



A Bundaberg Arts Centre Travelling Exhibition

bundaberg arts centre
incorporated 2004 (replaces the Bundaberg City Council)



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Tour Itinerary

Bundaberg Arts Centre, Qld

11 August – 5 September 2004

www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/arts

Cooloolo Shire Public Gallery, Gympie, Qld

17 September – 24 October 2004

<http://www.cooloolo.qld.gov.au/community.html>

Logan Art Gallery, Qld

12 January – 5 February 2005

http://www.logan.qld.gov.au/LCC/logan/art_gallery/

Warwick Art Gallery, Qld

18 February – 15 March 2005

http://www.warwick.qld.gov.au/lifestyle_comm/artgallery.htm

University of the Sunshine Coast Gallery, Maroochydore, Qld

7 – 30 April 2005

<http://www.usc.edu.au/gallery.htm>

Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, Qld

13 May – 11 June 2005

www.herveybayregionalgallery.org.au

Bauhinia Bicentennial Gallery, Springsure, Qld

24 June – 18 July 2005

Umbrella Studios, Townsville, Qld

22 July – 21 August 2005

www.umbrella.org.au/

Australian Sugar Industry Museum, Innisfail, Qld

2 September – 9 October 2005

Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, WA

21 October – 11 December 2005

<http://www.geraldton.wa.gov.au/artgallery/>

Goldfields Art Centre, Kalgoorlie, WA

24 January – 5 March 2006

<http://www.kalg.curtin.edu.au/gac/>

Queensland Museum, Brisbane, Qld

27 May – 27 August 2006

<http://www.qmuseum.qld.gov.au/>

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Printed by

Boom Baby Boom was officially opened by Mr Paul Neville MP, Member for Hinkler representing The Hon. Rod Kemp, Senator for Victoria, Minister for the Arts and Sport at the Bundaberg Arts Centre 11 August 2004.

Cover image:

Boom Baby Boom's Homage to Hamilton (2004), design was used for the exhibition's promotional materials designed by graphic designer Nadene Jones. It includes images of works from *Boom Baby Boom* exhibiting artists Ann Grocott, Helene Grove, Sue Hutton, Chris Johnstone, Seth Keen, Jennifer McDuff, Dave Machen and Christine Turner.



An Australian Government Initiative



This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia.



The Bundaberg Arts Centre is an Arts and Cultural Initiative of the Bundaberg City Council.
The *Boom Baby Boom* exhibition has received support from the following sponsors:



Introduction

I grew up with wonderful Baby Boomer parents in Bundaberg. I, like many other Generation Xers, have a deep respect for and curiosity about my parent's youth culture, even though sometimes there may be conflicts in our beliefs. I would not call my parents typical Baby Boomers nor would I call myself a classic Generation Xer. However, history dictates to us stereotypes based on popular culture, some elements of which relate to us individually.

The popular culture of the Baby Boomer generation has been celebrated and recirculated through film, television, music and fashion. A deluge of remixes were released in the 1990s. Elvis Presley still manages a release from the grave on special occasions. We had movies such as *Grease*, *Dirty Dancing* and more recently the Austin Powers' trilogy to remind us of the stereotypical traits of the Baby Boomer generation. Who hasn't been to a 1960s or 1970s themed party in the last ten years?

On the social and political front, a current hot issue is that of the retiring Baby Boomer generation or ageing population phenomenon. Baby Boomers make up approximately one quarter of our population in Australia. There is a lot of debate about how this will affect welfare; the health system and the general economic climate as this generation retires over the next 10-15 years.

Boom Baby Boom is an exhibition that brings together a group of artists who are of the Baby Boomer generation (born 1945-1964) or immediately adjacent to that period (the Silent Generation born 1923-1944 or Generation X born 1963-1982). The exhibition presents the artists' views on

the impact and influence of the Baby Boomer generation: the people, objects and events that shaped the generation and the issues facing the ageing Baby Boomer population.

In any period of history, there are controversies balanced with triumphs. *Boom Baby Boom* showcases some of this history through the eyes of eight contemporary artists. Some tell a more personal story, while others delve into issues triggered by memories or experiences. Some of the themes in the exhibition include the music revolution and the resulting "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" era. The Vietnam War features strongly, as well as comment on the futility of war and the effects of the Atom Bomb. Women's liberation, environmentalism and the peace movement are issues that showcase the activist qualities of some Baby Boomers. Trends such as Americanisation and Consumerism are also highlighted.

Congratulations to the participating artists Ann Grocott, Helene Grove, Susan Hutton, Chris Johnstone, Seth Keen, Dave Machen, Jennifer McDuff and Christine Turner on their successful tackling of this subject. There is variety of contemporary media showcased in the exhibition including computer generated imagery, film and installation. These artists are a strong example of the professionalism that exudes from regional Queensland's arts community.

Thank you to Visions of Australia (Australian Government), Bundaberg City Council, WIN Television Queensland and Central Queensland University's Regional Committee of the Arts for their financial and in-kind support of this exhibition tour.

Thank you also to Dr Karl Neuenfeldt from Central Queensland University for his dedication to research for the project and to Nadene Jones, our graphic designer.

I am continually grateful to the Bundaberg City Council for their continued support of the Bundaberg Arts Centre and our projects. We are fortunate to have a team of three professional gallery staff and

an administrative officer who are dedicated to delivering arts programs to our community, supported by a team of over 30 volunteers. Thank you Joan, Roana, Sandra and our wonderful volunteers.

Shelley Pisani, Arts Centre
Coordinator
July 2004





Ann Grocott (Silent Generation)

Ann Grocott was born in South Australia into the Silent Generation. Ann is a self-taught artist who has been painting for 23 years. Her work has ranged from large sculptural pieces to small oils and she has worked in fabric, plaster, cement, watercolour and oil paint.

She has had solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Bundaberg. She represented Australia in the “United Nations Millennium Art Exhibition” in 2000. Her work has been selected four times in the Salon des Refuses Archibald Prize and twice for the Salon

des Refuses Wynne Prize. In 2001 her work was on show at a major Expo in Japan.

Ann Grocott’s work in *Boom Baby Boom* looks at two separate themes. *Legacy* (2003) looks at the issue of the atom bomb. Being born immediately following the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Baby Boomers were the first generation to grow up with the knowledge of the devastation that this, one of the first weapons of mass destruction, could cause. In her assemblage, Ann has used tones of grey, torn materials and broken timbers to reflect the destruction of the atom bomb.

Sign of the Times (2004) is a graffitied piece of fence, displaying the slogans, names of products and people of the times which the artist recalls from the 1960s and 1970s.



Helene Grove (Baby Boomer)

Helene Grove is a prolific artist who started her career as a medical practitioner in the 1970s and now works solely as a professional artist from her studio in Bundaberg. With no formal training, Helene has managed to achieve acknowledgement as a finalist in numerous national art competitions such as the Archibald, the Wynne prize, Doug Moran and Portia Geach Portrait Prize. She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Australia, Norfolk Island, England and South Africa with her most recent showings at the Kenthurst Gallery in Sydney. Her work is represented in institutional, municipal and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Helene has two acrylic on canvas works in the *Boom Baby Boom* exhibition. *‘Boomers’ Illustrated* (2004) is a comment on the future of the Baby Boomer generation.

“We can fight wars, reach the moon, create in a test tube, have equal (?) rights for women and gays – but can we guarantee old age security?”. Helene Grove 2004.

