

Room Sheet



HANGBANG (nightshift) JOHN VELLA

Hangbang (nightshift*) is a new installation constructed from artworks made by the artist over the past sixteen years that are not held in public or private collections. Hundreds of diverse objects fill the gallery, numbered and displayed in a massive assemblage. The daily business of the gallery office is also being recorded and the information gathered will be employed in strategies designed to select specific works for nightly interventions by the artist and display in the office environment.

The interventions can be viewed live from 9pm at night until 5am in the morning through a window inserted in the gallery's courtyard wall as well as from the scaffold platform that exposes the gallery offices. During the nightly sessions the artist will 'live in' the gallery and reconfigure the installation, transforming the static archive of objects into a transient network of interactions while subjecting the artworks to forces and contexts beyond their intended making.

HANGBANG (nightshift*) originated with the artist's realisation of the magnitude and potential of his stored art objects and the thought, "**What if I didn't make any more artwork?**" Vella's practice is driven by a succession of ideas, ideas which are often free-form and offer a delightful thrill of risk: "**What if I continue to work only with the art objects I have already made?**" Surrounded by a personal archive, including many objects damaged through careless storage and handling, the artist determined to pack this 'history' into a gallery as a jumble of storage, display and radical retrospective. Viewing the damage as an extension of the process of authentic 'aging' - as opposed to the static preservation of official art - and excited by the idea of things 'rubbing up against each other,' altering their intended purpose and ultimate value, the interventionist strategy was then conceived.

The CAST installation includes works made from bath towels, computer keys, Lambda prints, die cut cardboard, sail-cloth, video works, bird cages, paint, vinyl and rubbish, as well as raw materials, off-cuts from large commissions and materials the artist 'just likes'. These dormant objects from his personal archive are redefined and/or restored; art objects become mere material while raw materials are presented as art by being part of the situation he has created in the gallery. The attribution of art is further enhanced by the activities of the institution that supports the gallery space and its programs. **HANGBANG (nightshift)** attempts to capture and play with the random flows of artworld ecosystems and the transitory and provisional 'value' of art objects through the systems that generate their existence and their perceived status.

Born and educated in Sydney, Vella relocated to Hobart in 1996. Some of the earliest redisplayed works include paintings from his 1996 series, *Meet Jackson Judd*, made of striped, timber and canvas paintings where the timber supports initiate his subversion of the painted canvas plane. Motivated by unconventional ideas and their manifestation into a visual form, the artist later subverted the painting plane to contain both the subject and the object of its image. The series *Paintjects* (1998–2000), extrapolated from the sexualized processes of frottage and painting combined with domestic apparatus, clandestinely presented object/images ranging from cotton buds to a domestic bathtub, simultaneously conflating the disciplines of painting and sculpture. Disloyal to studio disciplines, the artist continued to confound the subject in his 2004 multi-channel video work, *Hobart Portrait Group Life Drawing Session* where the subject (the artist as the model) is invisible but present only through the attention of the group's participants. Over the years his work has gone on to engage communities (*TerraTowel*, 2000; *Placemats*, 2004; *SRL* (Stigma Research Laboratory), 2009), corporations (*ProductLines* 2002 in collaboration with Amcor; *Inklein* 2005, with Yves Klein), commissions (*Silicone Valley*, 2005; *S C A P E* with Stephen Hurrell, 2007/08) and sites (*poleposition*, 2009, Clarendon House; *Blow*, 2003, Werribee Park). The playful conflation, subversion and/or radical treatment of the accepted disciplines, forms and values in the making of artwork, is the consistent yet sometimes elusive signal of this artist's varied oeuvre.

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