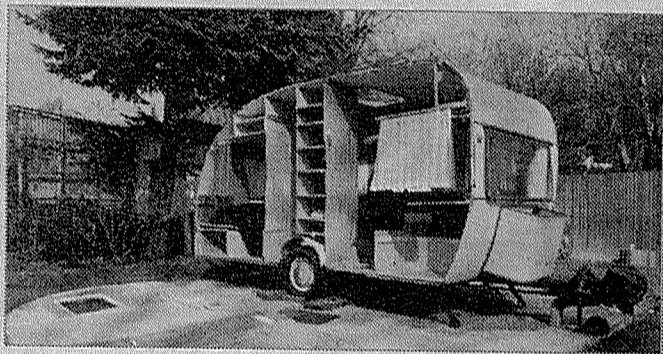


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A NEW LOOK

The shape of visual arts to come is explored in ACCA's New '07 program. **TONY McMAHON** gets viewpoints on its role from two of the artists involved: **CLAIRE HEALY** and **SEAN CORDEIRO**.



The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's *New* is one of the most eagerly anticipated events in visual arts. *New '07* continues ACCA's tradition of groundbreaking commissions from Australia's brightest up and coming artists. This year promises the look of love, the disappearance of things, fractured identities, a skating incident and much, much more.

Fresh from Berlin, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro will be presenting a forensic dissection of a caravan for *New '07*, as both a middle class getaway and counter-culture home.

Claire and Sean say they hope their Melbourne art experience is a little better this time around. "The last show we had in Melbourne was back in 2004," says Cordeiro. "The local punters were so unenthusiastic about the work; we couldn't even cadge cigarettes from them. We also rented certain components of our installation from some nice guys who were later arrested on the suspicion of being terrorists. So we were very eager to see what we could do this time in Melbourne."

So tell us a little about the forensic dissection of a caravan. "We began with the question: How much of an impression has our hunter/gathering nomadic past left on us?" says Healy. "Many of us put much time and effort into making our permanent living situations as cosy and convenient as possible, only to yearn for a holiday or adventure to 'get away from it all'. The problem is that no matter how hard we try to escape from the society that binds us, we still contaminate our new space with learned habit patterns and expectations."

"The caravan is both a middle class getaway and counter-cultural non-territorial home. It offers the possibility of sojourning in almost any location. At what point do these two differing visions meet? Whether a caravan sits in a

park or squats a block of land, it still delineates a personal, private territory. Because a caravan sits upon two or more wheels, it contains the illusion of convenient nomadism. But if we remove these wheels and break down the unit into its elemental components we not only come to a greater understanding of the structure's comprising mass but also the caravan's place within our fossil fuel society.

"The artwork is one complete caravan that has been disassembled and stacked onto four europallets, and then laid out as if under forensic investigation, as if it was an airplane crash. The caravan's recomposition speaks about standardisation and relocation. By placing the caravan onto europallets and re-displaying as if a life size jigsaw, we break the illusion that this nomadism is not directly fed by modern transportation and energy systems: the seamless connection between the motor vehicle's haulage and the mass of the caravan is transformed into a corporeal understanding of the caravan bulk."

"Like flatpacking readymade furniture," adds Cordeiro. "This assemblage is like many other things in our convenient world: difficult to reconfigure, yet transport ready. The project does not create a binary opposition between social models. Perhaps we are illustrating commonalities and inherent flaws within linked systems."

Claire and Sean have been quoted as saying their interests lie in areas such as architecture, gentrification and space invasion. What is it that has prompted this?

"There is always some kind of violence within our work that keeps on reappearing," says Healy. "This is the result of our experience of living within the fringe during the great early noughties housing boom of Sydney. The combination of jack hammers, renovation and caffeine-crazed landlords led us to our destructive outlook."

"We have previously stated that architecture is the stage in which the drama of our lives takes place," adds Cordeiro. "This makes the home a very special psychological space. There are three basic needs in life: food, clothes and shelter. The first two are treated as immutable human rights but the third is treated almost as a luxury commodity. Housing is as necessary to living as clean water, yet we live in a nutty society which celebrates the rises in housing prices."

New '07 is on at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art until 20th May.