Liberated Woman (2004) is the artist’s snapshot of the modern woman. Now able to vote and have a career, today’s woman also juggles motherhood and femininity.

“I don’t know whether we are the result of the choices we made during the revolutionary Baby Boomer period or whether it was simply destiny. This is the question.” Helene Grove 2003.



Susan Hutton
(Baby Boomer)

Susan Hutton has been working from her studio in Cordalba since she moved here approximately ten years ago, which coincided with a decision to concentrate on her artwork. Of late she has been interested in digital images, watercolour, assemblage and ceramics. Sue finds playing in one medium leads to ideas for another.

The poster series *burnt bras life on Mars* (2004) is an environmental statement.

“We reach for Mars while our home planet falls and we falter in our attempt to reach out a hand to help.

The turning to community and nature for an alternative knowledge the ‘revolution’ of love and peace has been boxed up in the back of our minds like outdated LP’s in our spare room cupboards.

The first of the four posters is reminiscent of the bright colour and false flower powered freedoms of the sixties the images mutate into the dark and desolate Mars surface of the forth poster.” Susan Hutton 2004.

Red Rags, Green Bans (2004) is a two-part ceramic piece. The first refers to the 1970s green bans of the Builders Labourers Union who fought to put people and environment before profit to preserve built heritage. These efforts saved many important buildings.

The second piece is more of a personal story. Sue Hutton’s father was a unionist and card carrying communist, known as a “red ragger” at the time. This piece focuses on Sue’s recollections of her father.

“He was a gentle man who did put people before profit.” Susan Hutton 2004.

Hands up all those who prefer peace (2004) is a mixed media installation of paper scrolls, ceramic bowls and an artist’s book. Stealth bomber images on the scrolls represent war and weaponry. Figures are enclosed in protective spaces.

“We sang of love and peace in the 60s but Earth is still weighed down with weaponry...

The damaged ‘beseeching bowls’ with their small bandages and motifs are appealing for peace. As the bowls line up one under each of the scrolls, which hang formally side by side, although they are fragile, I hope they convey strength and hope in their unity.” Sue Hutton 2004.



Chris Johnstone
(Generation X)

Chris Johnstone makes his mark in Bundaberg as a secondary school art teacher and a practicing artist. He studied a Diploma of Visual Art at the D.D.I.A.E. (now University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba) and a Graduate Diploma Teaching. He has held 2 major solo exhibitions at the Bundaberg Arts Centre - *Memories Lost* (1998) and *Redheads and Bionic Legs* (2001) - and has participated in numerous group exhibitions throughout the Wide Bay area.

“My recent mixed media sculptures explore the influences of television culture which shaped my generation. Issues of self determination and identity, as moulded by the television rather than by the ‘lived’ experience are the focus of my

‘Boom Baby Boom’ work.” Chris Johnstone, 2003

The five sculptures Chris Johnstone has produced for *Boom Baby Boom* are all buff-raku ceramic with oxides, glaze and underglaze. All five works are about identity and the external influences that construct our individual identities. *Rocketman* (2004) represents the masculine influences of the artist’s childhood in the 1970s – Lee Majors as Steve Austin, the *Six Million Dollar Man* and Rocket from the Apollo space program.

With *Steve blasting off to save the world* (2004), Chris again utilises Steve Austin metaphorically.

“Inspired by action figurines, *Steve blasting off to save the world* is portraying the fight of good (American democracy) over evil (the Russian communist threat) that was portrayed in television programming in the 1970s. Here Steve Austin the *Six Million Dollar Man* is off to protect the western civilisation like a tool of Cold War propaganda.” Chris Johnstone 2004.

Moulded Through Play (2004) and *Plastic Reflection* (2004) are both strong comments on the influence of environment and culture on our identity. The perfect torso of a Barbie doll and the ‘ideal’ faces of Ken and Barbie reflect the influences of youth culture and media on young women in *Plastic Reflection*.

From the Earth (2004) features a male and female figure perched on a foreign planet.

“This artwork is about identity. Without the influences of culture, how would your personality develop?” Chris Johnstone 2004.



Seth Keen

(Generation X)

Seth Keen is a new media lecturer, researcher and artist. He is an Associate Lecturer in Digital Video within the Centre for New Media Arts (CNMA), which is situated at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. He is currently completing a research Master of Arts (by thesis) as part of the Media Arts and Production program, at the University of Technology, Sydney. Seth Keen joined the *Boom Baby Boom* artist team while working in Bundaberg at the Central Queensland University Campus as an Associate Lecturer in Multimedia.

boomsplatbangwhack (2004) is a video and sound piece presented in this exhibition as part of our 1970s lounge room installation.

“The artwork *boomsplatbangwhack* takes up the theme of ‘onomatopoeia’, a term used to describe words that imitate sounds associated with an action. Boom, splat, whack and bang are part of a plethora of words that have been invented to describe an array of actions.

Onomatopoeia has been used in this exhibition as a form of protest against the cultural construct of “generationalism”. This is the placement of people into generational groups like ‘Baby Boomers’ and ‘Gen-Xers’, based on demographics. Mark Davis in the book ‘Gangland’ (1997) argues that this type of classification is used to create distance - a gap between generations. In addition to this, the ‘Baby Boomers’ use this demarcation to protect their own position, maintain monopolies and ultimately avoid having to deal with the issues of a fast changing society. ‘Baby Boomers’, by being defined into a specific generation group, are able to shift blame often onto younger generations.

Taking up this position, I was attracted to these playful comic routines, performed by the ‘Reilly family’, in the regional Queensland town of Stanthorpe. Recorded on 8mm film in the early 1980s, this family provides their own interpretation of popular culture at that time. With a family of nine children, there is no shortage of willing cast to perform or act as an audience. Verging on the ridiculous, these unassuming routines represent the petty unsubstantiated nature of the need to classify and segregate generations.” Seth Keen 2004.

Video Compositing – Seth Keen
Audio Design – Jonathan Stephens
Voice – Larry Sitsky



Jennifer McDuff

(Baby Boomer)

Jennifer McDuff has been working as an artist since 1971 when she held her first exhibition. She has exhibited mainly in Queensland as well as Sydney, Tasmania, Melbourne and Japan. She is primarily a painter/printmaker but has had forays into ceramic tile murals and photography. Her work is held in many regional Queensland collections as well as Queensland Parliament House, the University of Tasmania, the James Hardy Collection, the Australian War Memorial and Parliament House (Canberra).

Jennifer McDuff is well-known for her work on the theme of Vietnam. Her husband Barry is a Vietnam Veteran and some of her most moving works reflect their

struggle and those of many other veterans and their families. For *Boom Baby Boom*, Jennifer has produced a work called *Last Supper* (2004).

“The table is made of 56 hand glazed tiles (4 x 14). It is an elongated shape which contains 11 oval shapes. 10 out of 11 shapes are grey with one red oval [these ovals represent place settings]. The messages on the table refer to the Last Supper as Communion; as a place where people talk and philosophise.

The photographs are of 6 Vietnam Veterans – Barry McDuff, Harry Harkness, Ian Arnott, Ivan Wood, Bill Poppell and Eddie Knight. The portrait images are combined with a still life of food the Veterans might choose if it was their last supper, because I believe that all of them, from their war experiences, have looked at their own mortality.

