



ABOVE: LOUISE PARAMOR *Supermodel* (Installation Shot), 2014

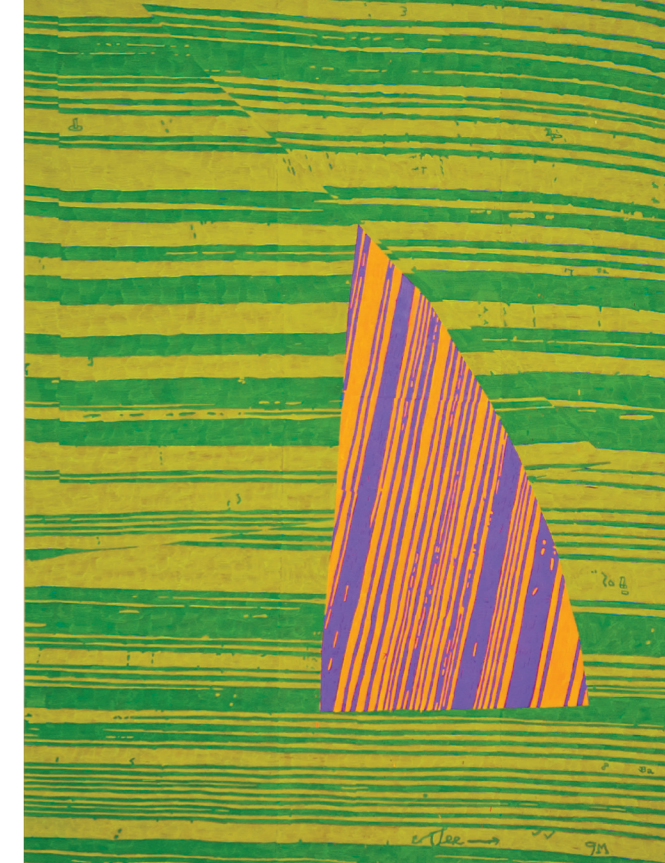
BELOW: PETER MALONEY *Black Sheep - White Goat*, 2014, acrylic on polyester, 170cm x 130cm



ABOVE: LOUISE PARAMOR *Maybellene and Roberto*, 2014, glass enamel on glass, 62cm x 43cm

FRONT ABOVE: PETER MALONEY *Siren Song*, 2014, acrylic on polyester, 161cm x 120cm

FRONT BELOW: LOUISE PARAMOR *Maxine and Bryan*, 2014, glass enamel on glass, 62cm x 43cm



ACTION STATIONS
PETER MALONEY
LOUISE PARAMOR



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PETER MALONEY + LOUISE PARAMOR

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CURATED BY ALEXANDER BOYNES

CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
GORMAN ARTS CENTRE, 55 AINSLIE AVENUE, BRADDON ACT

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ACTION STATIONS
PETER MALONEY
LOUISE PARAMOR

About a decade ago I was hunting through the ANU's School of Art library, when in the dim of the last aisle I discovered a figure nestled over a photocopier, surrounded by paper, coaxing something from the flickering light within the machine. What I initially thought to be a man trying to teach a Xerox machine T'ai chi, was actually Peter Maloney, painting. As we spoke, he manipulated drawings in an almost meditative state over the surface of the glass, light spilling from the machine, illuminating our faces and the bookshelves around us. In retrospect it seems perfectly obvious that his artworks would begin their lives in a place like this, surrounded by books filled with ideas, words, fonts, punctuated by mechanical rhythms as the initial stages of his paintings spurt out into the paper tray, the smell of hot toner floating in the air.

