

OPINION

Review: Cai Guo-Qiang at QAGOMA & Melbourne Now at NGV

Anna Waldmann



Cai Guo-Qiang
China b.1957
Eucalyptus 2013
Spotted gum (*Corymbia maculata*), wooden stools, paper and pencils
Length: 3150cm (approx.)
Commissioned for the exhibition 'Falling Back to Earth', 2013
Photograph: Natasha Harth, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art

Two extraordinary exhibitions opened on the same night: *Cai Guo-Qiang: Falling Back to Earth* at QAGOMA and *Melbourne Now* at NGV.

Falling Back to Earth builds on a longstanding working relationship between the artist and the gallery, which dates back to Cai's participation in the Asia Pacific Triennial exhibitions in 1996 and 1999.

Cai Guo-Qiang said the exhibition title was inspired by fourth-century poet Tao Yuanming's prose poem 'Ah, homeward bound I go!'

There are only four works taking over the entire ground floor of GOMA. *Heritage* (2013) is an installation of 99 replicas of animals including pandas, tigers, bears, giraffes and kangaroos, lowering their heads to drink water together from a lake that is surrounded by white sand, evoking the islands of Brisbane's Moreton Bay.

Eucalyptus (2013), a 31-metre tree suspended along GOMA's central Long Gallery, came from a plantation earmarked for clearing for urban community development. The work was inspired by the ancient trees of Lamington National Park, and creates a meditative, immersive experience. Cai presents *Eucalyptus* as an unfinished work to be completed by the audience, who are invited to draw and write their ideas on the tree's past and future.

The third major installation, *Head On* (2006) - Cai's signature work of 99 life-size sculptures of wolves, was commissioned by Deutsche

Bank, Berlin - is appearing in Australia for the first time.

The *Tea Pavilion* invites visitors to pause and reflect on the works in the exhibition. Visitors can sample Tie Guan Yin tea from Cai's home province of Fujian and watch a documentary created especially for *Falling Back to Earth* to learn more about the processes behind the exhibition.

At the opening Cai Guo-Qiang presented *Sound of the Earth*, a suite of new improvised performances with leading musicians William Barton and Wang Xinxin together with local children from Voices of Birralee.

Cai is a megastar. His recent solo exhibitions and projects have included the retrospective *Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe*, presented at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 2008 and the Guggenheim Bilbao in 2009. He was Director of Visual and Special Effects for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. In 2012, the artist appeared in solo exhibitions in Los Angeles, Hangzhou and Copenhagen. His first South American exhibition toured to Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 2013.

Peaceful and almost reverential the exhibition conveys a lyrical utopian vision that embodies Cai's image of a 'last-chance paradise and his awareness of a sense of crisis.'

Nothing could be more different at the National Gallery of Victoria where *Melbourne Now* is exuberant and anarchic. Assembling over 250 outstanding commissions, acquired and loaned works and installations, *Melbourne Now* explores the idea that a city is significantly shaped by the artists, designers and architects who live and work in its midst.

The exhibition brings together over 400 artists, architects, dancers, fashion and jewellery designers, spread over the NGV's two sites and a daily rotating program of free workshops, talks, catwalks and show'n'tells during some 600 events over the four months.

The collaborative curatorial structure of *Melbourne Now* saw more than twenty NGV curators working across disciplinary and departmental areas in collaboration with exhibition designers, public programs and education departments. The project also involves a number of guest curators contributing to specific contexts, including architecture and design, performance and sound, as well as artist-curators invited to create 'exhibitions within the exhibition', develop off-site projects and to work with the NGV's collection. The show moves into the streets of Melbourne with initiatives such as the *Flags for Melbourne* project, *ALLOURWALLS* at Hosier Lane, walking and bike tours and open studios.

There are too many works to be able to distinguish a common thread, so I picked a few favourites.

The installation by Hotham Street Ladies who have created a domestic life-size environment out of icing sugar is a fun way to explore nostalgia and feminism. A wild performative shop by Anastasia Klose is selling a range of kitsch and humorous 'knock-off' t-shirts and mugs. Lou Hubbard's videos *EYE OPS* is a homage to Luis Buñuel *Un Chien Andalou* made bearable only by its quirkiness.

The NGV collection is the subject of artistic reflection, reinterpretation and repositioning, with artists Arlo Mountford, Patrick Pound, The Telepathy Project, Julia deVillie and design practice MaterialByProduct bringing new insights to it through a suite of exhibitions, videos and performative installations.

