

**EUAN HENG** *turning for shelter*  
a survey exhibition 1979 - 2005



Stonington Stables Museum of Art,  
Deakin University presents

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a survey exhibition 1979 - 2005

**19 JULY - 9 SEPTEMBER 2006**

**EUAN HENG** *turning for shelter*

This exhibition will be opened by  
Dr Peter Hill, Artist, Critic and Senior  
Lecturer, University of Melbourne

6.00pm – 8.00pm Wednesday 19 July 2006

RSVP by Monday 17 July 2006

Artist's Floortalk:  
1pm Wednesday 2 August 2006

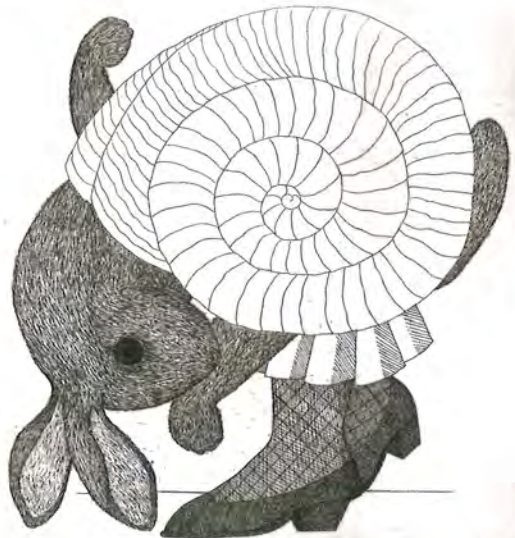
Exhibition dates:  
19 July - 9 September 2006

Stonington Stables Museum of Art  
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Cover  
*Night & Day (the hare's tale) - variation 1997*  
Linocut  
61.0 x 50.0 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist

*Winter Fragrance 2003*  
Lithograph  
24.0 x 21.0 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: Peter Lancaster (Lancaster Press)



*Boogie-Woogie* 2002  
Etching  
37.0 x 34.5 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: Martin King (Australian Print Workshop)



*In Your Own Backyard* 1979  
Etching and aquatint (3rd state)  
53.0 x 27.0 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist / Antonietta Covino-Beehre



*Bandage Mountain Hat Trick* 1980  
Etching and aquatint  
36.0 x 18.5 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist / Antonietta Covino-Beehre



*Sheep-Dog* 2002  
Etching (with colour roll up)  
37.0 x 34.5 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: Martin King (Australian Print Workshop)

## **EUAN HENG** *turning for shelter*

Over many years, Deakin University has been the fortunate recipient of artworks donated to its collection. Philanthropists of the arts have made generous contributions to a public collection that has become more reliant on, and yet blessed with, artworks of increasingly high calibre and significance to share with the university and wider community. Many emerging and established artists have also made these important contributions to the collection.

With this in mind we welcome and celebrate a major donation from the highly regarded artist Euan Heng to the Deakin University Art Collection of 40 prints; etchings, woodcuts, linocuts and lithographs from his oeuvre that were gratefully accepted earlier this year by Caroline Field, former curator and director of the Deakin University Museum of Art.

Heng would not deny that as an artist he is a painter first, but this considered body of work spanning 30 years of practice reflects a dialogue that occurs between both painting and printmaking mediums. This relationship is indicated in this exhibition with a sample of such paintings including Deakin University's own *Head Study II* (1999) purchased in 2001 as well as *Turning for Shelter* (1988), *Topple Tumble* (1994) and *Oskar Welcomed* (2005).

The artist and the Deakin University Museum of Art would like to acknowledge the contribution of printmakers Antonietta Covino-Beehre, Monash University, Martin King and Rosalind Atkins at the Australian Print Workshop, Anne McMaster at The Print Council Australia, Andrew Gunnell from Chrysalis Publishing, and Peter Lancaster, Lancaster Press in the production of these prints. Thanks also go to Justin Clemens, Senior Lecturer from the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University for his insightful catalogue essay and Dr Peter Hill, Senior Lecturer, Visual Media, University of Melbourne for opening this landmark exhibition.

Victor Griss  
Acting Manager / Curator  
Museum of Art



*Topple Tumble* 1995  
Linocut  
45.0 x 36.5 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist



*Ornithologist* 1993  
Linocut  
51.0 x 34.0 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist



*Glasses* 1997  
Linocut  
20.5 x 14.5 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist



*Normandy Livestock* 1997  
Linocut  
27.0 x 20.5 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist



*Youth* 1995  
Linocut  
17.0 x 14.0 cm (irregular)  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist

## PICTORIAL SUDDENNESS: *the prints of Euan Heng*

An early print by Euan Heng depicts a white-faced man in a grey pin-striped suit playing an accordion. His shadow falls on the flat pavement and on the stippled fence palings behind him. To his right, a man sporting a cap and black-and-white checked jockey's shirt leans out of a gate, proffering a little bunch of flowers. A peculiar pale bird struts atop the fence. Behind it all, in the garden beyond, a woman sunbathes topless in a deckchair, an open book face down on her lap. Just off the print's centre, another woman, wearing a transparent slip, her hair bound up in a spotted scarf, leans out a window whose awning is lined with bars. Odd trees grope an overcast sky. The angles are too sharp, wrong, the perspective awry. The print buckles with innocence and menace at once.

