



# Making a point about the view

**M**atthew Ngui's *Points of View*, at the John Curtin Gallery as part of the Perth

International Arts Festival, is a journey through a wonderland where things constantly change shape, scale and ultimately meaning.

In the main this is a show that was presented last year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney and also in Singapore at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

Some works have shifted slightly, some, like his PVC pipe piece, are born anew. All, of course, have changed in their relationship to this gallery space.

This might seem an obvious statement but it bears some importance to the work of Matthew Ngui. For *Points of View*, Ngui and curator Russell Storer have blended the work into the architecture of the gallery.

*Points of View*, as a retrospective, shows Ngui's fascination with the primary importance we give our two eyes as navigating instruments, particularly so in their position on our body, sitting forward and slightly raised off the ground.

Ngui's work shows us a perspective on life that is a conscious deconstruction of 180-degree forward viewing.

In fact, as he shows time and again our point of view often distorts reality — as Lou Reed sings on *New York*: "Don't believe half of what you see (and none of what you hear)."

The first work you "see" in *Points of View* is an immediate introduction to these concerns.

From the point of the diamond shape on the floor at the front entrance, looking straight ahead, the walls of the gallery move under a stream of broken text.

As you slightly crouch, the words "seeing may be believing but not always understanding" come together like a Gestalt.

The text, at one location, and it's a specific location, illuminates — or rather brings together — the fractured world around it.

It's a clever comment on our reliance on subsidiary information, particularly in the art world, to make sense of things, but it also paradoxically highlights the notion of epiphany, or illumination, something we perhaps also over-concern ourselves with in visual arts.

This work is a re-making of a piece Ngui did on PVC pipes for *Sub-terrain* at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts in 2006.

To the right of the entrance foyer is Ngui's *Chair*. One of his patented anamorphic works, *Chair* sprawls across the floor and wall, coming together again at one specific viewing point.

Off the foyer and in the first gallery, *Chair* comes together as a sculpture and video in a sort of ode to Joseph Kosuth.

Interestingly, Ngui employs people looking at the anamorphic chair to bring together the chair in his video and this works as a type of subversion of the production of meaning.

By this I mean, like Kosuth, Ngui's work is about the global production of meaning as it is produced in a relationship between maker and viewer.

Put simply, culture is a two-pronged attack; it takes production and consumption and if either side opts out, the social order of what things mean in our world collapses.

In *Chair*, as in his shifting text works, Ngui makes the process of meaning lopsided — the viewer, in a way, both makes the work and articulates its meaning.

For me, this is a realisation of

the inevitable workload one has in a world of global mobility to keep up with meaning.

We are constantly trying to make sense of the world as it is pumped at us; free-floating symbols often come to us out of context and we make of them what we will.

It's often a case of sink or swim. In a case of wonderful synchronicity, this is the theme of the final work as you walk through *Points of View*.

Coming out of a cluster of poles in which, to keep the metaphors going, you can't see the forest for the trees, you come upon a huge projection of the artist doing laps in a pool.

Trying his best to keep form, Ngui is shot in constant motion going up and down the lanes. Beautifully edited, spliced and meshed back together, this four-projector work is immersive in every sense of the word.

Swimming: At Least Eight *Points of View* is a terrific foil for the other works. With a soundtrack that has a coach barking instructions to him, this projection offers a complete view only to make us understand it is made up of several parts . . . an opposing way of presenting his anamorphic views.

The tension between landscape being something that we are sold as a cultural representation and something that we desperately try to immerse ourselves in drives Ngui's work. *Points of View* is a quality look back through a body of work of an artist who understands the making of cultural meaning and is avidly trying to find his position within its dissemination.

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**Points of View is at John Curtin Gallery until March 20.**



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