Melbourne Now is a *wunderkammer* of joyful creativity, whilst *Falling Back to Earth* has tranquil gravitas. Both enjoyable and energising, they are must-see exhibitions this summer.

www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/cai
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/melbournenow

RELATED LINKS

[Utopia in Southern Queensland - Cai Guo-Qiang: Falling Back To Earth](#) via ABC Arts

[Our Place In The Universe](#) via The Art Life



Anastasia Klose
 One stop knock-off shop (Marcel Dachump) 2013
 Photo: Vanessa David
 Image courtesy the artist and **Tolarno Galleries**, Melbourne

THE BUSINESS OF ART

Qantas Foundation Encouragement of Australian Art Award

Anna Waldmann



Alex Davies
Häusliche Glück 2009
mixed media installation
courtesy the artist
photo Alex Davies

Maybe it's the fact that Australia is an island: we are obsessed with travel, we need it for our intellectual and emotional well-being; and if we work in the arts, it's a necessity and a career requirement.

The red kangaroo pops up on many advertisements and banners for cultural events because almost every blockbuster and touring exhibition requires transport. Despite that, not many people are aware of another aspect of what Qantas, through its Foundation, is able to do for individual artists.

In 2007, Qantas decided to sell its corporate collection. Arguably, even the fact that there was a 1,000 works strong collection, came a surprise to some. Twenty works were auctioned by Sotheby's in May with its centerpiece, Brett Whiteley's *Opera House* (1971-1982) selling for \$2.88 million.

At the time Qantas asked Australia Council for advice on what might be the best approach to return some of the funds so that the money raised through selling art would help Australian artists. As director of Visual Arts, I was asked for ideas and for the best way to go beyond just giving a few grants to a few artists. I thought about what every artist who spent a few months in one of the VAB overseas studios told us when they came back: that travel made a difference to their career, that it opened their eyes to possibilities they didn't know existed, that it was a transformative experience.

Qantas wanted a point of difference for their support. There are hundreds of prizes and scholarships around the country and while thousands of hopeful artists apply, often they are limited in scope, force artists to work in a certain genre or are acquisitive. The Qantas Foundation Awards look at an entire body of work, the artists are recommended by their peers in the contemporary art spaces in each state and territory, and there are no limits to the ideas the artists might put forward and how they might be delivered. In 2011, a Community Residency component was included, to broaden the reach of contemporary art, share it with local communities and engage local people and places in artistic and cultural activities.

The Qantas Foundation Encouragement of Australian Art Award is made up of the two elements every artist wants - money and flights to anywhere in the world on the Qantas network. The Award recognises emerging Australian contemporary artists and aims to increase awareness of Australian contemporary art by encouraging promising, emerging artists to produce further work.

Since 2008 the Qantas Foundation Art Award has supported 54 Australian contemporary artists, who have risen in artistic acclaim and enjoyed successful exhibitions in Australia and around the world: Katherine Huang, Vernon Ah Kee, Yhonnie Scarce, Neridah Stockley, Izabela Pluta, James Newitt, Nick Selenitsch, Newell



Laith McGregor
S-O-M-E-O-N-E 2013
mixed media on paper
411 x 153 cm
courtesy the artist

Harry, Jemima Wyman, Roy Ananda, Lucy Bleach, Brown Council, Ash Keating, Hiromi Tango, Jess Olivieri and Hayley Forward, Min Wong, Susan Jacobs, Mark Hilton and many more.

Some of the artists' projects made a difference in the community, particularly in the last couple of years. The most recent winners have put forward meaningful projects: artist Kate Barker (ACT) invited residents of the Belconnen nursing homes and local school

students to share storytelling and create community connections; Ali Khadim (NSW) wants to engage children from Bamiyan, England, Japan and Australia to connect and create artwork using images of their own lives; Yinimala Gumana (NT) will collaborate with Indigenous artists from India and develop an education project at Buku-Larrngay to help artists and community members at Yirrkala broaden their horizons and cultural reference points.

The most important element is what the Awards mean for artists. For Alex Davies "the substantial support the award offered made a significant contribution to my practice. It enabled me to collaborate with leading artists in Austria and Brussels throughout the course of a year. These collaborations led to the creation of two major new media arts works, The Black Box Sessions and Häusliche Glück."

Laith McGregor traveled to New York, Berlin, London, Spain, India, Thailand and Indonesia.

He says "I was able to expand my vision by understanding different modes of production as a professional artist and gain experience in interacting with the broader arts community. The potential for creative development and the experience I was able to gain at this level of my career was invaluable, the potential of showing, working and growing in a cross cultural and progressive atmosphere was amazing. I was able to engage with the international art dialogue which would have previously been unattainable. I feel the

projects and the developments in my practice since getting the award have been extremely productive.”

