

STILLS FROM LIFE Oiled Up

Painter Steve Makse explores human identity and materialism in his debut solo exhibition *Stills From Life* at Linton & Kay Contemporary - Back Space Gallery, 123 Hay Street, from Saturday, October 23, 'til Friday, November 5.

For Steve Makse, the material world is an unreliable narrator, a spurious reflection that distorts our self-image and worth. He flouts flat screen TVs and gossip magazines, finding refuge in his art and the esoteric paintings of 16th century Holland.

"Maybe we're not as free as we think we are," Makse says. "We tend to be drawn to material goods to represent ourselves. We think we're independent but are drawn to certain brands of clothing, financial wealth and status. Maybe we rely on that too much instead of shaping our own image and identity."

This ethos has influenced Makse's art and he draws on the 16th century vanitas genre of still-life painting, where skulls and spent candles mingle with gold coins.

"Vanitas pits powerful images of mortality with material goods. It suggests that pursuing material happiness is necessarily not that satisfying and fruitful. People seem to work so much to buy shit they don't need to impress people they don't know."

Makse has given his vanitas paintings a 21st century bent, dotting them with iPods, fast food and designer clothes. It's visually jolting and a clever twist on the Dutch originals.

Makse's paintings are rendered in thick daubs of oil, giving his art a gravitas normally reserved for historical works. It is an appropriate medium that reinforces the theme of time and mortality.

"I love the traditional style of oil painting," he muses. "The background in *Vanitas MMVIII* has more than 30 layers of thin glazes; I spent about 150 hours in total on that piece. Only oils can give you the deep richness and subtle changes in tone. I stayed in London for a couple of years and loved looking at the oil paintings in the portrait and national galleries. I'm really into the work of Goya, Claesz and the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio's work."

Makse, 37, graduated from Curtin in 1994 with a BA in Graphic Design. After working for several magazines and ad agencies, he returned to education at Edith Cowan University, undertaking a MA in Visual Arts in 2008. As part of his masters, he wrote a thesis, *The Paradox Of Self*, that rekindled his passion for philosophy and led to his debut solo exhibition *Stills From Life*.

"This exhibition would be quite



Vanitas MMVIII by Steve Makse

different if I hadn't discovered the works of Sartre and Camus during my masters. It changed my perspective on things and influenced my art. I try to apply some of the theories to my everyday life."

In addition to more traditional styled oil paintings, *Stills From Life* will include several mixed-media screen prints in a series of portraits called *Facespace*. "People seem to be obsessed with Facebook and constructing their self-image

online. But is the result always a true reflection of the individual? It's an interesting concept."

Steve Makse refuses to follow the herd and is intent on creating art and living life by his own rules. "I've always been conscious of trends and trying to avoid them. I still haven't bought a flat screen - I'm quite happy with my old crappy TV..."

STEPHEN POLLOCK

SATU LANGIT INDONESIAN FESTIVAL Java Jive



Satu Langit

Kulcha's *Satu Langit Indonesian Festival* will be showing at UWA's Dolphin Theatre on Saturday, October 23, with performances at 2pm and 8pm. There will also be a show at Mandurah Performing Arts Centre on Sunday, October 24, starting at 6pm. Tickets through BOCS Ticketing.

Between 1992 and 1994, renowned choreographer

and artistic director Chrissie Parrott and her dance company were part of a cultural exchange program with East Java city Surabaya, Perth's sister city. The sister state relationship included a dance exchange program with Parrott and her dancers flying across to Surabaya and resulted in the production, *Satu Langit*.

Since then, Parrott has continued adding to her choreographic repertoire of over 60 works until last month when she received a call from Kulcha's Jon Cope asking if she would remount *Satu Langit* for the 20th anniversary of the multicultural arts organisation. For the latest production she has collaborated with Indonesian dance master and international Javanese dancer Didik Nini Thowork. The piece also features guest artist Agung Tri Yulianto and leading WA dancers.

"What I've done is integrated the traditional dance from these two guest artists into our evening as well. It's been quite a frantic and complicated process with long rehearsals but we're all very excited about it," Parrott says.

