



# Callan Park Gallery

For Self-Taught and Outsider Art

## Studio ARTISTS Untitled

It is always exciting, when coming upon a “new” artist, to see, if only fleetingly, the world as it appears to them. It’s like the moment when Picasso’s cubes suddenly resolve into a legible image and you understand his vision for the first time. It’s like stumbling on a video by Shaun Gladwell or Daniel Crooks and the happy awakening when you finally perceive the possibility of beauty and ineffability in screen-based art. The wonder is that every artist offers a new window on the world, one that is open for all to look through.

And so it is with this exhibition, in which Matthew Calandra, Daniel Kim, Greg Sindel, Robert Smith and Lynda Strong make their exhibition debut as a new collective called Studio ARTISTS. As a group and as individuals, these artists allow us to see the world through their sensibilities, quirks, passions and relationships.

Studio ARTISTS, as an entity, developed out of an educational and recreational service for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities that was established about 10 years ago in Hornsby, in Sydney’s far northern suburbs. As part of the range of courses offered by Studio ARTES Northside, as the service is called, artists Gabrielle Mordy, Emma Johnston and Maide Welch teach art. As well as providing the chance to work in the studio, the program offers art books for students to look through, and gallery visits aimed at promoting a broader appreciation of art. About 120 people attend the art studio every week.



Studio ARTISTS was formed when Mordy and her co-workers recognised the special talents of the five artists and their individual desire to develop mainstream practices. The artists’ coming together as a collective, and their act of exhibiting their work in a Sydney University art gallery where it will not go unnoticed by the wider arts community, is their statement that they are not artists with disabilities – they are, simply and purely, artists.

Walking into Callan Park Gallery as the exhibition was being hung, I was reminded of seeing preparations for a show such as the annual Primavera exhibition for younger artists at the Museum of Contemporary Art. There was the same psychological energy and searching in



# Callan Park Gallery

For Self-Taught and Outsider Art



the works strewn across the floor or leaning against the walls of Callan Park Gallery. There was experimentation, uninhibited expression, a genuine joy in the act of making. Greg Sindel had drawn cells from one of his graphic novels directly onto the walls. Sindel is a prodigious producer of graphic novels.

Gabrielle Mordy: "Greg Sindel announces his arrival [at the studio] with a barrage of questions. With an urgent tone, Greg thrusts his most recently drafted "graphic novel" in my direction. What do I think of his newly developed character? How do I feel about his decision to merge his central hero with the spirit of a wolf? Greg is constantly sourcing fresh comic artists from which to derive inspiration. He shows equal dedication to his own practice, as reflected in his portfolio of semi drafted and completed "graphic novels". I was reminded of the precious place these novels hold in Greg's life recently as I tried to convince the artist to exhibit his most recent graphic novel. Whilst keen to have his work experienced and published, he was reluctant to be at a distance from his novel, thereby restricted from further editing the text."

Robert Smith, known as Thom Roberts, works in multiples. Much of his work in this exhibition consists of rows of photocopied portraits behind plastic or completely covered in sticky tape. The

portraits are often of young children and babies, and Smith has adorned many of the faces with moustaches. The artist is intensely particular about his choice of portraits to photocopy.

Mordy: "Each week, Thom Roberts rushes into the art room, his backpack bursting at the seams. Is he carrying books, drawing paper, paint brushes, additional clothing? No. Stuffed into his bag are piles of photocopied portraits, protected by layers of cello tape. Along his desk Thom positions his coated copies in specific piles, filing each image carefully in accordance with the train type the picture is aligned with. Thom only copies or draws faces which he identifies as representing a Tangara, Waratah or Silver train. After selecting or drawing an image, he copies and then coats the picture, before finely positioning the item in a complex but particular transport code."

Daniel Kim's enormous, pencil drawing of a moustachioed baby was directly inspired by Smith's work, and is a clear example of the friendly cohesion and exchange of ideas between the members of Studio ARTISTS. If Kim's powerful drawing of the baby reminds you of something, perhaps you're thinking of some of the work coming out of contemporary China. I certainly did.