... I sometimes feel I could keep making a record of all the Veterans I know and don’t know because the War was such a national shame for politicians and the community at large. War solves nothing and creates havoc in every area that it touches. There is little justification for it except greed and power and blind faith.” Jenny McDuff 2004



Dave Machen

(Baby Boomer)

Dave Machen has been a full-time artist for over 30 years. He has exhibited in Paris (1999, 2001), Japan (2003) and regularly on the central coast of Queensland. He has won several major competitions including the 2002 Archibald Packer's Prize, for his portrait of Steve Peters. He often works as resident artist for advanced art school camps. Recently Dave Machen has completed several large public sculptures and is currently working as the Art Director of the Childers Streetscape project.

"Generally I paint on large canvases in acrylic, or large sculptures in ferris-cement, exposed steel and fibreglass, although I do poke my nose into other fine-art forms. I start with a subject; usually an inanimate but familiar object then the emotive mark-making approach soon over-rides the subject." Dave Machen, 2003

Dave Machen's three acrylic on canvas works in *Boom Baby Boom* are all about memories. *Fading Reflections* (2004) is about a loss of detail of memories.

"When I was growing up, the year 2000 was a distant future, so when I arrived there I deliberately decided to live for the moment and the future – I was in the future. However for this exhibition, I took time to reflect on the past. When I tried to remember in detail my 1960-1970's artmaking, I could not. The images were fading. But I do remember the feelings – they were good, exciting, happy and a struggle – just like now. Life's good." Dave Machen 2004.

Popeye and Pop Art (2004) has multifaceted meaning.

"The 1960 Pop Art Movement, to me, was about protesting against overindulgence, food waste and food dumping. Capitalist countries would dump food at sea, when there was a glut, to keep prices up, rather than give it to starving and desperate countries.

This practice continues today, disguised by token assistance. I loved the Pop Art colours but found their compositions lacking. However I loved the experimental compositions of cartoonist Bud Sagendorf who often drew Pop Eye characters. By 1968, (first year of my Diploma in Art) I was combining all these thoughts into my way of artmaking. This influence can still be seen in my work." Dave Machen 2004.

Rabbits 1954-58 (2004) is about Dave Machen's childhood memories in rural Victoria.

"I lived with my Grandma, on and off, for several years. These are my fondest childhood memories. We lived in a roughly hewn shack in the mountains in Gippsland, Victoria. Hessian was a major part of our life; the interior walls were stretched hessian covered with wallpaper roses. Nan trapped rabbits for food and for a living. We always took a hessian bag to collect the rabbits and they were stored in a long hessian sack suspended over a pole in the lean-to. The colours, olive greens, red, hessian browns etc are the emotive colours which remind me of the era in Victoria and my life there." Dave Machen 2004.



Christine Turner

(Baby Boomer)

Christine Turner was born in Melbourne in 1952. She moved to Bundaberg in 1987 where she began her art practice. She has had no formal training.

Turner has represented Bundaberg with exhibitions in contemporary galleries across Australia. In 1996, she participated in the award winning nationally touring exhibition "Junk Bonds".

She has been the recipient of two Art Queensland Project Grants. The installations she developed with this grant support were shown at the internationally renowned Greenaway Art Gallery in Adelaide in 1995 and 2001.

Turner's work encompasses a variety of aspects including contemporary assemblage, installation, collage, painting and digital imaging. Her works characteristically incorporate and recycle the discarded. Many of her recent works are an exploration of patterning and often feature reclaimed textiles, women's needlework and embroidery.

Christine Turner's art deals with the big issues of identity, memory, the body, nature, culture, power and the sacred.

Christine Turner has produced five digital prints for *Boom Baby Boom*. ...and then *Eve burnt her bra* (2004) looks at issues of women's identity through a collage of symbolic images from that era.

Remembrance (2004) reflects on the horror of war. The artist visited Vietnam recently and was moved by the lingering negative effects of the Vietnam War.

Spaced Out (2004), *White Rabbit* (2004) and *Magical Mystical* (2004) all represent the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll era and the resulting popular culture of the 1960s and 1970s.

"I float in my bubble above a technicolour path. The path widens and begins to spiral. I am sucked into a swirling vortex of kaleidoscopic colour punctuated with large gaudy flowers. Am I Alice? Where is the rabbit?No rabbit, just the deep pulsating rhythm of Jefferson Airplane. Safe inside the bubble I spin deeper into the star-spangled vortex that is sign-posted with anti-war placards and peace symbols. It's getting dark in here. I sense that there is upheaval without, hidden from me. I know there is chaos. I smell blood.

Let me awaken from this beautiful dream, this exquisite nightmare.

Peace." Christine Turner, 2003

Australian Baby Boomers: Some Facts, Figures and Projections

The Past

The period of heightened fertility in the post World War 2 era is known as the 'Baby Boomer' generation.

Between 1946 and 1964 there were 4.2 million births in Australia, during an era of general economic prosperity, large-scale immigration and cultural and societal stability.

The Present

At the time of the 2001 Census the following facts and figures outline the demographics of the generation.

- 50.6% were female
- 68.5% were married
- 12.7% had never married
- 12.0% were divorced
- 5.4% were separated
- 1.4% were widowed
- 33.9% were born overseas
- 78.2% of working Baby Boomers were employees
- 12.5% had a gross weekly income of \$159 or less
- 33.5% had a gross weekly income of \$700 or more

The Future

The peak of the Baby Boomer generation entering the over 65 group will be between 2011 and 2031.

The working age population in Australia (aged 15-64) presently expands by 170,000 per year. However, by the 2020s the working age population (projected on current population levels) will only grow by 125,000 for the entire decade.

Older age groups are projected to make the greatest contribution to the growth of the overall labour force.

It is projected that people over 65 in Australia will grow from 2.3 million in 1999 to 6.2-7.9 million by 2051.

From being approximately 12% of the population in 1999, they will be approximately 25% by 2051.

Broadly similar demographic trends exist in nations such as New Zealand, Canada and the US.



Diane Finch and Alan Browne at the Bundaberg Show Ball in 1971.

Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll

Each generation's music is commonly linked to drugs and sex, at least in the mind of older generations fearful of change or losing control over 'core' attitudes and values. Of course they forget their own generation's particular drugs of choice and kinds of sexual adventures (or lack thereof), and how their own parents warned them against certain styles of music and dancing.

The combination of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll is a good example of what are known as 'moral panics'. Every generation gets one. In Australia over the last several generations there have been moral panics about bodgies and widgies,¹ mods, hippies and punks, each with their own trademarks of outrageous actions or unsettling appearances.

Baby Boomers concocted their own generational checklist of excess. The Pill made sex more accessible and less worrisome. 'Illegal' (that is, un-taxed) drugs such as marijuana, LSD and hashish became more readily available. Trans-Atlantic musical styles such as rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, and psychedelia gained international appeal – and markets and imitators – in Australia and elsewhere. Songs such as 'White Rabbit' (Jefferson Airplane), 'Everybody Must Get Stoned' (Bob Dylan) and 'A Day in the Life' (Beatles) were considered pro-drug songs even if the authors did not consciously (or perhaps unconsciously) intend them to be.

Together these kinds of cultural elements combined to help mark the Baby Boomer generation as supposedly different from the furtive gropings, back-door booze and hyper-active jitterbug of their parents. But they were not really different, after all. Sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll as lifestyles had their downside too but each generation fervently believes – at least for a while – that it re-invents the world in its own images and actions – and excesses.

