peter hennessey
making it real

UQ Art Museum
The University of Queensland
14 March – 12 July 2015

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.
Contemporary Australian artist Peter Hennessey explores big ideas in UQ Art Museum survey

The major survey Peter Hennessey: Making it real opens at UQ Art Museum on 14 March. It will reflect on the past decade of the artist’s practice, and will feature new work made in response to a recent residency with UQ’s Centre for Hypersonics.

Trained as an architect, and with a background in new media design, Peter Hennessey has established an international profile for his physically imposing and conceptually rigorous sculptures. He is inspired by the science of space exploration and comparable technological advances, and scours the Internet and other publicly available information to produce his work. The resulting sculptures are ‘re-enactments’ of objects – space probes, lunar rovers and GPS satellites – that allow people to encounter in three-dimensions what they would otherwise only see in reproduction, or on the Web. In recreating these structures, Hennessey explores the ‘space between images and experience’ and expounds on related social, political and economic imperatives.

The exhibition illuminates key themes in his work: our quest for knowledge and the limits we face in pursuing it; the gulf between things we ‘see’ virtually and those that we are able to experience; and the role that communication systems play in enabling geopolitical powers and creating new corporate empires.

The first comprehensive analysis of Hennessey’s work, Making it real will include his most significant extant sculptures, including My Humvee (Inversion therapy) 2008 from The University of Queensland (UQ) Art Collection. These large-scale sculptures will be complemented by videos, prints and maquettes of key works such as My Ikara 2004, which no longer exists full sized, as well as new work emerging from a residency at UQ’s Centre for Hypersonics.

Selected quotes from the artist, Peter Hennessey:
“Working on Making it real with UQ Art Museum has been an incredibly interesting and productive process. It’s been a generator and motivator that has pushed my practice in different directions. In recent months I’ve had access to researchers, students and academics across UQ who generously shared their time and content, and I’m excited that works in the exhibition will reflect both this time at the University, as well as the past decade of my practice.”

“The show Samantha Littley has curated feels cohesive and is, in many ways, a milestone. I’m looking forward to experiencing My Humvee again as part of this exhibition; it’s a favourite piece that now resides in the UQ Art Collection. I love that it captures a certain dynamic in my work that goes beyond the ephemeral. Often with really large works, it’s an impossible process. You have this ridiculous and ambitious idea that you’re not sure will work, but you’re prepared to try it. And even up until the point of installation, you’re sometimes still unsure, but by then it’s too late. My Humvee was one of those big ideas that I’m relieved to say, worked out.”

Selected quotes from exhibition curator, Samantha Littley:
“Peter Hennessey’s project – to reconstruct technically complex, often large, objects in exacting detail – inspires awe. His intent, however, goes beyond the desire to leave his viewers spellbound. Hennessey’s sculptures are vessels that carry forth the equally weighty ideas that preoccupy him, ideas that revolve around social justice and the political systems that dominate our lives.”

“With his training in architecture and his background in new media, Peter Hennessey is equipped to recreate structures that indulge his fervour for spacecraft, satellites and other technology, and allow him to explore
their symbolism. While other artists might legitimately outsource production, Hennessey has the skills to realise his own dreams.”

“Peter Hennessey is committed to experiencing and understanding objects that elude us because of our distance from them, both literally and metaphorically. His self-appointed mission has been to give these things shape, all the while acknowledging that his structures are no more than understudies. He nevertheless finds delight in giving objects known predominantly through the digital realm three-dimensional form, and his enthusiasm is infectious. As an artist he is both altruistic and optimistic. He creates work that challenges our paradigms, with a view to a more humane world.”

**Documentary film**

Critic, broadcaster and lecturer Dr Andrew Frost, who has written for the Peter Hennessey catalogue, is producing a short documentary on the artist that will screen in the exhibition. Frost’s acclaimed ABC-TV series *The A–Z of contemporary art* and his blog *The art life* have earned him a broad audience. His documentary *Conquest of space*, which explored links between science fiction and contemporary Australian art, aired on ABC-TV on 11 November 2014.
KEY INFORMATION FOR LISTINGS & DIARIES

Exhibition title: Peter Hennessey: Making it real

Running dates: 14 March – 12 July 2015

Opening event: 13 March 2014 (6.15 pm for 6.30 pm)

Curator: Samantha Littley
Curator, UQ Art Museum

Webpage: www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/content/peter-hennessey-making-it-real

Art Museum address: The University of Queensland Art Museum
James and Mary Emelia Mayne Centre (Building 11)
University Drive
The University of Queensland
St Lucia Qld 4067
(07) 3365 3046
http://www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au

Opening times: Open daily, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm (Closed public holidays)
Free entry

Media images: Download images for news and review here

Image caption (Cover): Peter Hennessey
Where we are now (Navstar Block II-F satellite, USA) 2014 (detail)
Plywood, ABS plastic and wax
Collection of The University of Queensland, purchased 2014
Reproduced courtesy of the artist, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, and
GAGPROJECTS/Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Image caption (Page 3): Peter Hennessey
My Humvee (Inversion therapy) 2008
plywood, automotive enamel paint, aluminium and steel
500 x 210 x 180 cm
Collection of The University of Queensland. Gift of the Melbourne Art Fair
Foundation, 2008.
Reproduced courtesy of the artist, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, and
GAGPROJECTS/Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide
Photo: Carl Warner

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