

Nick Mangan

Born in 1979 in Geelong, Australia

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Nick Mangan's work is often situated at the turbulent cusp between contemporary consumer culture and the construction of history through artifact. In his sculptural installations, he draws on the narratives embedded within ready-made and found objects.

An integration of natural and cultural processes of fragmentation and reconfiguration, and an examination of how meaning is formed via these methods is central to his work. This interest is played out both metaphorically and through a manipulation of materials. Mangan's installations highlight the environmental effects of culture on nature that are so intrinsic to modernity. Working from this position, Mangan has nurtured an ongoing investigation of "exotic" objects and souvenirs, exploring the ways in which they both represent and commodify culture.

*The Mutant Message* (2006), a project the artist developed during a two-week residency in Australia's remote outback region of Arnhem Land, highlights these concerns. The residency was intended as a cultural exchange project between non-indigenous artists and artists from the Gunbalanya community in the Northern Territory of Australia. Mangan drew on his observations of the region's people, their artwork, and the politics of the

area in the creation of *The Mutant Message*. Using materials available at the local store in Gumbalanya, Mangan created a "Dream Catcher". This piece responded to the working methods of these artists, particularly the way they manipulated everyday objects to serve new functions. With this work, Mangan draws attention to the commodification of indigenous culture - especially the merchandising of "dreaming."

Similarly, *Comparative Material* (2006-07) was created during a residency in New York City where the artist collected and compiled an assortment of recycled and second-hand objects sourced from the city's streets and flea markets. As with *The Mutant Message*, Mangan found inspiration from the way locals employed material. In this case Mangan drew on the resourcefulness of New York's homeless people and the way they appropriate plastic bags, cable ties, shopping trolleys and packaging boxes, making them into temporary homes. With *Comparative Material* Mangan questions the notion of sculptural production in an age of waste and over-consumption, as well as exploring the cultural articulations of value that alter the function and meaning of an object.

Presenting fragments of site, history, and myth, Mangan's sculptural installations are surreal, yet revealingly honest analogies of humanity and the dubious progress of capitalism. With his particular attentiveness to people and the way they interact with context, both culturally and historically,

Mangan's works embody the essence of place and the perpetuity of time with humor, honesty, and sincerity.

Alexie Glass