Christine Turner's work *White Rabbit* (2004) references the song of the same name by the successful late 1960s US band Jefferson Airplane. The song is about taking the drug LSD and the artwork reflects this theme, the pros and cons of drug culture, the happy and sad effects.

For more information on hippies and punks, see the book in the exhibition's lounge room installation *The Seventies: Good Times, Bad Taste* (2002). You will also find a book on Rock 'n' Roll Heroes featuring photographs of well known international rocking Baby Boomers.

¹ A great example of bodgies (male) and widgies (female) is the movie *Grease* (1978, Paramount Pictures). The storyline is set in 1959 at Rydell High in the US. John Travolta's character Danny and his gang are typical bodgies, with the sweeping, greased-back hairstyle continually combed into place, accompanied by a cool walk and rebellious nature. The Pink Ladies were the typical widgies with tight fitting tops with low plunging necklines, and form-fitting skirts to allow room to move at the knees. The leathered-up look that Olivia Newton-John's character Sandy adopts to impress Danny is typical widgie style. It was all about living rock 'n' roll, perpetuated by the younger of the Silent Generation (c. 1925-1944) and older Baby Boomers (c. 1945-1964).



Bundaberg architect Bronwyn Innes (right) attended the Sunbury Festival in 1972 as a university student. The student architects constructed make-shift lodgings for the period of their stay at Sunbury as part of their studies. This was the typical 1970's 'Hippy' look.

This Bundaberg 'Mod' who wishes to remain anonymous is dressed in a style made famous by the Austin Powers movies (New Line Cinema) of the late 1990s and early 2000s.



Music Revolution

Each generation has its own music providing a soundtrack to its lives. The music a generation plays to, falls in love to and dances to indelibly marks their coming of age as somehow musically different from that of their parents, children or grandchildren.

The international music industry responded to the post-World War 2 economic boom by courting the large youth market with its disposable income, prolonged adolescence and malleable tastes. And whereas professional songwriters, musicians and arrangers had predominantly created the music of the previous generation, Baby Boomers started to do it themselves. A pivotal musical change was the advent of singer-songwriters and groups writing, singing and performing their music. The illusion was created that somehow the new music operated outside the 'business' of music and more addressed music's 'heart' and 'soul'.

When Australian Baby Boomers were growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, the music they heard came predominantly from Britain and the US. When rock 'n' roll came to Australia it was demonised as simplistic, unmusical and overtly sensual. In comparison to the sophisticated music of the previous generation all the adjectives arguably applied. But a generational musical revolution is not usually about subtlety but rather a sonic sea change. Acid rock, psychedelia and protest songs certainly had little in common with the crooners, girl group harmony trios and big bands of the previous generation.

While we think of the 1950s and 1960s as the birth of rock 'n' roll, there were many teenagers looking for a venue that was not strictly sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Coffee lounges were set up and there was a resurgence of ballads and folk music. Following in the footsteps of the very popular folk group Peter, Paul and Mary, Australia's own Seekers gained a world-wide audience.

Overseas artists who contributed to the Baby Boomer's music revolution included Elvis Presley, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Joni Mitchell, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, The Supremes and Marvin Gaye. Although many Australian artists were imitative of these music innovators, artists such as Johnny O'Keefe, Little Pattie, Col Joye, Normie Rowe, John Farnham and Billy Thorpe, to name but a few, created a solid foundation for popular music in Australia. Artists and groups of this era appeared regularly on television and performed concerts throughout Australia where Australia's own dance craze 'The Stomp' was all the go. These groups included The Easybeats, Masters Apprentices, Axiom and Daddy Cool.

The turn-of-the-21st Century successes of the ABC television series, DVD and live-concerts called *A Long Way to the Top* demonstrated that Australian Baby Boomers have their own pantheon of stars.



Members of The Beatles band including singer Paul McCartney (L) and John Lennon (R) wave to fans from balcony of Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne during 1964 Australian tour. Photograph courtesy of Newspix/ News Ltd. Used with permission.



Ann Grocott, *Sign of the Times*, 2004, mixed media



Jennifer McDuff, *Last Supper* (Detail - Barry), 2004, photograph



Dave Machen, *Popeye and Pop Art*, 2004, acrylic on canvas



Seth Keen, *boomsplatbangwhack*, 2004, video



Susan Hutton, *burnt bras life on Mars (3 of 4)*, 2004, digital image



Helene Grove, *Liberated Woman*, 2004, acrylic on canvas



Christine Turner, *Remembrance*, 2004, digital image



Chris Johnstone, *Steve blasting off to save the world*, 2004, oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay

The Vietnam War

Baby Boomers played major roles both as troops and protesters during the Vietnam War. Australia's involvement in the war stretched over more than a decade, although war was never officially declared. Australia contributed 'advisers' in 1962 and eventually contributed approximately eight thousand troops (army, navy and airforce) before finally withdrawing in late 1972.

Like the French before them, the US and Australia became bogged down in a prolonged, brutal and ultimately delusive attempt to control the Indo-China region. Within the context of the 'Cold War', the Vietnam War provided Australia with an opportunity to display its compliance with the geopolitical agenda of the US and its economic, military and industrial power.

The Vietnam War was too complex to sustain the simplistic explanations offered officially by Federal governments and pro-war media. It eventually divided Australian society as the war's futility became apparent. An unpopular war overseas led inevitably to a popular anti-war movement at home.

During the war, Australian troops (both enlistees and national service) initially fought under the direction of US command but were eventually allowed some autonomy. In particular, Australian troops were heavily involved in fighting and civil aid projects in Phuoc Tuy province. By the time a peace accord was signed in 1973 between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the US and the National Liberation Front's provisional government in South Vietnam, Australia had suffered 424 killed and 2369 wounded. The two Vietnams (and the neighbouring countries of Laos and Cambodia) had suffered massive destruction and loss of life.

At home in Australia the war created an acrimonious and seemingly unbridgeable rift between pro- and anti-war factions, which were often delineated along generational and political party lines. In the aftermath of the war the mass exodus of political and economic refugees from Vietnam to Australia, the revelation of the exposure of Australian troops to toxins such as Agent Orange, and the long term negative psychological effects on some troops, added final (and contentious) chapters to the defining war – thus far – of the Baby Boomer generation.

If you would like to know more about Australia's involvement in Vietnam please look in the lounge room installation of this exhibition for the book *Vietnam Remembered* (2002).



This photo dated 22 March 2000 shows Le Thi Nhon (L), 24, and her younger sister Le Thi Hoa (R), 15, both victims of Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War, standing at the door of their house in Dong Ha, in the central province of Quang Tri. They were born from parents affected by the toxic chemical before 1975. In a report on 8 February 2004, the Vietnamese Association for Victims of Agent Orange, which was established last month under the umbrella of the ruling Communist Party, filed a lawsuit on their behalf at the US Federal Court in Brooklyn, New York on January 30.

Photographer AFP/HOANG DINH NAM. Photograph courtesy of Newspix/ News Ltd. Used with permission.



Vietnam Vets: Pawns? Patriots? Victims? Survivors?

Some Reflections of the Vietnam War and its Aftermaths



Photograph taken of Barry McDuff (early October 1969) at The Horseshoe, South Vietnam, a fortified hill used for retraining the Army of the Republic of Vietnam troops. The weapon pictured is a 66 mm M72 rocket launcher, light anti-tank weapon. The photograph was taken about 6 weeks before Barry McDuff returned to Australia.