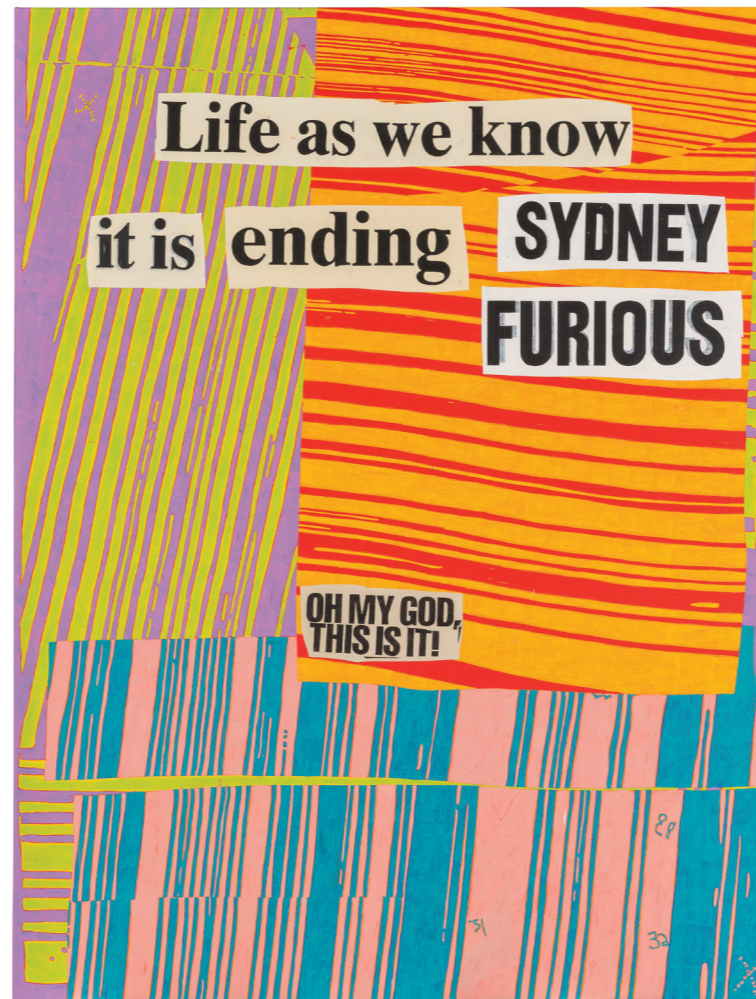
It took me some time to realise that painting, or the practice of making art for that matter, is not just the time spent with a metaphorical paintbrush touching canvas. Paintings are being made when you're brushing your teeth, or waiting in line to use the ATM, or when you lie awake at night and long for sleep. For Maloney, painting is as much about the representation of painting as a practice, and his feelings and ideas about it, as it is the action of applying paint to a surface - in a sense, they're paintings about making paintings.

Maloney studied painting at the ANU School of Art in the mid-1970s, and relocated to Melbourne to complete his studies at the Victorian College of the Arts in the late 1970s. Although his primary interests lie in painting, he works across various media including photography, collage, digital prints, and combinations thereof. As an emerging artist Maloney was initially concerned with issues surrounding HIV, AIDs and male sexuality, but his practice has come to include broader contemporary political concerns, the fragile nature of masculinity and the ephemerality of human existence.

Utilising collage as a pre-working process, photocopying, layering and fragmenting drawings, photographs and newspaper headlines, Maloney faithfully reproduces the outcomes in paint - referring to them as 'anti-collage'. He recently declared that "I've got enough drawings, if I want a different one, I just tear it in half and use it again". One of the attractions of Maloney's work is that he has always hidden his making process in plain sight, literally and metaphorically. He openly declares his making process by faithfully reproducing his distorted photocopies with masking tape, coded blotches and signifiers, a process comparable to a mathematician presenting the steps to solve a complex formula, but ultimately leaving the final answer unsaid. This process of disguising and revealing is a key element in Maloney's work, which he uses to highlight the purposeful imperfections in his process, expressing the fragile nature of human existence.

Maloney's text works are often layered in droll wit; reading like senseless tabloid headlines that shock and surprise, yet don't immediately reveal themselves. Although Maloney trades in a façade of humour, he doesn't see his work as being funny, rather, it is a way to address serious issues - the visual equivalent of realising there is a barb in a joke, halfway through laughing at the punch line.

Another strong influence in Maloney's work is sound; his work easily imaginable as the visual equivalent to music concrete or beat poetry. 'BOY KILLED BY men with foam sponges' clatters across the surface in differing sizes and fonts, surging in volume and immediacy. Underneath, vocal chords and harmonic discordances vibrate and smash against each other, intimated by clashing colours or the frequency of a mark, visual corrugations stutter like sound waves over the surface. It's no surprise then that Maloney has made album art, videos and fan-zines for international experimental post ambient quasi-industrial noise rock bands, Thee Mark Chapman Experience ('Housewives Sold Ice As Chicken') and The Size Queens.



PETER MALONEY *The Bottom of My Heart*, 2014, acrylic on polyester, 170cm x 130cm

As is often the case in what could be loosely described as *contemporary abstract painting*, Maloney's works are not left untitled, or called *Untitled*. The titles have a clear identifying function as well as alluding to the artist's sources, meanings and broader references. In *Siren Song* a more literal reference appears to be at play, an enticing plea lures sailors to their fate, an orange triangle smashes against the rocks. Here, and in numerous other works in the show, Maloney interchanges form, font, and glyph to represent the slippage in meaning, again utilising a smoke-and-mirrors mode of delivery and intent.

