

Leftovers

New Collaborative works

Shaz Harrison-Williams & Penny Malone

Each of Penny and Shaz's collaborative exhibitions have included the word 'left' in their title (*Two Left of Centre* 2003, *Plots from The Left* 2005, *Third Turn Left* 2008). For the artists, this recurrent word is an important statement about their political leaning and their chosen position outside the mainstream and commercial art realm.

Their persistence and delight in coming up with witty reconceptions of 'left' for each of their shows also provides insight into how their collaborative process works: their joint practice is grounded in shared values, defined loosely by an eclectic set of self-determined yet constantly expanding motifs and is steeped in irreverent humour. Their exchange is sustained by a serious commitment to bringing their art into new contexts through actively investigating variations on ideas and themes the two of them have also explored independently for decades.

Shaz and Penny first met at art school in Hobart in the 1970's. Shaz was an outspoken member of the student union and worked as the school's printmaking technician. She recalls a boisterous Penny pestering her to learn silk screening. Their friendship developed when they found themselves neighbours, twice over. When Penny moved to Melbourne, where she then lived for ten years, Shaz had orders of Penny's hand-printed fabric sent back to Tasmania for the handmade bags and hats she sells through her Salamanca market stall. Consequently, Shaz happens to be Penny's longest running customer. This is just one of the many facets of this remarkable, 30-year creative relationship.

Leftovers is Shaz and Penny's fourth joint exhibition. Here they dish-up no less than four bodies of work, each of which essentially experiments with the potency of things left behind.

The oversized shadow-boxes of treasures *Left On The Wall (Wall Flowers)* showcase the beauty and value of materials most of us would have overlooked or rejected as being beyond use. It is wonderful and horrifying to think that almost every scrap of wool, piece of fabric, surplus computer print-out and vintage haberdashery item employed in these works were fastidiously saved and stored - sometimes for decades - before being lovingly reworked.

In a similar vein, the series of fashion accessories called *Leftovers* take seemingly un-useful items and grant them glorious second lives as unique and desirable design objects. Whether driven by ethics or aesthetics, it is evident that Shaz and Penny realise genuine potential in the stuff the rest of us throw away.

Meanwhile, the humorous *Cover Up* works draw attention to everyday objects by encasing them in custom-made covers made from offcuts of Penny's column design fabric. This original pattern emerged in 1996, was reissued in 2010, and was the first design Penny had commercially-printed. Significant skill is required to make these unique, snug-fitting three-dimensional forms complete with ring-pull retro zippers. The amusing effect of these shrouds is to at once elevate the object inside whilst making them dysfunctional and ridiculous.

Left the Catwalk pays homage to the UK fashion designer Alexander McQueen who committed suicide last year at age 40. Whilst the sombre, personalised premise of this work might seem to set this assemblage aside from the others in the exhibition, it can also be seen to engage related themes on a metaphorical level. McQueen is one of Shaz's great artistic influences. In tribute to him she decided to knit life-sized interpretations of McQueen garments and charged Penny with the task of inventing 'Aussie tartans', which have been sewn into breezy antipodean kilts referencing the designer's famous appropriations of traditional Scottish pattern and dress. The freedom, fun, originality and fantasy flaunted in *Left the Catwalk* is a celebratory testament to the legacy of inspiration one creative life can leave behind.

Small crumbs of this exhibition spill-out of 146 ArtSpace and can be seen, day and night, in the shopfront windows along Elizabeth Street. It is fitting that Shaz and Penny's creations should escape the gallery to slip back into the realm of everyday business. Amidst product displays and commercial signage their beautiful, playful work makes a gentle intervention into consumer culture and can be interpreted - in that very instant of aspiring towards something new or different - as a reminder of the constant stream of excess we each generate and the deep down knowledge that nothing we opt to leave behind ever really leaves us.

Bec Tudor

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SHOPS on THE BLOCK

Brisbane St

150
Too Bizarre
Pre Loved Clothing

146
ArtSpace Gallery

134
Chado
The Way of Tea

124
Ken Self
Ride Cycle Centre

Elizabeth St

179
basket & green

177
The Knife Shop

165
CWA Gift Shop

147
Elders Brown & Banks
Real Estate

Melville St

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