The 'boozier', D Coy 6 RAR lines Nui Dat, about 16 November 1969, 3 days before Barry McDuff's return to Australia. All troops in the photograph were just back from an operation except Barry who was just back from hospital. Rear, with glasses, a US Army Master-Sergeant whom Barry befriended and who carried him to the medivac helicopter a week before. Bottom right, Bob Baldwin; back to camera, Ron Crane; and opposite camera Greg MacMahon. Photographs courtesy of Barry McDuff.

“Vietnam: – The Ten Thousand Day War

The Vietnam War was the longest war in modern history. It raised political passions and moral controversy throughout the Western world and played an important part in shaping the political destiny of, not only Southeast Asia, but of the whole world. There still is much misunderstanding of the true reasons for the war [-] as illustrated by the comparison of how both perceived and reacted to what they thought (often erroneously) the other was getting up to, [and] the way the tragedy evolved. In Vietnam, there was the trauma of [military personnel] having to fight on while questioning the rationale, and then after – in the home coming – the devaluing of the soldier's sacrifice along with the cause. It was a different war only in that, without a national valour, the soldiers were left without any feeling of individual honour – all too often left without any feeling at all, brutalized by the terrible sameness of war which in this case they could never redeem.” (Shane Fontana, Australian Vietnam Veterans Organisations <http://vietvet.org/ozorgs.htm>)

“Mark Baker in [the book *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There*] wrote: ‘The war billed on the marquee as a John Wayne shoot-em-up test of manhood turns out to be a warped version of Peter Pan. Vietnam was a brutal never-never land, outside time and space, where boys didn't have to grow up. They just grew old before their time’.

Some healing has been done in the last few years. At the welcome home parade in Sydney in 1987, many of us had emotional reunions with mates that we hadn't seen since Vietnam. As we marched through Sydney that day we realised that a lot of people do care about us ... We had finally been welcomed home. Some say ‘too late’, others say ‘better late than never’, either way we were home now as one unit, as ‘Australian Forces Vietnam’. Living with the Aftermath of Vietnam.” (Gary McMahon, http://www.forgottensoldier.com/veterans_accounts/vietnam/gary_mcmahon/livingwith...)

“Current issues involving the [Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia] include the recently released [1998] results of the Vietnam Veterans' Morbidity Study ... [It] revealed that Vietnam veterans have a death rate 7% higher than the general male population, with deaths from cancer 21% higher, prostate cancer 53% higher, lung cancer 29%, ischaemic heart disease 10% and suicides 21% above the general male population.

Over the years there has been a persistent media presentation of Vietnam veterans as ‘victims’ ... This is not an image that the [Association] wishes to perpetuate either for itself or its members. Rather, it sees Vietnam veterans as achievers. Vietnam veterans have reached the highest level of business, professional and political ranks within Australia, and every one of them who has overcome psychological or health problem in order to raise a family and live a relatively normal life has overcome adversity in order to achieve. Vietnam veterans aren't victims, they are achievers.” (<http://www.vvaa.org.au/history.htm>)

“The common factor that I felt was/is present when I meet Veterans is that they have seen a side of life that can't be replicated other than in something very abstract. That could be the music of Redgum's, ‘I was only Nineteen’, or the imagery of the folded flag in Ray Beattie's painting *Image for a Dead Man* (1980) – but for me it is the fact they have all faced a part of their own mortality.” (Jennifer McDuff, Artist, 2004).

Jennifer McDuff's work *Last Supper* (2004) is one of many she has completed paying homage to Vietnam Veterans. As the wife of veteran Barry McDuff, she has seen first hand the effect of the war on veterans and their families. Since 1992, this theme has greatly influenced her art practice.

If you would like to know more about Australia's Vietnam Veterans please look in the lounge room installation of this exhibition for the book *Vietnam Remembered* (2002).

Americanisation – Popular Culture, Technology & Social Movements

The advent of the Baby Boomer generation in Australia coincided with a substantial shift away from predominantly British to US influences. In the decades following World War 2, Australia adopted or adapted many of the popular culture, technological and social movements originating in the US - the home of rock ‘n’ roll, the cult of the automobile and freedom rides.¹

In some instances attempts were made to Australianise such influences. Rock ‘n’ roll performers such as Johnny O’Keefe found a ready market for their localised versions of rebellion, romance and raunchiness. Automobiles were advertised as being built for ‘Australian conditions’ but that was more a statement on the under-developed state of the road network and not anything intrinsically different technologically. Social movements such as civil rights, environmentalism and women's liberation borrowed the rhetoric and iconography of their US role models. And some politicians of course were quite prepared to go ‘all the way with LBJ’.²

Unlike their parents, the Baby Boomers now live in an era where Americanisation such as presidentialised politics, a plethora of fast food outlets and incessant media manipulation are the norm and unremarkable. An unspoken but pivotal question for Baby Boomers is: what exactly IS Australian about contemporary life?

Participating artist Chris Turner's recent visit to Vietnam showed her the effects of the Vietnam War on Vietnam itself and the subsequent Americanisation of Vietnamese culture. The work *Remembrance* (2004) references the Vietnam War, the effects of Agent Orange (the poisoning of Vietnam's soil) sadness, regret and the sense of the futility of war represented by the upturned smiley face and the veil of dripping blood.

¹The freedom rides were a form of protest of the US Civil Rights Movement in protest against racial inequality. Black and White Americans would board a bus and travel to the southern US states where overt segregation was at its worst. This interracial travelling party would defy the rules of segregation by having White people sit at the back of the bus and going into Black-only areas and vice versa.

²LBJ was Lyndon Baines Johnson, the President of the USA at the time of the Vietnam War. The slogan “all the way with LBJ” was used by then Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt to show their support for the US and the Vietnam War.



“Johnson and Holt: US President Johnson needs more help with the Vietnam War and ‘All the way with LBJ’ Prime Minister Harold Holt of Australia is just the man.” (18 July 1967)



“Disquiet over Vietnam increases: As problems continue to grow on the home front President Lyndon Johnson realises that public disquiet over the continuing conflict in Vietnam is growing.” (17 August 1965)

“Jeff” Cartoons Copyright (c) Geoff “Jeff” Hook <http://www.geoffhook.com> Used with permission.

Film, Radio and Television



The 1981 filming of *Gallipoli*, starring Mel Gibson (left) and Mark Lee (centre). Directed by Peter Weir. Photograph courtesy of Newspix/ News Ltd. Used with permission.

Technological developments in mass media such as film, radio and television have had profound impacts on the Baby Boomer generation. Although film and radio were popular media for earlier generations, the addition of television (and now the Internet) means the lives of many Baby Boomers are media-based and their tastes – and spending power – influence media content.

Film has over a century of history in Australia and like previous generations Baby Boomers are active movie-goers. In the 1970s government, public and media support encouraged a renaissance in films with Australianised themes. *Alvin Purple*, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Gallipoli* and *The Getting of Wisdom* are just a few of the uniquely Australian films produced in the 1970s. Along with the historical films and social commentaries, Baby Boomers saw their generation's experiences portrayed on screen.

