa helicopter FWD shell assembly,
acrylic gouache paint, jute, tape
157 x 125 x 14 cm

Okame 2020
Kiowa helicopter engine cowl assembly,
acrylic gouache, polyester rope
107 x 60 x 14 cm

Raiko & Shuten Douj 2020
Kiowa FWD helicopter shell assembly,
acrylic gouache, jute, tape
157 x 125 x 14 cm

Shoki 2020
Iroquois aircraft panel, acrylic gouache,
polyester cord
130 x 145 x 10 cm

Sumitomo Zaibatsu 2020
Iroquois aircraft panels, acrylic
gouache, jute, tape
130 x 165 x 10 cm

Tako 2020
Kiowa helicopter engine cowl assembly,
acrylic gouache, polyester rope
107 x 60 x 14 cm

The Pilgrims 2020
High definition video
8 min 58 sec
Cinematographer: Sukrit Srisathaporn
and Cake Napatsorn
Editors: Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro
Post Production: Vera Hong & Craig
Bender, Thomas Dicker
Sound Designer & Mix: Tim Mahony
Fixer: Kritanu Manokam
Supported by: Shadow Places Network

Tosa Dako 2020
Iroquois aircraft panel, acrylic gouache,
response accessory cord
115 x 105 x 10 cm

Block Party 2021
Lego, 151.5 x 327 cm
Created with the assistance of year
10 visual art students from Katoomba
High School, Wycliffe Christian
College and La Salle Academy, as
well as teachers and BMCC staff and
volunteers, with special thanks to
Lucien Aartoli.

Mayday 2021
Piper Aircraft wing, stickers, acrylic
166 x 552 x 58 cm

Revolting Youth 2021
Beechcraft Duchess BE76 wing, wood,
spray paint, spray paint cannisters,
paper, and other event materials.
550 x 150 x 360 cm
Special thanks to: Alethia Cooper,
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curated by Rilka Oakley

www.claireandsean.com

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BACK COVER: *Auto Safari (Falcon)* 2017, Giclee print on Hahnemühle museum etching paper, 50 x 63 cm

FRONT COVER: *Sumitomo Zaibatsu* 2020, Iroquois aircraft panels, acrylic gouache, jute, tape
130 x 165 x 10 cm. Photo: Luis Power