# Callan Park Gallery

For Self-Taught and Outsider Art

Matthew Calandra's compelling portraits exude a latent graphic energy, with particular intensity in the eyes. Mordy: "Through his abstraction and distortion, Matthew manages to imbue his images with a temperament and life force. As I turn my back on a Matthew portrait, I often swear they blink behind me."

The communal nature of the group is particularly clearly seen in the work of Lynda Strong, who celebrates her profound friendship with Calandra in many of her innocent, naive-style paintings. Mordy: "As a person passionate about social connections, for Lynda painting has become a key means of forming and fusing personal relationships. Lynda's portfolio is proliferated with bold, colourful depictions of her friends and family. In particular Matthew. At times, she paints herself and Matthew morphing into a single form, their two heads emerging side by side from the same shoulders."

Vibrant, toy-shop colours bounce around in Strong's paintings, one of which she has brushed straight onto an interior gallery wall – a curatorial device to demonstrate the hands-on involvement of the artists in staging this show. Committed, honest, expressive, focused. All these words describe the vision of the Studio ARTISTS group. Long may its members make their art, and long may we look through the windows they have opened on their world.



Elizabeth Fortescue, Australian correspondent for The Art Newspaper, London; Visual Arts Writer for the Daily Telegraph, Sydney [www.artwriter.com.au](http://www.artwriter.com.au)

**Images:** (page 1) Robert "Thom" Smith, *Mo Baby (Millenium train)*, 2010; Robert "Thom" Smith, *Coneheads & Milleniums*, 2011; (page 2) Lynda Strong, *Lynda Matthew's Friends*, Acrylic & Markers, 2009; Matthew Calandra, *Portrait of Lynda Strong*, pen and gouache, 2011; (page 3) Daniel Kim- Artist at work drawing his interpretation of Robert Smith's *Mo Baby, Millenium Train*, 2011.



# Callan Park Gallery

For Self-Taught and Outsider Art

## Studio ARTISTS Untitled

Curated by Emma Johnston and Gabrielle Mordy

1. Greg Sindel, *Enlarged copies from "To be continued..." graphic novel*, cartridge paper, 21 A3 pieces of paper, 2011.
2. Greg Sindel, *Enlarged image from p.18 in "To be continued..." graphic novel*, texta and acrylic paint on wall, wall size, 2011.
3. Lynda Strong, *Mum*, acrylic on canvas, 2010.
4. Lynda Strong, *Lynda Matthews Friends*, acrylic on watercolour paper, 35.5 x 49.5cm, 2011.
5. Lynda Strong, *Rob Thom*, acrylic on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
6. Lynda Strong, *Untitled Wall Mural*, acrylic and poster paint on wall, wall size, 2011.
7. Matthew Calandra, *Untitled*, ink and gouache on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
8. Matthew Calandra, *Self Portrait*, ink and gouache on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
9. Matthew Calandra, *Lynda*, ink and gouache on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
10. Matthew Calandra, *Greg*, ink and gouache on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
11. Matthew Calandra, *Daniel*, ink and gouache on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
12. Daniel Kim, *Untitled*, graphite and oil pastel, 160 x 200cm, 2011.
13. Lynda Strong, *MatthewsLynda*, acrylic and poster paint on watercolour paper, 56.5 x 76cm, 2011.
14. Greg Sindel, *Untitled*, sculpey, 12 approx. 2 x 2cm, 2010.
15. Robert "Thom" Smith, *Millenium Trains*, mixed media, 2011.
16. Robert "Thom" Smith, *Family*, mixed media, 2011.
17. Robert "Thom" Smith, *Poems*, mixed media, 2011.
18. Robert "Thom" Smith, *Red Rattlers*, mixed media, 2011.
19. Greg Sindel, *To be continued...*, A4 spiral notebook, A4, 2011.

**Studio ARTISTS Untitled** will be on display to Friday 8 April 2011

**Gallery hours:** By appointment

**For further information please contact:**

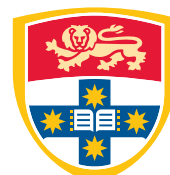
Professor Colin Rhodes, Dean

Sydney College of the Arts

The Visual Arts Faculty of the University of Sydney

[callanpark.gallery@sydney.edu.au](mailto:callanpark.gallery@sydney.edu.au)

[sydney.edu.au/sca](http://sydney.edu.au/sca)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**