In radio, from the early to mid 1900s Australia developed extensive and popular networks of commercial and national broadcasting. For example, in the 1950s radio attracted a large and devoted audience for variety shows, serials, comedies and quiz shows. Teenagers of the 1960s were often found with one ear glued to the transistor radio, eagerly awaiting the announcement of the No 1 Hit on the Hit Parade or lying in bed listening to Sydney radio station 2UE's Top 40 when they should have been studying or sleeping.

The addition of FM broadcasting in the mid-1970s and the expansion of the Australian Broadcasting Commission's local and national networks meant Baby Boomers had a wide range of radio formats available. FM in particular featured better audio quality and helped showcase the music of Australian performers who were using advances in recording technology.

Many Baby Boomers can recall the first time they saw television: it marked an important generational experience. The arrival and staged expansion of television beginning in the mid-1950s affected not only their leisure time activities but also marked a decided difference between 'TV' and 'pre-TV' generations. Australian 'stars', programs and series presented an Australianised view of the world. Baby Boomers' 'coming of age' coincided with the spread of television and they are the first fully televisual generation.

During the 1960s, *Bandstand* with Brian Henderson was a viewing must. This show highlighted Australian talent and was the launching pad for many young Australian stars and groups, including the Bee Gees.

Chris Johnstone's *Rocketman* (2004) and *Steve Blasting Off to Save the World* (2004) and Dave Machen's *Popeye and Pop Art* (2004) show the influences that television had on their childhood.

Pop Art/Op Art

The Pop Art (popular art) of the 1960s drew extensively on icons and images from popular culture, including celebrities, advertising and household objects. Multi-media artists and social innovators such as Andy Warhol, Richard Hamilton and Roy Lichtenstein varied as to style and subject matter. However, they shared a fascination with and celebration of the mundane – albeit sometimes boldly presented in size, colour or repetition or with an inescapable underlay of irony.

Depictions of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, soup cans, clothing and cartoon panels said something about the era in which many Baby Boomers grew up: a world of consumerism, mass media, overt sexuality and a volatile mix of social and political upheaval.

What may have started off as depictions and celebrations of 'low culture' have over time been transformed into 'high culture'. Pop Art – as a style and a body of work – is now a staple of state and national gallery collections. The mundane world it depicts is no longer perceived as inherently boring or without artistic merit. The artistry is in presenting and combining the common place in uncommon ways.

Op Art (or optical/kinetic art) also rose to prominence in the 1960s. Its focus and style were different than Pop Art and had a range of expressions. The most optically based style, abstract visual inducement, uses visual patterns and effects to generate a psycho-physiological response from the viewer. Another style requires the viewer to move to animate the artwork. Some Op Art integrates light with movement or combines spectacle and environment to make their statements. Machines and mobiles are other common styles.

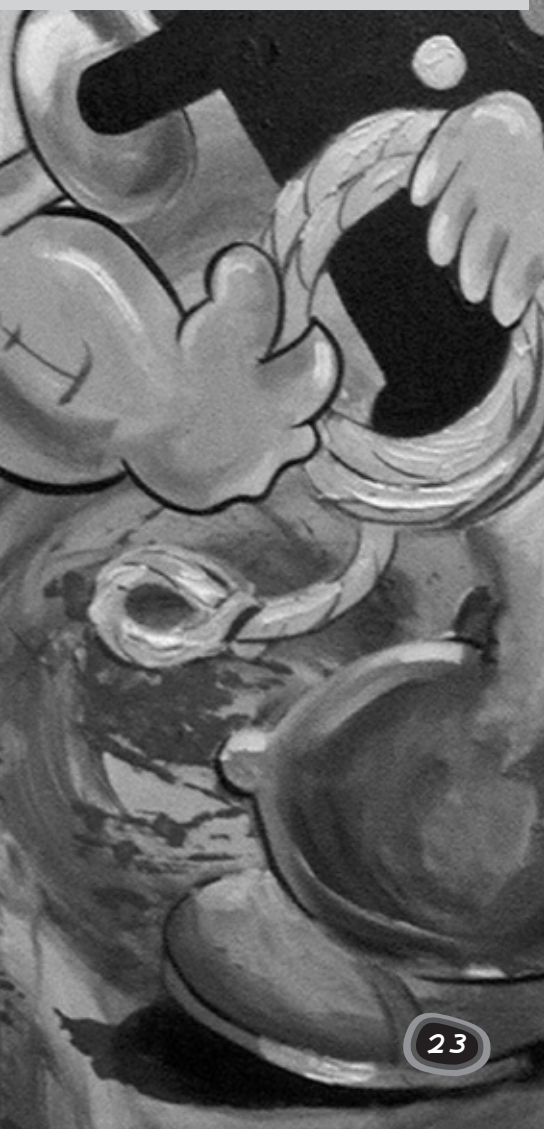
For Baby Boomers, Pop Art and Op Art were ways of visually, aesthetically and thematically distinguishing their generation's artworks from those of their parents and grandparents. Affluence in particular meant they could also purchase artworks, even if they celebrated such mundane things as tomato soup they could find in their cupboards, celebrities they could see in the movies or social events they could experience first-hand.

Artists in this exhibition which have utilised popular culture themes include Chris Johnstone, Dave Machen and Christine Turner. Chris Johnstone often uses the well-known icons of Barbie and Ken and Steve Austin (The Six Million Dollar Man) to represent not only symbols of his childhood, but also the powerful images they portray of bodily perfection and the artist's rejection of that. Dave Machen has used the popular comic *Popeye* alongside Heinz spaghetti (reminiscent of the soup can works of Andy Warhol), both also childhood memories. The psychedelic op art patterns, smiley faces and peace and flower symbols used by Christine Turner reflect influences of pop and op art.



"Boom Baby Boom's Homage to Hamilton" is a play on the work of British Pop Artist Richard Hamilton whose collage works reflected the consumerism of the 1960s. Instead of the male body builder and scantily clad female images often found in Hamilton's work, we have substituted images that reflect the more conservative nature of ageing Baby Boomers alongside artworks and objects from the exhibition. This design was used for the exhibition's promotional material, and was created by graphic designer Nadene Jones.

Background image detail: Dave Machen, "Popeye and Pop Art", 2004.



Atom Bomb

The 'Bomb' has been a constant companion to the Baby Boomer generation. First dropped by the US primarily on civilian and secondarily on military targets in Japan, it still haunts the world and world view of Baby Boomers. The threat, real or imagined, of the atom bomb provided the Cold War with its main fear factor and sparked the economically important and politically useful 'arms race'. Current debates about who should be allowed to have the 'Bomb', point out its on-going use as a metaphor for control over the ultimate weapon of mass destruction.

Australia played a role in the development of the atom bomb by allowing Britain to test its bombs here for twelve years starting in 1952. Prime Minister Menzies unilaterally consented to the tests and bombs were exploded at the Montebello Islands off Western Australia and at Emu Field and Maralinga in South Australia.

Cleaning up the sites and addressing the health concerns of both willing and unwilling participants proved to be contentious issues. In 1985 a Royal Commission reported its findings but it was not until 1993 that Britain finally agreed to contribute more funds to cleaning up the sites. Left in a more ambiguous situation were the Aboriginal people affected physically, socially and culturally by the tests. Australia has the dubious distinction of allowing the atom bombing of its own population by a foreign country.

It was these kinds of surreal scenarios that helped fuel the "Ban the Bomb" and anti-nuclear movements, in which some Baby Boomers were and still are very active participants. To paraphrase the subtitle of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 satirical movie *Dr. Strangelove*: "they may have not learned to stop worrying about or love the Bomb but they have learned to live with it".

