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## Ghosts of the Coast

Gallery 4a, Asia-Australia Arts Centre, Chinatown, Sydney.

Artists: Lionel Bawden, Cherine Fahd, Alex Kershaw, Mel O'Callaghan, Todd Robinson, Pat Sae-Loy, Evan Salmon, Prateep Suthathongthai.  
Curated by Dougal Phillips

Dates: Thursday, 27 April – Saturday 27 May

Opening: 6-8pm, Friday, 28 April

This show brings together works which use the forms, equipment and spaces of the maritime to explore the uncanny connections and presences found at the coastline. The artists in this show approach the concept of the coast both literally – in terms of the detritus and ghostly traces found at the water's edge and under the sea – and figuratively, as a limit, a point of facing-off between the known world and the unknown possibilities of the expansive otherness of the ocean. This otherness is ingrained in the psyche of Australasians who gather at the rim of waterbound lands. In this show the coast serves as a metaphor for the liminal points of form and content, lines crucial to our marking out of Self and Other and of fantasy and reality.

Beyond this overall maritime or coastal metaphor the works expand in different directions to describe many overlapping themes. At the level of social commentary, looking at the strange boundaries and margins within the community, Alex Kershaw's *Construction for Watching Waterloo* places faceless figures on the rigging of a playground apparatus on an urban sandbank facing the cliff-like edifice of a housing project. The delineation of the coast is fused with concept of what it is to neighbour someone; the question asked is whether the various "tribes" of Waterloo that mingle together ever meet. Cherine Fahd's strip of photographs juxtapose homeless people sleeping in parks and dead birds under sand. Boundaries of life and death, the horizon line, of society and outlawry, weave together across the series. Mel O'Callaghan works seem to move from the intimate (in the video) to a discussion of international boundaries and limits in *The Maze* (floor work). The oil rig defines the perimeter of a country more correctly than a coast and becomes a gatekeeper on the invisible frontier of international maritime law. In her work the conditions of the seabed are reproduced with an inky blue pigment powder sediment.

The metaphor of the border is also described through many of the works through the uncanny use of materials. Lionel Bawden's sculpture *Monster* is produced through the erosion of coloured pencils, referencing both coral forms and the sedimentary edifices of seaside cliffs. The line separating the object from drawing practice is blurred and the use of common materials, first encountered in preschool, draw another line between what we consider high art materials appropriate for a high art objects. Evan Salmon, through his painterly and mannered reconstruction of WW1 naval camouflage further problematises the already paradoxical relationship between artists and the military machine; what is it when an artist becomes the camoufleur, illusionist and engineer? Does any "artistic consideration" just fade away or can a naval ship be aesthetic? The title refers to a quote from an American Officer which the artist has spelt out in semaphore flags.

This sense of an ironic limen is central to other works in the show. Prateep Suthathongthai, a Thai new media artist, has sent a multi-panel projection of a digitized riverscape entitled *Tidal Wave*, in which the flat horizon of a river is tilted to produce a strange ocean-like swell. The local is turned through a very simple camera trick into a representation of a disastrous natural event. Pat Sae-Loy has installed a walkway of invented text made out of dried and sewn fish maw, placed above votive ashes on pillows. The cheapness of the material belies the religious and social intention of her work. In Todd Robinson's piece the grotesquery of severed limbs and the gothic associations of ghosts and animal sacrifice are underplayed with the non-threatening and humourous notes of Disney and B-Grade horror. The works in this show all make new voyages into the various paths and spaces of the great watery unknown which lies at our doorstep.

For all enquiries about the artists and works please contact Dougal Phillips – 0402 063 828 / dougalphillips@gmail.com

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Half Dozen is a non-profit, artist-run initiative dedicated to commissioning, promoting and exhibiting the work of emerging visual artists. For more info, please visit our website: <http://www.halfdozen.org>  
Half Dozen gratefully acknowledges the support of the Artist Run initiatives program of the Australian Council for the Arts.

1. Evan Salmon  
*Dezzie Ship* ("Oh God, as if we didn't have enough trouble! They send us artists!"), oil paint on balsa wood, plywood and canvas, wire, aluminium, nuts and bolts and plastic. 2005-2008  
Courtesy of Legge Gallery
2. Alex Kershaw  
*Construction for Watching Waterloo*, Lambda-print, 118 x100cm, 2006  
Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE
3. Pat Sae-Loy  
*Predicting the fortune of Buddhism*, fish maw, cotton/polyester, paper, silk, ash, dimensions variable, 2006
4. Lionel Bawden  
*the monsters (like some colossal python which after swallowing a mountain is sluggishly digesting the meal)*, 2005, coloured Staedtler pencils, epoxy, linseed oil, Plinth of metal, MDF and perspex.  
Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE
5. Todd Robinson,  
*sightlessness (Mez) I-V*, Iris print of watercolour paper, 2005-2006
6. Todd Robinson  
*untitled*, 2006  
bucket, plastic pig mask, nylon chord
7. Cherine Fahd  
*Mors, mortis*, 2004-2006, c-type photograph  
This project has been supported by the NSW Ministry for the Arts, Women & Arts Fellowship.
8. Prateep Suthathongthai  
*Tidal Wave*, 2005  
Video, duration 1.00.
9. Mel O'Callaghan  
*The Detection of Movement*, 2006  
Video, duration 2:38  
The artist would like to acknowledge – Camera: Benjamin Storrier, Man: Daniel Carlisle.
10. Mel O'Callaghan  
*The Maze*, 2006  
pigment, enamel, plastic and wood.  
Courtesy of the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney and galerie schleicher + lange, Paris.