

Woolloongabba Art Gallery
20-23 May 2026

Pictures at a Sibling Rivalry Exhibition

Stephen Stockwell



Catalogue

art is it?

When you are looking at my contribution to the Sibling Rivalry Exhibition, I imagine that one question that may come up will be "Is it art?" As a life-long supporter of art-life integration, it is a question I ask myself a lot as I seek the aesthetic in the everyday.

The question was given some poignancy when, in my youth, Queensland's famous Flying Artist, Mervyn Moriarty said that, unlike my sister Lisa-Jane, I have no artistic talent at all - (*actually what he said was "didn't show any obvious painterly inclination"*). While accepting Mervyn's judgment, it has not stopped my pursuit of the artistic expression that is our human right and I have been lucky to find nooks in the artistic world where my lack of talent has been an advantage. Punk music for one.

Conceptual art offered early refuge as we will see below but frankly I lack the effrontery to pull it off over the long term. Outsider art provided some sort of cover despite me always having been a bit of an insider.

I revelled in the cut and paste collage techniques of Dada and have tried to pass myself off as a naive or folk artist but the lack of talent thing becomes an issue even there. I've had more success as a poet and that is not saying much. This current work has aspects of concrete poetry and I'll take the opportunity to give some slam poetry performances reading straight off the wall.

Some generous people see the influence of Art Brut and Adolf Wolfli but the cautious will be asking: is this really the product of a disturbed, obsessive, compulsive mind? The answer is maybe.

I've been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and one of the byproducts of the medication is compulsive behaviour, usually to do with sex or gambling, but in my case it might be writing poetry and making art.

But whatever these works are and wherever they came from, this is not my first rodeo. In 1976 Tony Woodyatt and Michael Cassamatis opened the Little Toowong Gallery and accepted my proposal to use the car park behind the gallery to declaim poetry while using a sledgehammer to smash a black and white TV made redundant and cheap by the introduction of colour television. Conceptual performance art was established in Brisbane, even if only in my own mind.

Then, in 1983, I kind of stumbled into having a piece hung in what turned out to be the Institute of Modern Art's prestigious "No Names" exhibition which featured many up and coming artists with talent and a future... and me.

I can't remember the exact details of how I convinced the curator (Barbara Campbell?) to include my cloak of found pieces of plastic and paper in the collection. It was a late addition. I always assumed that she was just being kind to an idiot and had taken it down as soon as I left. I was surprised to find my name included on the list of artists hung in the show in documents now preserved in the Queensland State Library.

Since then I have frequented galleries more as a spectator than an artist as I put my creative energies into writing - journalism, political PR, academic books and articles and, since retiring, poetry.

Last year I had an aortic valve replacement replacement (my second go) and the drugs and dehydration took me on an amazing trip where I thought I was to be the victim of a ritual sacrifice only to return to consciousness in an overly optimistic, utopian mood that led me to writing lists of positive things.

Early this year as I pondered what to do after completing and promoting my last book, I put elements of those lists into a coloured grid in my notebook and then, exploring colour theory, painted some grids on cardboard in the Golden Ratio of 8x5 where I wrote words and phrases from those lists.

There was some influence here from Rosalie Gascoine, Robert McPherson and my old friend, Michael Barnett. Philosophically Walter Benjamin, mystic materialist and eclectic utopian, was never far away.

Then as I began to play with these elements, the work took a life of its own. Themes began to resonate, ideas sparkled into life, thoughts and memories called up future possibilities.

The pressing question emerged: how can the world be different? Our appalling situation in the world at the moment, where genocide is normalized and obliteration is a form of communication, opens the door to many possibilities, many different paths out of this catastrophe, calling for decisions to be made in the moment as I was doing with acrylic paint and marker pens on cardboard.

As I made decisions to include, exclude and adapt phrases on poetic, political, design and random bases, these pieces of cardboard became machines to create new ideas, ideas big, bold and bad enough to confront the insanity of a world at war at one man's behest.

Many say peace is a pipe dream, utopia impossible but something must be better than a world stumbling into its own annihilation, fueled by hate, lies and minds closed to the joys of sharing, diversity and love.

So I offer these ideas, this machine, to you for your own purposes, particularly the pursuit of sanity in a better world. Let's Give Peace a Chance. All You Need is Love and Good Vibrations. Use a Mystic Matter Matrix to seek an Eclectic Ephemera Epiphany in Autonomy Attempt Zones of a Land of a Thousand Dances. Steer the Storm by the Stars using Wild Fox Zen and Gnostic Ninja Skills in a Sentient Democracy. Realise Your Enlightenment. Utopia Now. And much more. What does it all mean? I don't know but join me in having a guess.

Is it art?

Well at least you can hang it on a wall.