Ann Grocott's artwork *Legacy* (2003) comments on the fact that the Baby Boomers were the first generation to grow up knowing the devastation of the atom bomb in the wake of the World War 2 US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The Peace Movement

The Peace Movement in Australia mirrored similar socio-cultural and political phenomena elsewhere and was multi-faceted in its focus. Anti-nuclear sentiments predominated in the 1950s but were superseded by the anti-conscription/anti-Vietnam War movement from the mid-late 1960s onward. After the end of Australian involvement in Indochina, attention shifted to concerns over nuclear missiles and the neutron bomb.

The People for Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Disarmament parties both mounted public campaigns and fielded political candidates against issues such as US bases, the export of uranium and the presence of nuclear weapons in Australia. The Nuclear Disarmament Party elected a Senate member from Western Australia in 1984 but eventually friction led to a split. Naturally both parties were perceived as threats to the power of the major political parties.

Baby Boomers, as the generation most intimately connected to the Bomb, were heavily involved in the various incarnations of the Peace Movement. The very public and often hostile debates tested Baby Boomers' idealism in the face of Australia's military and economic dependence on the US and the active opposition of the major parties and vested interests against new political movements. However, some idealism survives in Baby Boomers' interest in current issues such as the treatment of refugees, detention of young children and Australia's participation in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Sue Hutton's installation piece *hands up all those who prefer peace* (2004) shows eerie images of threatening stealth bombers alongside symbolic prayer and peace offering bowls. The qualities of the materials used in the work reflect the fragility of peace.

Atom bomb blast at Maralinga, South Australia in the 1950s. Photograph courtesy of Newspix/ News Ltd. Used with permission



The peace symbol and slogans such as 'Make Love Not War' were and still are used when protesting for peace.

Background image detail: Ann Grocott, "Sign of the Times", 2004, mixed media



Environmentalism

In general terms, environmentalism means an awareness of and concern for physical, natural and social surroundings. For some of the Baby Boomer generation, environmentalism also came to mean activism as environmental issues became highly politicised in Australia and elsewhere, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

Although Australia is very urbanised, environmentalism has often focused on concerns about non-urban environments. Some of the major concerns centre on human effects on land, water, drought, forests, biodiversity and marine pollution. There has also been conflict between urban-based environmental concerns and rural-based communities and industries, characterised in political rhetoric as the city-bush divide.

Some Baby Boomers have participated in responses to environmental concerns, whilst at the same time other Baby Boomers have managed and implemented the policies of mining, agri-business and forestry companies. The environmental activists of the generation participated in several pivotal campaigns (e.g. Franklin Dam, Daintree, Save the Whales, Fraser Island, Landcare) that focused national attention on some of their key concerns. Baby Boomers were also active in founding and supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Australian Conservation Fund and Greenpeace.

A paradox for environmentally concerned Baby Boomers is that their consumption driven lifestyle, economic spending power and longevity put considerable strains on the environment. Perhaps an attempt to rationalise this paradox is the now popular term 'sustainable development': the idea that one can protect the environment while simultaneously being an active or even aggressive consumer – albeit an informed one.

Sue Hutton's series of works *Burnt Bras Life on Mars* (2004) refer to this paradox. The degradation of the planet that is occurring while we strive to reach Mars is a great disappointment to the artist.

Women's Issues

For many Australian women of the Baby Boomer generation, women's issues were and still are important to how they view themselves and are viewed by others. After World War 2, there were several general trends affecting the role of women in Australian society. These included a reduction in overall family size, an expansive economy, the development of labour-saving household devices, and an increase in the availability and variety of consumer goods. These trends led to significant changes, challenges and opportunities for Baby Boomers that differed considerably from previous generations of women.

As elsewhere, feminism in Australia has focused on identifying and altering the disparity of the rights of women in comparison to those of men. Historically, efforts to address inequities have focused on improving educational and occupational opportunities, encouraging political participation and representation, and overcoming sexual domination and exploitation by men.

Of the various 'waves' of feminism during the 19th and 20th centuries, the second wave during the 1960s and 1970s had the most profound effect on Baby Boomers. Some of its key concerns were repositioning women as more than 'just' wives and mothers and encouraging sexual liberation, based on the ready availability of contraception and wider acceptance of same-sex relationships.

In the heightened climate of debate and socio-cultural change in the 1960s and 1970s, women's issues moved to the forefront of Australia's political, economic and socio-cultural life. Politicians of all parties, religious leaders of many denominations and even the military establishment had to at least pay lip service to the notion of women as equal to men. Importantly, the efforts of many Baby Boomer women (and men) toward fuller equality did not focus solely on gender but combined with related concerns for civil and human rights. Those concerns still overlap today, even though women are still demographically under-represented in the upper echelons of commerce, education and politics.

Helene Grove's work *Women's Liberation* (2004) highlights the struggle of the modern woman, balancing having 1.5 children, a career and femininity.



September 5, 1989: Anti-logging protesters at the launch of the "Koala Kit for Schools" in Martin Place, Sydney. Photographer Dave Hancock. Photograph courtesy of Newspix/News Ltd. Used with permission.



Photograph of a 1966 Sirens of the Surf team, a carnival established in Bundaberg in 1946 as entertainment for the Railway Picnic. This is an example of the desire for women's fashion and consumerism, in direct conflict with the ideals of the feminist movement.



Consumerism and Invention

Baby Boomers are arguably the first Australian generation that have the luxury of privileging lifestyle over work. They are the consummate consumers, driving mass industries for ‘making things’, ‘making images’ and ‘making choices’ to satisfy their seemingly insatiable appetite for the new, the unique – and often – the expensive. Baby Boomers are the huge market that advertisers pursue as the wants, needs and desires of their generation change across their lifespan.

What they buy as well as how much and where they buy it reflect their status and display their affluence. Whereas the Silent Generation, growing up with the adversity and limitations of the Great Depression of the 1930s, learnt to ‘do without it’, Baby Boomers learnt to ‘do it with a credit card’.

Consumerism is a cross-generational link. Generation X-ers and Y-ers are also addicted to ‘retail therapy’, shopping as a lifestyle – and increasingly an economic necessity, something that can be done ‘in the national interest’. The things and images they consume may vary but the ethos remains the same as their parents and grandparents.

Australians from the Silent Generation invented, refined or initiated many of the items, images or infrastructure projects that fuelled the consumerism of Baby Boomers and their descendants, although it is also very much a transnational phenomenon.

Some notable Australian inventions that contributed to consumerism and helped define the post World War 2 lifestyle were:

- the Hills Hoist accompanied the expansion of suburbia – and families, 1946;
- the CSIRAC computer, not only the world’s fifth computer but also the first capable of producing computerised music, 1947;
- the Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme, provided power for appliances and manufacturing, 1949-1972;
- the Victa rotary lawnmower, helped keep the quarter-acre block neat and tidy, 1952;
- the beginning of television broadcasting, profoundly affected social and cultural life, 1956;
- QANTAS’s round-the-world air service heralded the era of rapid – and eventually affordable – transnational air travel, 1958;
- the water-path ultrasound scanner epitomised increasing advances in medical research and treatment, 1961;
- the first full-time environmental centre established in Sydney, indicated widening and organised concern for the environment, 1972; and
- the first IVF pregnancy, offered hope to infertile Australians but also challenged some strongly held religious beliefs and notions of what made up a ‘family’, 1973.

