



May Day banner (1950s) and Simon Blau paintings 2006 at The Cross Art Projects.  
Courtesy Unions NSW, Trades Hall Banner Collection

Waterloo with notes and views of the shiny new Waterloo of residential apartments. Gentrification and outsourcing—both processes in the tension of globalization.

The artists of May Day honour the determination and colour of two great workers' commemorations: the Eight-Hour Day (renamed Labor Day), won 150 years ago by stonemasons, and the May Day parade initiated by shearers at Barcaldine in 1891. Today the two have pretty much fused into one public event. May Day, associated with rites of spring, May Queens and maypoles, and given aesthetic legitimacy by William Morris and Walter Crane, is undergoing a renewal.

Kylie Tennant's novel *Foveaux* (1939), an account of life in inner-city Sydney set in 1912, gives texture to these events: *Eight-Hour Day* was almost invariably blessed by rain or wind and some of the unions from bitter experience had taken to carrying their banners furled. *More than one groan had gone up from the crowd as over a hundred pounds' worth of crimson silk split like old sailcloth.*

This is the third and final show in The Cross Art Projects' series on Art & Politics. It was preceded by *Tunnel Vision, Stupidity & Greed: Artists, cartoonists and planners review concrete politics in Sydney*, curated by Jo Holder and ArLanguage. Every *Publishable Place*, curated by Ruark Lewis.

## CROSS CONVERSATIONS

Talk with Tom Carment, artist, and Pat Geraghty, seaman, unionist and local resident. Saturday 6 May at 3pm.

'MAY DAY, MAY DAY': RETHINKING ART & POLITICS  
**Saturday 27 May at 3pm.**

Speakers Ann Stephen, curator and author of *On looking at looking: The art and politics of Ian Burn* (2006), Neil Towart, curator Trades Hall Collection, Unions NSW, Craig Judd, curator Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.  
[www.rightsatwork.com.au](http://www.rightsatwork.com.au) ACTU Hotline 1300 362 223



Artists and Writers' Alliance, ACT  
Art action to protest the 'Work Choices' Industrial Relation Bill passed in the Australian Senate, December 2005, Canberra.  
Photo Kim Hopper

### THANKS

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), Unions NSW  
Trades Hall Collection, Neil Towart for the Kylie Tennant reference. May Day bannerette workshop supported by COFA Campus Art Store  
([campusartstore@cofa.unsw.edu.au](mailto:campusartstore@cofa.unsw.edu.au)).

### THE CROSS ART PROJECTS

A SPACE FOR INDEPENDENT ART & CURATORIAL STUDIES  
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The Cross Books open Sundays

THE CROSS  
ART PROJECTS

MAY DAY  
THE RETURN OF ART & POLITICS  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE CROSS ART PROJECTS  
A SPACE FOR INDEPENDENT ART & CURATORIAL STUDIES  
33 Roslyn Street Kings Cross 2011  
EXHIBITION DATES  
6 MAY - 3 JUNE 2006

THE CROSS  
ART PROJECTS



# ARTISTS

Simon Blau, Barbara Campbell, Tom Carment, Tom Nicholson, Raquel Ormella, Jacky Redgate, Emma Rees and Bernie Slater (Artists and Writers' Alliance, ACT), Toni Warburton, Jelle van den Berg, John von Stummer, Deborah Vaughan, Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit

## CURATORS

Jelle van den Berg and Jo Holder

## THE EXHIBITION

*May Day: The Return of Art & Politics in the 21st Century* looks at contemporary industrial relations from a cultural perspective, connecting an interdisciplinary curatorial work and historic moments.

It reflects on these sorry days of government manipulation of unions and the introduction of divisive industrial laws, on the curbing of civil liberties and the strangling of access to information. It also identifies a strong neo-conceptual critical and aesthetic strain within contemporary Australian art practice that interacts with global concerns and local political topics.

As many have observed, the 1950s and Cold War political posturing have become a metaphor for today's

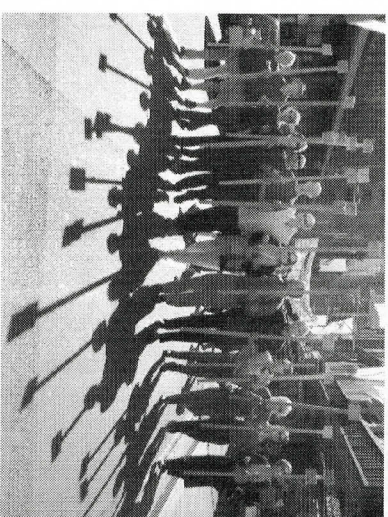
conservative politics. While not a historical survey, the exhibition includes newsreel footage of the 1956 Sydney May Day shot by the acclaimed Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit whose work typifies an 'art is a weapon' style mixed with Brechtian theatre techniques and some related archival material.

In contrast, artists are now maneuvered off the set by the spectacles of art and entertainment and cultural politics is divorced from institutional political culture. However, artists often work with this lineage of modernism and cultural activism. Barbara Campbell, Tom Nicholson and Raquel Ormella use traditional emblems of protest—banners, occupied sites, anonymous poster paste-ups, hand-to-hand materials, collaborative actions. Some—Tom Carment is an example—work with activists like Pat Geraghty, veteran member of The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and resident of Kings Cross, to document the cultural history of workers' struggle for fair conditions. Other artists, like Simon Blau, Jacky Redgate, Toni Warburton and John von Stummer comment in symbolic or abstract ways, often with irony and humour.

The project evolved from discussion of Jelle van den Berg's sketchbook titled 'Industrial Relations' which juxtaposes notes and views of the old industry suburb of

**Once upon a time Australians believed that an employer who could not afford to pay a living wage did not deserve to be in business. That's over. Now anything goes.'**

— *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 2006.



Barbara Campbell

*The sentence we all carry*, 2006.

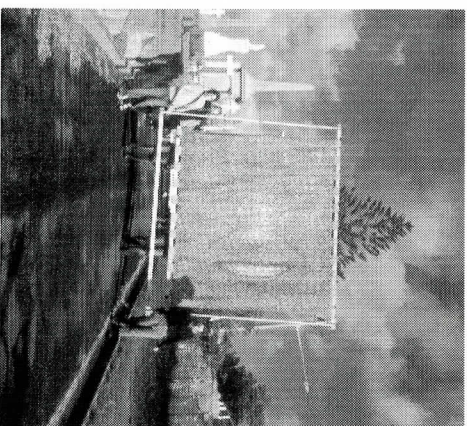
A bannerette workshop directed by Barbara Campbell at The Cross Art Projects on 6 May preliminary to Sunday 7 May Sydney May Day march.

Participants: Famille Berg, Robin Blau, Phillip Boulien, Loma Bridge, Elizabeth Burke, Liz Day, Christopher Dean, Shirley Diamond, Trevor Fry, Sarah Goffman, Helen Grace, Jo Holder, Gunter Hojdissek, Robert Lake, Ruark Lewis, Fiona MacDonald, Fleur MacDonald, Sue Pedley, Anna Pauls, Mary Roberts, Catherine Rogers, Ann Stephen, Jeffrey Stewart, Sophia Thibaudreau.

Watercolour placards with dowel attached.



Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit (Norma Disher, Keith Gow and Jock Levy.) *Banners Held High*, May Day 1956. Courtesy The Maritime Union of Australia.



Tom Nicholson, *Marches for a May Day*, Sydney, 2005. Dawn banner march prior to May Day.



Simon Blau, *Miss Red*, 2006. Acrylic on paper, 25 x 20 cm