

DOWN IN DENILIQUIN

■ Match Box Projects in conversation with Kelly Doley

How did Match Box Projects form?

In 2006 it was the Australia-Japan Year of Exchange. My twin sister Leanne had graduated from COFA with a BFA (Hons) and was using matchboxes and images of matchsticks in her practice to discuss issues of identity, and I was working in the Japanese tourism and education industries. We found a book on the art and design of Japanese matchbox labels and discovered that skilled artists were integral to the development of the labels. We decided to conduct an exchange between ourselves to gain an insight to each others' diverse worlds, and at the same time create an avenue for artists to present their work and exchange with their peers in both countries. We endeavored to deepen public awareness and mutual understanding of contemporary arts practices through our exchange.

This led to the creation of Match Box Projects – a series of collaborative works and exchanges we created with Australian and Japanese artists. We invited diverse contemporary artists from Australia and Japan to create small scale works for matching boxes to present in our Match Box Gallery - clear perspex hand-held portable cases. We toured these installations across the two countries as we gained insights to the art and culture of both regions, generally

presenting the work to those who engaged with us in public space. By the end of the year 60 artists had created works and had taken part in a series of complementary exchanges, education programs and exhibitions we presented. We continued to develop projects, evolving into an artist-duo, and organically took the name Match Box Projects as our pseudonym.

How did you become involved with such a regional town like Deniliquin?

Leanne and I are currently developing a project which will incorporate us touring through regional Australia in a mobile space. I have been developing the plans for the mobile space as part of the special elective Nexus: Collaboration: Creation: Innovation. Thanks to Apollo Motorhomes providing us with their Adventure Camper, Leanne and I conducted action research for this at the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's 25th Anniversary Rally held in Deniliquin in April. Locals attending participated in a work we created on the Rally's Open Day. This led to being invited to develop a project for the Play on the Plains Festival aka the Deniliquin Ute Muster, one of the largest rural themed festivals in Australia. The COFA Ute has been instrumental in the development of this new work, which both Leanne and I are very grateful to Arc for providing.

Why are you interested in participatory forms of art?

Our first project involved collaboration and public participation, and these have continued to be major elements of our social practice. To date our works have been generally site-specific and are looking at the identity of a people, place, community and/or culture - so local public participation is integral to the realisation of the majority of our projects. Our practice is not just about the end work created but the communication and

process of engagement between ourselves and our participants and at times, their engagement between themselves. The inclusiveness, experience, relationships built, barriers broken and knowledge gained that emerge from participation in our projects are important elements of each project.

Can you think of an artwork or particular artist that has had the most influence on the style/intention of your own work with Match Box?

The style and intention of our work to date has not been informed nor influenced by an artwork nor a particular artist, but rather from the ongoing action research we conduct in the public realm. However we admire and are inspired by various artists who have been brought to our attention since we began our practice, who, themselves have incorporated participation, collaboration and/or working in public space in their practice. They include Francis Alÿs, Sophie Calle, Astra Howard and Tsuyoshi Ozawa.



Image: Match Box Projects (Leanne and Naomi Shedlezki) Reflections...Deniliquin 2011 www.matchboxprojects.com