Louise Paramor is a Melbourne-based artist who was born in the mid-1960's in outer-Sydney, and relocated to Perth in the late 1970's. She undertook a Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting at the Western Australian Institute of Technology, Perth, and completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts in the late 1980's.

Paramor's practice encompasses collage, painting, sculpture, installation, and more recently public artwork - although each may seem a discrete discipline, an affinity with materials has allowed her to seamlessly blur the boundaries of her oeuvre. A continuing concern with mass consumption, and society's ephemeral approach to the manufactured object have informed Paramor's work over the last two decades. By using an expansive array of discarded household and industrial items - such as glassware, plastic containers, rubber balls - she addresses 'a product' that is constantly at-odds with its excessive cost, both economically and environmentally. In a sense, this is work that only exists because the problem does - a western obsession with mass production and consumption. On paper, this could all seem to be excessively preachy and the ramblings of a dreadlocked eco-warrior, if only it wasn't so tongue in cheek. By exaggerating the superficial faux-slickness of capitalism, she masquerades as a flag bearer for the cause, while ridiculing its end game. Her use of utterly banal funnels, buckets and hoses to represent an exclusive fashion

parade is absurd, but it works. Because of the highly malleable nature of her medium, and its refined plasticity, Paramor is able to emotively suggest a sophisticated whole - put simply, it does exactly what she wants it to.

During Paramor's time in Perth she was mentored by David Watt, who was to become an important figure in contemporary Australian art, and a much-loved lecturer and practitioner in the Canberra arts scene. Paramor's humorous and often profound approach to working with the found object may well have its roots in Watt's teachings, however it has grown to become a language truly her own. While Paramor's work might share aesthetic similarities to Pop art and 20th century abstraction, and may well have been initially informed by a readymade sensibility, it is not Warhol, it is not Duchamp, and these are not readymades. These are re-imaginings of objects that fly under the radar, their banality stripped away to allow new poetic connections to occur between components that create noise, movement and rhythm. As an outsider, it could appear that her making process is approached much like a bowerbird, where only the wildest forms and brightest colours will do, no matter the size or material - nothing is safe. As Chris McAuliffe once elegantly wrote, "It's more a case of finding objects that don't know that they're sculptures and convincing them to be more ambitious."

In *Action Stations*, Paramor features her *Supermodel* series, eighteen plastic assemblages strutting their stuff down raised platforms in the gallery; on the walls flanking the catwalk are still-life paintings of the 'supermodels' coupled in embrace, seduction and desire. Objects that were once household appliances (potentially advertised by supermodels) are assembled into abstracted personages and take on figurative leanings and emotive names. In this environment one could easily expect to hear the space buzz with shouted conversations over thumping beats, as if entering an exclusive party filled with the hottest people in town, the night unfolding as we watch: *Barbara* and *Maximilian* arrive late from a photo-shoot in Milan, *Eric* and *Victoria* make-out in the corner, *Maxine* scoffs at *Bryan's* pick-up line and checks her phone, and *Hank's* pissed and *Fredereike* is yelling at him in the corridor.

The reflective dialogue between the assemblages and the paintings wittily plays on our interpretations of what is 'real', and what's not. Are the 3D objects 'alive', so therefore *real*? Or because the 2D works depict moments from the past (maybe a party a few weeks ago), and the subjects have turned up to see them on show, does that mean *they're* the artworks, and therefore more real? This visual feedback loop provides a bizarre paradox with no clear outcome, but references Paramor's investigation into the language of advertising, where it's hard to know what comes first, the product, or the sales pitch.

Action Stations was born out of a long friendship between Maloney and Paramor, and an enduring admiration for each other's ever-evolving practices. While at first glance it may seem to be a purely aesthetic coupling, the successful pairing of Maloney and Paramor's work lies deeper than their usage of colour and composition, humour and whimsy. The pastiche quality present in both artists' works (Paramor with objects, Maloney through found photographs and text) is a key connection, however it is their mutual interest in mortality, excess and desire that really align their practices.

Peter Maloney and Louise Paramor are two contemporary Australian artists at the top of their game, who challenge, seduce, educate and pull our legs, all at the same time - the life of the party in every sense. The work explodes with excitement and is instantly seductive, but it really gets under the skin when one allows themselves to slow down and contemplate the bigger issues at play. After all, every great party finishes, the characters in Maloney's paintings meet tragic ends, and supermodels aren't super forever.

Alexander Boynes
August 2014