And Mish Meijers and Tricky Walsh commented “We received the Qantas award for our ongoing collaborative project *The Collector* which is an art project based on a fictional character who collects both objects and experiences. So far our Qantas journey has taken us to Japan where we indulged in numerous museum collections (Miraikan Museum of Innovation and the Tokyo Kite Museum were highlights) and also spent (too much) time wandering the electronics labyrinths of Akihabara, playing with World War 2 radio equipment. Next we are travelling to the United States to experiment with kites and radios and recreate some of the early Marconi experiments by trying to transmit information through very basic technology.

We’ll also be travelling to specific places in New Mexico to record the sounds of the atmosphere, electromagnetic distortions and other natural radio phenomena with Very Low Frequency radio receivers, among other things (museums, museums, museums). The outcomes of this travel have already begun to surface in the project with the recent show at *Detached* in Hobart and the room of radio receivers transmitting a radio play. It will undoubtedly continue to turn up throughout our artworks for a long time.”

Enlightened patronage happens regularly, Qantas is not unique in offering sponsorship and philanthropic support to Australian contemporary artists. Each year, awareness of the Qantas Foundation Encouragement of Australian Contemporary Art Award grows within the art community, and it has become a respected accolade and an amazing platform for the artists’ careers. It has spent to date \$750,000 “creating life changing experiences for the next generation of Australians.” The community projects speak for themselves and the artists flourish. Maybe it would have happened anyway without the extra support, but how rewarding for Qantas to realise that it made possible for our artists who are deeply engaged with their art forms and who are boldly original and push the boundaries of their genre to undertake a galvanising experience.



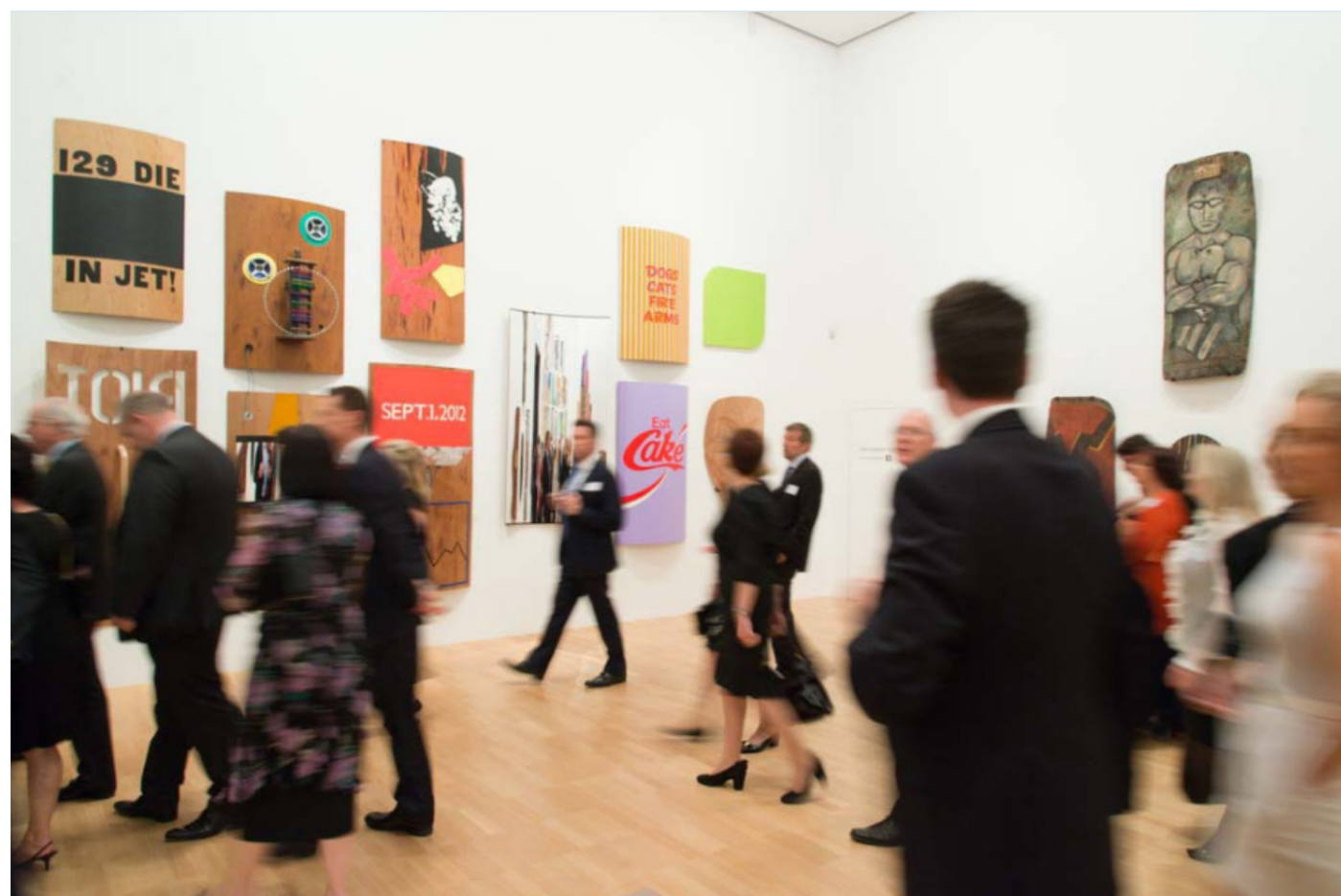
Meijers + Walsh
 The Collector Project: Cutting and Grafting 2013
 Hand wound loop antenna array, crystal radios, timber
Detached, Hobart
 courtesy the artists

