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“IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD” – paper

The Researched and the Researcher

Some would claim that there are and will always be inevitable differences between art and fashion. That they are separate concepts, individual disciplines with sharply defined boundaries. “Art requires time, contemplation and thought. It is eternal ...Fashion is instantaneous, ephemeral and above all, an industry” (Boodro 1990:120). However in the light of postmodern consideration, one must seriously question whether the images and concepts produced by the ‘artist’ are, in terms of their cultural use, significantly different from those created by the ‘fashion designer’ (Radford 1997:328). In fact, is fashion the ‘art’ of modern society?

Sculpture even more than art conjures up images of a defined space; a permanent structure; a work that transverses time. Perhaps the antithesis of fashion? How then is it possible to meld the two and in the process create an artwork that speaks with an individual and collective voice? Such was a sculptural piece that was selected and exhibited in *Sculpture by the Sea* (2002) and *Sculpture from the Sea* (2003). National flags cut and sewn into boardshorts were imbued with a *pastiche* of memories – ancestors, parents, past homes, our own children. Yet the inclusion of flags from numerous cultural groups now living in Australia allowed us to challenge contemporary notions of multiculturalism and comment on the confusion within Australia about what multiculturalism really means.

Titled ‘In Your Own Backyard,’ we juxtaposed ideas of individuality with cultural identity. Using Australian icons such as the ubiquitous Hills Hoist and the celebrated surf-culture garb, boardshorts with symbols of national and cultural identity, world flags – we spoke of our personal experiences and those of new and would be Australians – immigrants, refugees and displaced persons (refer to image).



By weaving our life experiences into a collaborative artwork, we were able to locate an interdisciplinary space. A space between high art and popular culture; art and fashion;

multiculturalism and Australian surf culture. In the ensuing process, we became in Cole's (1994) words, "the researched and the researcher."

References

Boodro, Michael. 1990. "Art and Fashion: A Fine Romance." *ARTNews*, September, pp. 120-127

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Radford, Robert. 1997. *Dali*. London: Phaidon.

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Robyn Gibson and Marianne Hulsbosch lecture in Visual Arts Education in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. As proponents of arts-based inquiry, they see art as research and research as art.
