



## Adam Laerkesen

GAIL KENNING

### While Adam Laerkesen refers to his work as

sculptures, we might also think of them as scenarios. They are combinations, sometimes collisions, of materials and imagery that enable meaning to unfold. The work is created from a variety of materials including wood, metal, cloth, flocking and found objects and includes a range of representational, referential and/or metaphoric imagery. The choice and variety of materials used in each scenario are key elements in creating the tension, drama and theatre that arises in the work.

The work displays baroque sensibilities in its visual and tactile richness; its layering and folding of form and content; its seeming contradictions; and its drama and theatre. Laerkesen explains: 'My work's always had that element of theatre to it ... it needs a certain kind of lighting and materials such as flocking make it really theatrical.' However, while the work includes drama, tension and movement, highlighted by the use of drapery, the work does not display baroque excess; decoration is restrained and pared back. This is neo baroque. The work exhibits traces of the desire for the simplicity of form esteemed by modernism.

The combinations of imagery, materials, narrative and/or metaphor come together seemingly by chance. Laerkesen draws on restrained and pared back. This is neo baroque. The work exhibits traces of the desire for the simplicity of form esteemed by modernism.

The combinations of imagery, materials, narrative and/or metaphor come together seemingly by chance. Laerkesen draws on intuition and visionary states. He embraces the experience of not being fully conscious, and has a fascination for the state that exists between wake and sleep. He explains that his work is an 'exploration of imagination... [and of] the visions that come from hypnagogic states and lead to the combining of the familiar with the unfamiliar'.

Visions and daydreams are channelled through the making process. Laerkesen explains: 'I don't try to pre-empt the work; I just experiment with it to see what will unfold, to trust the process. Sometimes it will fail and sometimes it will work.' For Laerkesen the viewer plays an important part in completing the work.

A constant theme in his work is the relationship between culture and the mutational aspect of nature, which parallels his exploration of the tensions between the intellect and intuition. Laerkesen embraces this tension in his choice of materials and imagery and throughout the making process, balancing when to employ intellect and when to 'let go of control' and trust intuition.

Laerkesen feels that trusting intuition invites 'nostalgia, half memories [and] half understandings' to enter the work. This multi-layering of material, imagery, intellect and intuition is what he recognises and respects in the work of artists such as Philip Guston and Louise Bourgeois. The influence of such artists is evident in Laerkesen's approach and ambition for his work. In discussing the work of Tom Arthur, Laerkesen shares further insights into his own aims: '[The work is] so multi-layered, and all the imagery is so loaded. It's just dripping with all this meaning ... the placement and the way everything reads off each other, it's incredible, it's like looking at a memory. ■

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Gail Kenning is a Sydney-based arts researcher. She lectures at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, Sydney.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: 1/ *Something in the Way*.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: 1/ *Something in the Way*, 2009, plaster, wood, cast foam, 150 x 190 x 110cm.

2/ *They once cut my heart down like they cut a tree*, 2009, industrial chair, plaster, cast foam, 217 x 100 x 85cm.

3/ *Holiday Snap*, 2009, plaster, resin, flock, 80 x 21 x 43cm.

All images of work by Adam Laerkesen. Images courtesy the artist and Anita Traverso Gallery, Melbourne.

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