Heng works with simple, well-defined, and easily-recognised forms, discriminated from their environments with crisp unbroken lines. His images can be at once cute and distressing, as in the linocut *Normandy Livestock* (1997) - a homage to Ferdinand Léger - which presents a parrot with a crazy crest captured in a cage without bars. In other prints, faces are erased; baby ships go down in childlike night seas, the ripples engulfing the doomed craft like grey-blue lips; the eyes, hair, lips, throat of a figure become an exercise in inhuman geometry; the gazes of lovers, or men and their dogs, don't quite meet. A madly intricate hare leaps from an illuminated manuscript or an Etruscan tomb or a Moghul miniature into an empty world shared only with a rough human figure.

What's peculiar about these eminently accessible environments and their inhabitants is that they present their enigmas so directly. This holds for the paintings as much as for the prints. Nothing too extreme, you understand - there are no consciously outrageous transgressions - but there's still something genuinely uncanny going on. The logic of Heng's images can seem like that of dreams, proffering suggestive ciphers and symptoms.

At the same time, the forms are too careful, too cartoonish to be unbelievable in quite the way that dreams are unbelievable. A kind of Pop meets Politburo, or SimpsonsTV meets Kalighat drawing, Heng's work is not quite like anything else - though it is, at the same time, a lot like a lot else.

These "not-quite-likenesses" are no accident. Heng's techniques are often drawn from Léger, and he also quotes Picasso and other 20th century masters. Take those quaint superannuated figures, distinguished by their old-school hats and suits. It's nearly an allegory of the powers of the archaic, of what continues to have effects long after its time seems to have passed. So the immediacy of Heng's work shouldn't be taken as the result of naivety or innocence. On the contrary, he is - to use a phrase of Umberto Eco's - a deeply "semiotically-nourished" artist, drawing on a vast range of images from wildly disparate times and places. Italian mosaics and frescoes, French modernism, Indian temple illustrations, pop art and pop culture all are admitted, if subtly, into Heng's art. At the same time, he returns to the depthless explorations of certain pre-Renaissance or 20th century achievements, a striving towards an abstraction that never quite arrives. Heng never abandons figuration, but experiments constantly with the gap between abstract composition and the presentation of figure.

This play between the gestalt of figure and the rigorous intrusion of geometrical forms - crosses, checks, blocks, spots and panelling - traverses his work. Heng is not interested in illusion or expressiveness or technique for technique's sake. Rather, the prints are exercises in reduction and compression, seeking the maximum impact from a minimum of mark. Heng admires Matisse's linocuts, which work their magic with only a handful of strokes. And a print can be rapidly accomplished in a fast, satisfactory day's work. Uncomplicated by ornamentation, prints can seize the essentials of a design.

Since Heng is so careful with his colours in paint, it is revealing to see how he works with monochrome prints; what stays and what goes. Heng often begins with rough sketches, then moves to linocuts or lithographs before starting to paint - and such a move may take years to complete its arc. A detail from a finished painting may then, in turn, return to print form before returning again to paint.

The scale of the prints is also significant. Historically deriving from books that you could grasp with your hands, the prints are small, almost intimate. Only you are looking at this print now. Yet prints are multiple, and often collaborative (Heng has worked with a number of printers, including Peter Lancaster and Martin King). This intrinsic multiplicity of prints has a bearing on Heng's own career. There are not really well-defined temporal "periods" in his work, but rather ongoing elaborations, returns, remixes, and divagations. To follow these prints from the earliest to the most recent is to get hints of such a development. If anything, Heng's has been a long, committed process of purification towards *this* economy, *this* stillness.

In Plato's dialogue, *The Symposium*, we find the peculiar statement that "love is the sudden." This memorable phrase designates very well what Heng is after: an art of the sudden. All the black dogs and besuited men, the steaming ships and well-wrought hands are placed in the service of this "pictorial suddenness," which ceaselessly explores an exemplarily artistic question: in what ways can the simplest marks create neighbouring sets of entirely different creatures, yet still work in a composition as a whole?

Justin Clemens

Senior Lecturer, School of Communication & Creative Arts  
Faculty of Arts, Deakin University, May 2006



*Turning for Shelter* 1998  
Etching  
19.0 x 20.5 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: Anne McMaster (The Print Council Australia)



*Signal not Detected* 2003  
Lithograph and Watercolour  
24.0 x 21.0 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: Peter Lancaster (Lancaster Press)

## ABOUT THE ARTIST: *Euan Heng*

Born in Oban, Argyshire, Scotland, in 1945, Euan Heng grew up in Lanarkshire on the outskirts of Glasgow. Between leaving school in 1960 and attending Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, in 1970, he went to sea as a steward travelling world-wide. Euan Heng immigrated to Australia with his family in 1977.

Euan Heng holds undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, and RMIT University in Melbourne. Since leaving art school in 1975 the artist has held twenty two solo exhibitions and participated in numerous curated group exhibitions in Australia, Asia, UK, Europe, Canada and USA. Works by Euan Heng are represented in numerous public gallery, university and corporate collections in all states of Australia including the Australian National Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Queensland Art Gallery. His work has been written about, illustrated and cited in the arts review pages of newspapers and the visual arts press in Australia and the UK, including the ABC and SBS television. Recent publications include Vivien Gaston's essay 'Sleuth: The Recent Work of Euan Heng' in *Art and Australia*, vol. 40, no.2, 2002/3.

Other activities of the artist include visiting artist/lectureship and residences in Australia and overseas. In 1999 Euan Heng was the Australian Council Artist in Residence at the British School at Rome. Currently he holds the honorary position of Associate Professor / Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University, Melbourne.



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Exhibition opening hours:  
Tuesday – Friday 12pm – 5pm / Saturday 1pm – 5pm

Back Cover  
*Profiles* 1999  
Linocut  
18.0 x 19.0 cm  
Deakin University Art Collection  
Printer: The Artist



STONINGTON STABLES  
museum of art