"We've also been fortunate enough

that one of our male dancers from Broome is going to do some indigenous Australian dance. So we're combining Australian indigenous dance with contemporary dance and Indonesian dance together.

"What's been really revealing, this week in particular, are the similarities of movement between indigenous Australian and Indonesian dance. Indonesian and indigenous dance is very earthed whereas in contemporary there is a lot of jumping. Rather than blending the two we're highlighting the differences and similarities."

Parrot said another choreographic difference was discovered in the Indonesian duet between the female and male dancers who don't have a lot of contact with their bodies. The movements can be close together but the dancers don't actually touch and so she has incorporated some of that into the western contemporary. However, throughout the whole process Parrott is continuously checking the protocol so as not to disrespect the cultures.

Adding to the performance will also

be the component of live gamelan music from local gamelan musicians. Parrott says this element adds a colour and exuberance to *Satu Langit* that matches the heart of Indonesian culture with its unique rhythmic patterns.

"The exuberance and joy of hearing the gamelan live, which is a very beautiful instrument, and all the cultures and performances together are just so special. I just want the audience to smile because it's a celebration. That's what's so enjoyable because it's not something that's too deep and meaningful, it's about three different cultures coming together and performing under one roof on the night," she shares.

"The name of the piece stems from the initial project. When I was over there I sat down and asked them what the translation was for something that meant 'canopy' or 'one sky' or 'umbrella' or something like that. They gave me *satu langit* which I thought just sounded so beautiful. It symbolises that we all live under the same sky."

TANYA MACNAUGHTON

PRIDE Stepping Out



Pride Parade

PrideWA's 2010 Festival events run until Saturday, October 30, with the penultimate event, *Pride Parade*, on the 30th at 8pm through the streets of Northbridge. The official after party is at Connections Nightclub immediately following. Tickets \$40 for Pride Members or \$45 for non-members. For full details on events see pridewa.asn.au.

Turning 21 years of age is a milestone - self-reflection and future planning are a big part of moving in to the second phase of life. In 2010, PrideWA acknowledges the 21st anniversary of the historic rally of gay and lesbian Western Australians on the steps of Parliament House, and they've planned three weeks of events around the theme of 'looking through the keyhole' to celebrate their coming of age with a *Festival* including films, theatre, comedy, and the Parade.

In recent years a noticeable downward trend in attendees to Pride events, dwindling membership numbers and a major financial crisis has seen PrideWA reassess its position and relevance in the contemporary Western Australian community.

PrideWA, as with many member-funded organisations, has a constant struggle for financial sustainability and infrastructure funding. With less members and attendees to events, where will the support required to put on the *Pride Festival* come from?

The 2010 committee have held several community forums as well as special general meetings, and as a result have reoriented their focus towards the youth in

the GBLT community, who may have not been previously included in PrideWA's focus but are the key to the future sustainability of the organisation in its twenties and beyond.

Other changes implemented include cover charges for events such as *Fairday*, and shortening the *Festival* to three weeks. Female Co-President Sharlene Dixon says this allows the *Festival* to present a more focused and higher quality calendar of events. "We will continue to showcase local and interstate artists, and PrideWA looks forward to local community groups presenting their events as part of this year's *Festival*."

Spokesperson Mark Hamer says he expects the 2010 *Pride Festival* to rejuvenate the community spirit for PrideWA. "The *Pride Festival* provides an opportunity for all lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, queer and other same-sex attracted people to stand up and be counted as proud members of the local community."

The Parade is the biggest public event in the *Festival* calendar, with all facets of the community marching through the streets of Northbridge. The Pride party continues post-Parade at Connections Nightclub, where the official *Neon Ballroom* afterparty will be held. One of the oldest gay and lesbian friendly venues in the southern hemisphere, and Australia's longest standing, Connections will be open until the break of dawn with four different party spaces spanning out in to car park with four bars, two dance floors, and two performance stages.

DAVID GEOFFREY HALL

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STILLS FROM LIFE

OCTOBER 23 - NOVEMBER 5

Paintings by Steven Makse, at Linton & Kay Contemporary in the Back Space Gallery



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