LAND OF ONE

IRREAL SHIVA SAMBA MIND MAGIC MAMBO WONDER LAND WATUSI FOX TROT FREE THINKING TWIST EXISTENTIAL POLKA TANTA-LISING TANGO JOY JUMP JIVE THEORY OF EVERY THING QUANTUM MECHANICS GENERAL RELATIVITY DARK MATTER COHERES DARK ENERGY EXPANDS BLACK HOLE PARADOX QUARK CHARM STRANGENESS

COSMIC

ABSENT IN THE ABYSS BARE BARREN BLANK CHASM SPASM DEAD DEFUNCT DEPTHS DREAD+ DESPAIR EMPTY EXTINCT HOLLOW HOLE

EXIST-

NIL NULL NONE NOUGHT NAU SEA NO THINGNESS NIX OBLIVION OBSOLETE THE PITS VACUUM VOID VANISH

THOUSAND

MESS SURFIE CHA CHA SHIMMY SHUFFLE JAZZ K POP UNTIL YOU DROP LINDY HOP DOOF DANCE PARTY ANTI MATTER ASYMMETRY SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT OBSERVATION EFFECTS AMBIGUOUS REALITY GRAVITY SUCKS GALAXY SPIRAL TIME SPACE TURBULENCE

ATOMIC

IRONIC

ACERBIC WIT DIOGENES THE CYNIC CUTTING SARCASM HORACE JUVENAL MAKE A MOCKERY SWIFT POPE TREND ANT DERISIVE

ENTIAL

CRISIS

DANCES

MYSTIC

WALTER BENDA MIN KABALLAH PROTOCOL AURA HANNAH ARENDT FREE THINKING FOX TROT LEWIS CARROLL WONDERLAND WATUSI PEGGY GUGGENHEIM SURREAL SHIVA SAMBA

FABRIC

FUTURE

ABOLISH WAR POST MATERIALISM SENTIENT DEMOCRACY AI SUFFRAGE GLOBAL REFERENDA VOTES FOR TREES FOOD UBIQUITY WORK AS PLAY

CRISIS

IRONIC

MATTER

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES WILL-TAM BLAKE SPACE SPEED SPIRAL BLANQUIN BARRICADES PLANET OF LOVE ALAN GINSBERG ANARCHO GREEN COMMUNE ELAINE BLAIR

IDEAS +

REBEL RHIZOME RING GROSS DOMESTIC HAPPINESS FREE POWER CO-OP CAPITAL COSMIC CITIZEN THE WISDOM TEST END OF GOVERNMENT UTOPIA NOW

SATIRE

INCONGRUITY A MODEST PROPOSAL TRAVESTY LAMP OON RIDICULE PRIVATE EYE SPOON SEND UP

MATRIX

POSSIBLE

MODAL MIND MIX MARX BROS LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST TROTSKY DEMOCRACY IMAGINE LEVIN FUNGI FRATERNITY

IDEOLOGY

FIRST NATIONS 65,000 YA FIRST FLEET 1788 BLAYLAND WENTWORTH LAWSON 1813 BLACK MASS AGRES 1774-1928 GOLD RUSH EUREKA STOCKADE 1851-6 NED KELLY HANGS 1880 WALTZING MATILDA 1895 WHITE FEDERATION 1901

PARODY

NIMBIN AQUARIUS PARIS COMMUNE 1870 CATALONIA 1937 LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA WOODSTOCK 1969 PIRATE HAVENS 1742 CEDAR BAY 1976

STANDARDS

ANZACS 1915 ANTI CONSCRIPT VOTE 1916 BODYLINE TESTS 1932-3 KOKODA TRACK 1942 MULTICULT MIGRANTS FROM NLS MEDIBANK WHITLAM DISMISSAL 1975 NO REPUBLIC VOTE 1999 NO VOICE VOTE 2023

POPULIS

4ZZZ 1975 CAME TOAD TIMES 1977-2021 DOOF DANCE PARTY HAIGHT ASHBURY DIGGERS ABBEY MEDIEVAL FESTIVAL KRONDSTADT 1921 ROAD NOWHERE

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POLITICS

PARADOX

UTOPIAN

NATIONAL

PROJECT

ECCLECTIC

AUTONOM

ZONE

SURFIN

DODDY BROTHERS

Mystic Matter Matrix (small)

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Good Vibrations

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

23cm x 32cm

\$50



Pirate Havens Wonder

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Cosmic Utopia Mambo

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Lola Loves Layla

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Wild Fox Zen

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Collage

Print on Canvas

Photography - Blasius Erlinger

Digital Design - Matt Mawson

Print - We Sell Prints

120cmx100cm

\$500



Planet of Love League

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

18cm x 36cm

\$50



Eclectic Ephemera Epiphany

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

45cm x 72cm

\$100



Mystic Matter Matrix

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

45cm x 72cm

\$100



Land of 1000 Dances

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

45cm x 72cm

\$100



Surfing Safari Syndrome

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

45cm x 72cm

\$100



Magical Meaning Machine (in development)

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

125cm x 175cm

\$500

Utopia Utility Union

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cmx120cm

\$200



Possible Politics Paradox

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cm x 120cm

\$200



Future Ideas and Ideology

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cm x 120cm

\$200

If this is the future...



Problems With Reality

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

47cm x 100cm

\$150



Autonomy Attempt Zones

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cm x 120cm

\$200



Realise Your Enlightenment

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

43cm x 100cm

\$150



Existential Dread

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cm x 120cm

\$200



Ironic Satire Parody

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

45cm x 72cm

\$100



Walter Benjamin

Acrylic and ink on cardboard

75cm x 120cm

\$200

