

4A

LAST WORDS

PHASE 1

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan

Eric Bridgeman

Hikaru Fujii

Archie Moore

Shen Shaomin

Zhang Ding

Phase 1 Exhibition dates: **16 July - 28 August 2010**

Launch: **Thursday 15 July 6-8pm**

Public Program: **Artist and curator talks, Saturday 17 July 2pm**

Last Words is a curated two-part exhibition of works that tackle issues of communication, memory and history. These artists articulate that it is no longer straight forward to answer questions such as who are you, where are you from, how do you fit in? Our ideas and experiences of place and locality are increasingly defined by the intersection of local, national and global references - colliding histories, traditions and politics are what define our contemporary experiences.

Technology, economics and global politics have changed our understanding of geography and other cultures. We can talk instantaneously with our friends around the world, we have an understanding of society and politics in different parts of the globe and we are exposed to multinational global brands and their ideologies. Within these cross-cultural, cross-national and consumer movements, where does the individual fit? How does the individual articulate their own position and their own history?

Last Words explores language, knowledge and communication in an age of cultural diversity and globalisation. We have entered a period where traditional forms of identification are neither consistent or certain. Last Words highlights the need to find new ways of thinking and talking about culture.

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In the groundfloor gallery, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan's *In God We Trust* (2010) sits, shiny and gleaming. Decorated with the assistance of craftpeople in Manila, there's something absurd about seeing an ornate life-size stainless steel jeep (or jeepney as they are affectionately called in the Philippines) in the street front gallery. The jeep, left over after the Second World War by the Americans, resonates with much of the cultural history of colonization and American occupation

in the Philippines. These modified and decorated vehicles have come to represent a symbol of popular culture as well as vernacular design and ingenuity within Filipino culture. For the Aquilizens, the jeepney is also a symbol of how cultures transform, how imports become locals and how everyday popular culture can be beautiful.

On the first floor Last Words includes a range of young and emerging Australian artists alongside more established artists from China and Japan. Included are early surviving works made by the Chinese-Australian artist Shen Shaomin from a series of works called Dialogue. The works are constructed from newspapers and jettisoned household carpets the artist found on the sides of roads during suburban 'clean ups'. Born in Acheng City in Heilongjiang Province, China, Shen arrived in Australia in 1989. As a poor migrant, the artist began working with these abundant and accessible materials as a way of maintaining his own creative language during times of great uncertainty. Shen Shaomin found it difficult to engage with Australian culture, and hoped that maintaining his creative language in this new context would allow him to find a way to engage with society at large and assist in preserving his identity as an artist.

Cutting, weaving and scorching newspapers, these early works result in absurd meanings through the interlocking of English and Chinese text mixed with images of contemporary Australian political figures. The incorporation of these rare early works illustrates that the challenges of communication are consistent artistic themes in recent Australian art history. Even in times of instantaneous communication, we cannot take for granted that human connection and understanding necessarily come easily.

The Fight (2010) is one of Eric Bridgeman's recent video works, and was developed from a recent trip to his mother's village in Papua New Guinea. As an artist with both Anglo-Australian and Papua New Guinean heritage, Bridgeman has become increasingly interested in returning to his family's country in order to better understand his own history and culture. Growing up in Australia, Bridgeman states that he became interested in his cultural heritage through coffee table books, ethnographic photography, National Geographic Magazines as well as the gifts sent down from family in PNG. Bridgeman acknowledges that his recent photographic and video work results from the complicated relationship he has as a consumer of these genres of image making and photography. On this research trip he became aware of the great differences between the lived experience of his family in the Highlands compared to the cultural 'shows' put on for passing tourists. For these reasons he found taking photographs and video difficult, becoming aware of his own 'whiteness'. Bridgeman understood that during his research and travel through PNG he was as much a consumer of these potentially exploitative forms of image making, as he was its subject. The Fight carefully makes these contrasts visible. There are moments that this film has the feeling of a documentary, the realisation that The Fight is a mock fight that was presented especially for their wantok¹ artist armed with a video camera, makes for a less straightforward relationship between the artist, camera and subject.

Zhang Ding, has two works in Phase One. Boxing I and II (2007), in which the artist shadow

1 Pidgin for relative

4A

boxes hanging cacti, is a cathartic work based on a performance of the artist, testing the limits of his endurance. *The Great Era* (2007), uses a Fellini-esque cinematic language, with the artist as the work's main subject. Zhang employs absurd action to examine the position of the individual in relation to the great social and cultural changes occurring around him.

Based in Tokyo, Hikaru Fujii is an artist who responds to the impact on individuals and communities of a vision of a global community secured through the activities of global brands. His work is conceptual, political and process driven, often incorporating moving images and social activities. Fujii's work is engaged with the relationship between individuals, economy, cultural administration, law and art. In his work *Nike Politics* (2008), the artist explores the intersection of communities and individuals – how individuals articulate their own space within the larger concepts of nation and global commerce.

Archie Moore's *Mulgoa* (2010) is a new work which has been made specifically for this exhibition. This interactive work contains the Bible opened to its last words – The Book of Revelation also known as The Apocalypse of John. By running a modified tape player over the pages of the book, you can hear strains of 'Bound for Botany Bay'. In this work Moore creates relationships between the last words of the Bible – which foresees the end of the world through war, pestilence, famine and natural disasters and the cultural and the linguistic destruction of the Aboriginal world with the arrival of the First Fleet. The title of the work, *Mulgoa*, is a Dharug word for black swan, which the artist has related back to Nassim Nicholas Taleb's idea of Black Swan events which are unforeseen, undirected, catastrophic events which have major impact beyond the realm of normal expectation in history, science, finance and technology. *Mulgoa* highlights the limitation of our learning and the fragility of our knowledge as the realms of European and Aboriginal knowledge collide.

LIST OF WORKS

4A

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizon

In God We Trust (2010)

stainless steel, Jeep parts

Courtesy of the artist and Jan Manton Art, Brisbane

Archie Moore

Mulgoa (2010)

Mixed media

Shen Shaomin

Dialogue 1-6 (1993)

Newspaper

Shen Shaomin

Dialogue (1993)

Carpet

Zhong Ding

Great Era (2007)

Video, 14 mins looped

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai

Zhong Ding

Boxing I & II (2007)

Video, 3 minutes looped

Courtesy of the artist and ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai

Eric Bridgeman

The Fight (2010)

16:9 HD video on tarpaulin

Hikaru Fujii

NIKEPOLITICS (2008)

Installation with video



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