WHAT NOW?

MARCEL **COUSINS**

You've just come back from Tokyo?
I have. I returned about two months ago. I completed a PhD at Tama Art University in Tokyo. I was in Japan on and off for 12 years.

You've called your exhibition* Chop-Shop. *What's a chop-shop?
I was working off the idea that cars are stolen and reinterpreted and reformulated, then sold on the black market. I'm taking images and borrowing those and tinkering with them, so I saw the connection there.

I suppose the word chop-shop came about too because I'm using a variety of different mediums. I'm using everything from polyester resin, three-dimensional printing techniques, traditional painting, construction, installation and airbrush.

You had a nice way of putting it in your artist statement, that the images and cultural detritus we come across in everyday life are a kind of "reservoir of the collective unconscious".
I was picking things which seemed separate and not related and trying to make a relationship between the two of them, or them as a group … In Japan, there are so many things that have been appropriated from Western culture and misinterpreted, and they actually become part of the vernacular. Even just the language. There are so many words that are used in Japanese that are actually from English but they've completely missed the meaning. It takes on its own meaning itself, which is really weird for a Westerner, but you become accustomed to that, which is even weirder … In my earlier works I was working with this whole pool of things from Japan. Then I decided to step back from that because I found myself just becoming so immersed in it.

It's really hard to work with those sort of culturally significant images. Japan has this ownership over them and using them as a Westerner becomes quite problematic. So I chose to move away from that … I wanted to work on something that was broader, that wasn't specifically about Australia, or about Japan, or the relationship between the two.

How do you think that's changed things?
I'd like to think it's more open. I'd like to think that people can approach the work and actually input something of their own into it … I want the viewer to be more involved in the process rather than have things that are closed-end.

You've said you have almost an anti-style, meaning you adopt whichever materials and methods best serve the work. The traditional reason to stick to one bag would be a desire to achieve mastery or expertise in a particular area. Have you ever felt that kind of pressure?
To a degree, but the challenge of working with new mediums is something that I find really fulfilling. It becomes its own challenge, coming into contact with different people, obtaining information – I find that really rewarding. It's quite frustrating at times and often it will take a long period of time but you have to remain on it and eventually you find a solution to the problem. The process of learning something new is really important to me.

Jane O'Sullivan

Chop-Shop by Marcel Cousins will be exhibited at Helen Gory Galerie in Melbourne from 10 August to 3 September 2011.

Foreground, Marcel Cousins, *Owl (lexus pearl white)*, 2010. Fibreglass, polyester resin and 2 pac polyurethane paint with pearl finish, 162 x 95 x 81cm; and background, Marcel Cousins, *Background Noise*, 2010. Freehand airbrushed acrylic on canvas, 207 x 566cm. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND HELEN GORY GALERIE, MELBOURNE

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Helen Gory Galerie
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Wed – Sat 11am – 5pm



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