THE BUSINESS OF ART

Interview with Lynn Kraus

Sydney Office Managing Partner, Ernst & Young

Anna Waldmann



Non-executive director and CEO guests of EY enjoy an artist-guided tour during a preview dinner for *Melbourne Now* at the National Gallery Of Victoria in November 2013

When did Ernst & Young start supporting art and culture and why?

EY has a proud history of supporting the arts in Australia, with strong connections to some of the nation's leading art institutions. For over two decades, we have supported the visual and performing arts in Australia in three key ways: through our sponsorship programs, by providing pro bono professional services and by connecting business leaders to art institutions.

We do this to assist organisations in showcasing world-class exhibitions and performances to a wider audience than may otherwise see them. It's one of the many ways we are building a better working world – for our people, our clients and our communities.

What cultural activities does EY support?

Each year EY contributes around \$1 million in sponsorship funding to 11 arts institutions across Australia and New Zealand. This allows our galleries and cultural organisations to showcase and promote world-class exhibitions and performances.

We have long-standing relationships with a number of leading visual arts institutions across Australia including the Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, National Gallery of Victoria and National Portrait Gallery. We have also recently added a new sponsorship with the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, which commenced in 2013. Some of the recent

exhibitions we have supported include *War Is Over! (if you want it): Yoko Ono*; *Picasso: Masterpieces from the Musée National Picasso, Paris*; *Francis Bacon: five decades*; *Melbourne Now*; and *Monet's Garden*.

In the performing arts, we partner with organisations including the West Australian Ballet and the Queensland Ballet. We also have relationships with a number of other arts institutions including Opera Australia, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Festival and Sydney Dance Company.

In addition to our sponsorship programs, many of our people also provide their experience and professional services to visual and performing art boards on a pro bono basis. This ensures boards are able to better navigate the complexities of corporate governance, manage their tax obligations, make sound investment decisions and position their organisation for growth.

There must be many interesting proposals that come to you for funding, how do you decide?

Most of our associations are long term partnerships, for example we have had ongoing relationships with the National Gallery of Victoria and Art Gallery of NSW for almost ten years. When looking at new opportunities, EY considers the long term view and whether we can form a true partnership with the art institution for a mutually beneficial outcome.

Do staff benefit from the activities you support?

Each of the exhibitions and performances we support are promoted to EY's people and alumni, giving them the opportunity to experience and be inspired by these world-class exhibitions and performances.

Through our sponsorship program we are able to provide our people with a range of related activities. Specific details depend on the individual events but, in the past, have included things like talks by the curators of particular exhibitions, family day viewings and special ticket offers.

Does EY collect art or considering it?

EY Australia does not have a corporate art collection as we feel we are best able to support the arts through our robust sponsorship programs, connections and pro bono support. We did however commission an original artwork from Aboriginal artist, Dhinawan, to mark the launch of our Reconciliation Action Plan in 2011. This painting is proudly displayed in our Sydney office.

Corporate support for cultural events is not as wide-spread in Australia as it is in other parts of the world. Why should business support the arts?

It's important for businesses to engage with the communities in which they live and work. Arts programs enrich the whole community. They make our lives more vibrant, encourage creativity and diversity, and broaden our

perspectives. Corporate support of major exhibitions and performances allows galleries and organisations to make these events available to the community – for free or at a reduced cost – helping to make art accessible to everyone.

At EY, we encourage and promote the development of ongoing and valuable relationships between business and the arts. We help to connect business leaders, entrepreneurs and philanthropists to art institutions through our corporate hospitality programs. We believe that when corporates support the business of the arts, we help enable institutions to grow, innovate, manage their corporate obligations and make sound investment decisions. Working together, we can help make the art world even better.



EY Oceania CEO, Rob McLeod, with artist Yoko Ono at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in November 2013