There are many other examples of Australian consumerism but perhaps some of the main consumerist credos of the Baby Boomer era could be typified as: ‘you are what you buy’, ‘you are where you travel’, ‘you are what you idolise’, and finally last but certainly not least: ‘I shop, therefore I am’.

Look in the lounge room display to find books about design and consumer goods of the 1960s and 1970s.

Aging Population Phenomenon

Australia and other countries in the ‘developed’ world face major challenges dealing with the ageing Baby Boomer generation. Central to creating those challenges are a steep decline in fertility rates and longer life spans. Variable levels of migration are also significant.

There are several main questions to be answered. By whom and how will Baby Boomer’s requirements be met? How much is government willing or able to do? What level of responsibility will younger generations accept?

Population projections suggest there is a need for fundamental societal changes in order to move responsibility away from governments on to families or the private sector. In Australia, government enforced changes already include mandatory occupational superannuation, means testing for the age pension and a gradual increase in women’s pensionable age from 60 to 65 by 2012.

Capitalism of course has winners and losers. Financially successful Baby Boomers – those with property, investments or superannuation – may have the resources for a relaxed and comfortable old age. Less resourced Baby Boomers, particularly those who have been on a low income level, welfare, disabled or ill, may not have the means for a secure retirement. The societal, and ultimately moral dilemma is deciding to what level the much touted notions of ‘egalitarianism’ and ‘land of a fair go’ still hold true in Australia – or at least remain politically palatable to the younger generations fated to look after the Baby Boomers in retirement.

It is not all ‘doom and gloom’ however. Baby Boomers are projected not only to live longer but also to be healthier. Therefore they may be able to assist in looking after their own age group through volunteer work. There may also be sufficient alternative community care choices available so they can remain at home and independent as long as possible. Regardless of what may happen to individuals, as a generation they will still constitute a large voting block and thus can influence political decisions concerning them.



Bundaberg resident and Baby Boomer Phil Ainsworth co-founded the company Jabiru in 1988, designing and manufacturing light sport aircraft.



The Victa lawn mower and the Hills Hoist are still strong symbols of Australian invention. They even featured in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. Photos courtesy of Sandra Aidon.

Intergenerational relationships:

Silent Generation vs. Baby Boomers vs. Generation X vs. Generation Y



Boom Baby Boom curator Shelley Pisani (Generation X) with her parents Alison and Robert McLucas (Baby Boomers) on her Christening day in 1973.

There are certain stereotyped differences between generations: the old are supposedly bull-headed, recalcitrant and old-fashioned; the young are supposedly inexperienced, irresponsible and inactive. And each generation dreads to hear refrains such as ‘when I was your age’ or ‘when I’m in charge, things will be different’. Stereotypes are just that: generalisations both positive and negative. However, each generation experiences its world in a particular blend of time, place and situation and each responds in its own ways.

In Australia, key generations can be characterised as the Silent (c. 1925 – 1944), the Baby Boomers (c. 1945 – 1964), the X’ers (c. 1965 – 1978) and the Y’ers (c. 1979 – 1994). The Silent Generation grew up in the shadows of two pivotal and traumatic events: the Great Depression and World War 2. For them, security – financial and political – is a major issue.

The Baby Boomers grew up in an era of economic expansion and affluence, albeit under the chilly shadow of the Cold War. For them, iconic phrases such as ‘a quality lifestyle’ and ‘save the rain forests/whales/koalas etc’ demonstrate the sometimes-paradoxical conflict between their lifestyle aspirations and the environmental consequences of their actions.

Generation X-ers and Y-ers have grown up in a world of intensive and profound global change where the media broadcast conflicts, disasters and major events live to their lounge rooms. For them, the overwhelming influence and resource requirements of the Baby Boomer generation in particular, mean they may have to pay a higher price to support their needs, such as the growing costs of aged care and health.

It is over simplistic however to defer too much to rigid stereotypes. After all, Australia’s different generations still speak collectively with their votes. The strongly conservative Australian governments since the mid-1990s indicate that the supposed broadminded tendencies of the Baby Boomers in their youth have morphed into something else. Perhaps it is the caution of age or perhaps a desire to protect what they have accumulated. Perhaps the ‘Me Generation’ (a term often applied to Generation X) merely paused momentarily amidst the trappings of the ‘abnormal’ before returning to the ‘normal’ of its parents’ generation. Perhaps generation ‘gaps’ are not necessarily unbridgeable ‘chasms’ when self-interest intrudes.

List of Works

Ann Grocott

Legacy, 2003
mixed media
123 x 92 cms

Sign of the Times, 2004
mixed media
127 x 63 cms

Helene Grove

‘Boomers’ Illustrated, 2004
acrylic on canvas
80 x 100 cms

Liberated Woman, 2004
acrylic on canvas
80 x 100 cms

Susan Hutton

burnt bras life on Mars, 2004
digital images
Posters (4) 61 x 44cm

hands up all those who prefer peace, 2004
mixed media
Wall hangings (7) 81 x 31 cms
Ceramic bowls (7) 17 x 4 cms
Artist’s book 22 x 31 cms

Red Rags, Green Bans, 2004
ceramic, metal and digital images
Wall piece (2) 32 x 20 cms

Chris Johnstone

Rocketman, 2004
oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay
40 x 10 x 10 cms

Moulded Through Play, 2004
oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay
57 x 18 x 18 cms

Plastic Reflection, 2004
oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay
54 x 14 x 15 cms

From the Earth, 2004
oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay
61 x 25 x 25 cms

Steve blasting off to save the world, 2004
oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff-raku clay
45 x 28 x 32 cms

Seth Keen

boomsplatbangwhack, 2004
video
Base loop running time 1.50 minutes

Dave Machen

Fading Reflections, 2004
acrylic on canvas
102 x 122 cms

Popeye and Pop Art, 2004
acrylic on canvas
122 x 102 cms

Rabbits 1954-58, 2004
acrylic on canvas
102 x 122 cms

Jennifer McDuff

Last Supper, 2004
ceramic tile installation and photographic panels
Tiles (56) 15 x 15 cms each
Photographs (6) 150 x 100 cms

Christine Turner

...and then Eve burnt her bra, 2004
digital image
63 x 51 cms

Magical Mystical, 2004
digital image
63 x 51 cms

Spaced Out, 2004
digital image
63 x 51 cms

Remembrance, 2004
digital image
63 x 51 cms

White Rabbit, 2004
digital image
63 x 51 cms

Other Catalogue Image Acknowledgements

- p. 4 – detail of Ann Grocott, *Legacy*, 2003, mixed media
- p. 5 – detail of Helene Grove, *'Boomers Illustrated'*, 2004, acrylic on canvas
- p. 6 – detail of Susan Hutton, *hands up all those who prefer peace*, 2004, ceramic bowl
- p. 7 – detail of Chris Johnstone, *Moulded Through Play*, 2004, oxide, glaze and underglaze over buff- raku clay
- p. 8 – still from Seth Keen, *boomsplatbangwhack*, 2004, video, presented on Colorama television
- p. 9 – detail of Jennifer McDuff, *Last Supper*, 2004, handpainted ceramic tiles
- p. 10 – detail of Dave Machen, *Rabbits 1954-58*, 2004, acrylic on canvas
- p. 11 – detail of Christine Turner, *White Rabbit*, 2004, digital image