



Expedition

Tom Müller
Galerie Düsseldorf
14 May – 10 June 2007

Born in Switzerland, trained in Italy and Australia, and mentored by the illustrious Ilya Kabakov in New York, Tom Müller is a Perth-based artist with a bonafide background to espouse a global language.

His practice to date has combined a sophisticated understanding of visual language and utopian vision with a focused investigation into universally adopted processes and protocols. To this end, Tom has issued worldwide passports online (*World Passport*, 2000 -), released limited edition 24 carat gold credit cards complete with instructions for melting (*Gold Card*, 2006), and opened a supermarket for limited edition art works (*Supermart*, 2004). Politically provocative, these projects each reflect an interest in the circulation of value and meaning through global systems of exchange.

It is in his prints and paintings, however, that Tom's true fascination with the universal language of design is best evidenced. His computer rendered mapping projects dissect, chart and represent elements of the natural and built environment, compressing information and reducing subject matter into abstract forms. In this new exhibition, works such as *Mineral range* (2007) reference the global implications of the mineral boom currently consuming our land and economy. Unlike traditional mountain ranges that are visible and can be reached by climbing, Müller's mineral-landscape is underground; it is not clearly defined, we never really know how much there is. By likening these mineral formations to graphs and employing oil byproducts such as vinyl and acrylic for their depiction, Tom directs us to consider the future of nature. Other works, such as *Facets* (2007), also push us to acknowledge the relationship between nature and economy. In presenting a step by step diagram of diamond cutting, the question is posed; can nature be divided up without compromising its essence?

These illustrative diagrams, which have also taken the lives of rivers, trees and stars as their source, use the modern computer language of vectors to describe nature. They reduce the living and breathing into skeletons of precision and order, offering a beauty that often transcends its source. A complex process, the artist best describes his approach as the conflation of, 'isolated elements of design, architecture and art into universal forms and shapes...that become signifiers, not just of universalised building forms, but also of the inherently political process of globalisation and its geographic consequences'. In his *Vector worlds* series (2007), Tom finds beauty (and perhaps security?) in these artificial worlds. With titles such as *Shooting stars* and *Galaxy*, these works present the possibilities of a universalised sublime; the infinity of the sky captured in a reductive language of vectors.

Müller continues his mapping of uncharted territories in this exhibition by delving into the lands of heraldry and national symbols. In *Heraldic animals* (2007), the artist has grouped together animals borrowed from various coat of arms from around the world. The animals appear liberated from their national duties and are seen to be marching towards a common direction. With *International fables* (2007) he explores

the mythology behind these national symbols and locates them in a contemporary fable. While seemingly didactic in their narrative (and perhaps referencing the stories the artist now shares with his first born son) these works are deceptively rich in the formative histories of the present day European Union.

Expedition is a clever title for the exhibition of these new works from Tom Müller. It directly references his engagement with the diverse natural environments that his work seeks to represent while alluding to the longer term implications of our relationship with these resources.

Hannah Mathews

Curator, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

Tom Müller has exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas, including *Capital*, Sherman Gallery art box, Sydney (2006); *Primavera*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2005); *Mix Tape*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (2005); *Stadium*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth (2005) *Project Room* at the Melbourne Art Fair (2004); *Australien*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (2003) and *Homoglobus*, Galerie Düsseldorf (2002). See www.tom-muller.com for more works.