

HENRY'S MOBILE STUDIO : WEST SPACE 2014

CONCEPTUAL WICKED CAMPER

Henry Jock Walker is an athletic young man. It is quickly apparent in his physical presence and it is reiterated in his making. Surfing is a looming presence, continuing ongoing cultural contemplations of where the boundaries of action and creativity are placed. He paints in the surf, rides modified sculptures and uses the beach as a backdrop for the overall context of his continually liminal practice.

Jock is a surfer boy, there's no escaping it. Where Scott Redford's Reinhardt Damm is a crack, back and sack waxed Gold Coast post pop poser, Jock is like his thrill-seeking cowboy bush cousin, stuck in an art school freak binge, eminently dynamic and engaging. There is a veritable maelstrom of energy thrust forth in his practice, much like the closing out of a 6 foot emerald cathedral surging precariously over reef.

The nature of Walker's practice is like a wriggling child, resistant to constraint. Discussion of his smorgasbord of outcomes is best pursued when we consider the dominant flavour to be performance. Live art is also a handy hook, and poignant. His presentations take forms common to these discussions – we see video documentation and residues of his actions and often experience 'live' making or 'live' process at the launch of particular events. More viewers are likely to engage with the residues or recordings of his actions than the primary performances. This does not make him a video artist. Nor does it make him a photographer or even a painter, though he most definitely invests a large part of his energy within a visceral 'painterly' zone. A label that sticks, in this case, is that of performance lifestyle. We need to consider Jock's everyday as his practice. He immerses himself in his making, quite literally, and extends an invitation to us to join him on that journey, or at that particular, ephemeral, moment.

Jock has spent the last twelve months circumnavigating Australia in a van. The van has become a kind of mobile creative brothel or conceptual Wicked Camper. He has lived, or is living the dream. He is engaged in 'the search', chasing waves and chasing opportunities where 'only an artist knows the feeling'. If you asked Jock for Hennessy Youngman instructions on how to make an 'art' he might tell you to tape a canvas to the outside of a motor vehicle and drive it across the Nullabor, intermittently splashing paint out of the moving vehicle's window, sometimes landing it on canvas, mostly smearing it across the car and painting it upon the rapidly passing landscape. And he would be right.

One of the things that we aren't as quickly aware of in Jock's practice is his pursuit of collaboration. His preferred collaborators are those we might label as 'outsiders', makers who are not trained in the intricacies of art history and career building, and those people who might not even think much about art, especially art like Henry's. Whilst we sometimes use the label 'workshop' to talk about these events, Henry's projects transcend this sometimes simplistic term. The spectrum of collaborators that he pursues ranges from surf nomad buddies met in isolated campgrounds, to art tour senior citizens, to those people who don't fit neatly into homogenised art supermarket aisles but who nonetheless maintain rigorous and inventive practices. Indeed, his co-opting of outsider artists such as the Rubbish Warrior, Jungle Phillips and Scott Pyle who have followings much more established than his own may be read as clever or tactical. Any cynicism in this statement ought to be put aside as his motivations are much more celebratory than the colonial pursuits of early Art Brut proponents. Jock is chasing a purity of energy, a purity of expression which is largely unsullied or "unconscious". This sense of the unconscious

is critical in the larger dynamic of Walker's practice. His performance outcomes are often like variations of Blue (and Orange) Poles whereby the state of the production is more important than the product. This unconsciousness is the same intuition applied by a surfer attacking a mobile liquid surface whereby the outcomes of several tonnes of water need to be felt rather thought.

In regards to the orange and blue palette, an objective justification remains slippery and elusive. The fact is that rationalisation of this is a mere nuance in the consideration of his larger practice. The colour scheme is a device that helps build a framework for his work. It makes it recognisable, and adds a hook. The colours are Jock's brand. We need brands to understand things and the Australian art industry craves brands. Henry Jock Walker's brand espouses the foamy shore breakers of the studio that wash back and forth, never constant or predictable but immersive and gratifying in their very essence.

James Dodd

April 2014

HMS : NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL EVENTS -

2 May - 9am to 5pm - Virtual Sunset Strip: with Andrew Treloar and Ben Cocks - Painting Stripes - Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne CBD, FREE

3 May - 10am - 5pm - One Arm Point Painting JAM: With Ashely Hunter and Vivienne McDermott - Artist talk, Art workshops - West Space, FREE

4, 7 and 10 May - 9am - 3pm - Surf Studio - Journey to Torquay and Back, Surfing Lessons & Torquay Beach \$95 Limited available

8 May - 10am - 2pm - Artrubbishart with Trevor Jenkins - Rubbish art installations with the Rubbish Warrior. Artist Talk at 5:30pm. West Space, FREE

9 May - 10am - 5pm - Painting A Painting Machine with Gregory Hodge - The power of two painting machines combined is cranked up to create a new series of works. West Space, FREE

11 May - 10am-12pm - 36 Thousand Rainbows A Day: with Jessie Lumb - It's a Rainbow intervention! - West Space, FREE

-3pm-6pm - A HMS finale afternoon dance party featuring DJ BC, many arts (all of the above) and a screening of new and old HMS adventures! And a performance by Atalanta Eke and Henry Walker - EW Blow - West Space \$5

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