



Tramspotting

Michelle Hamer

**Fortyfivedownstairs
Gallery**

2–13th June 2009

HOURS

Tue to Fri: 11am–5pm
Sat: 12pm – 4pm

MEDIUM

Hand-stitched tapestry (mixed yarn on perforated plastic) accompanied by an electro-acoustic soundscape by Melanie Chilianis

Artwork Photography: Marc Morel
Image Manipulation: Gordon + Kreisler

www.michellehamer.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This exhibition has been made possible through much time and support in many forms from: Steve Adam, Stephen Banham, Matt Bird, Tiani Chilemi, Melanie Chilianis, Gerry & Ken Hamer, Toby Horrocks, Gaby Jung, Bernadette McGrath, Candy Mitchell, Olivia Poloni, Beatka Provis, Christine Scott-Young, Marcus Sinfield.

Special Thanks from both Michelle Hamer and Melanie Chilianis to Marc Morel for providing endless time, support, critical feedback, equipment and photography.

ABOVE *Give up your day job* (2009) 136 x 55cm

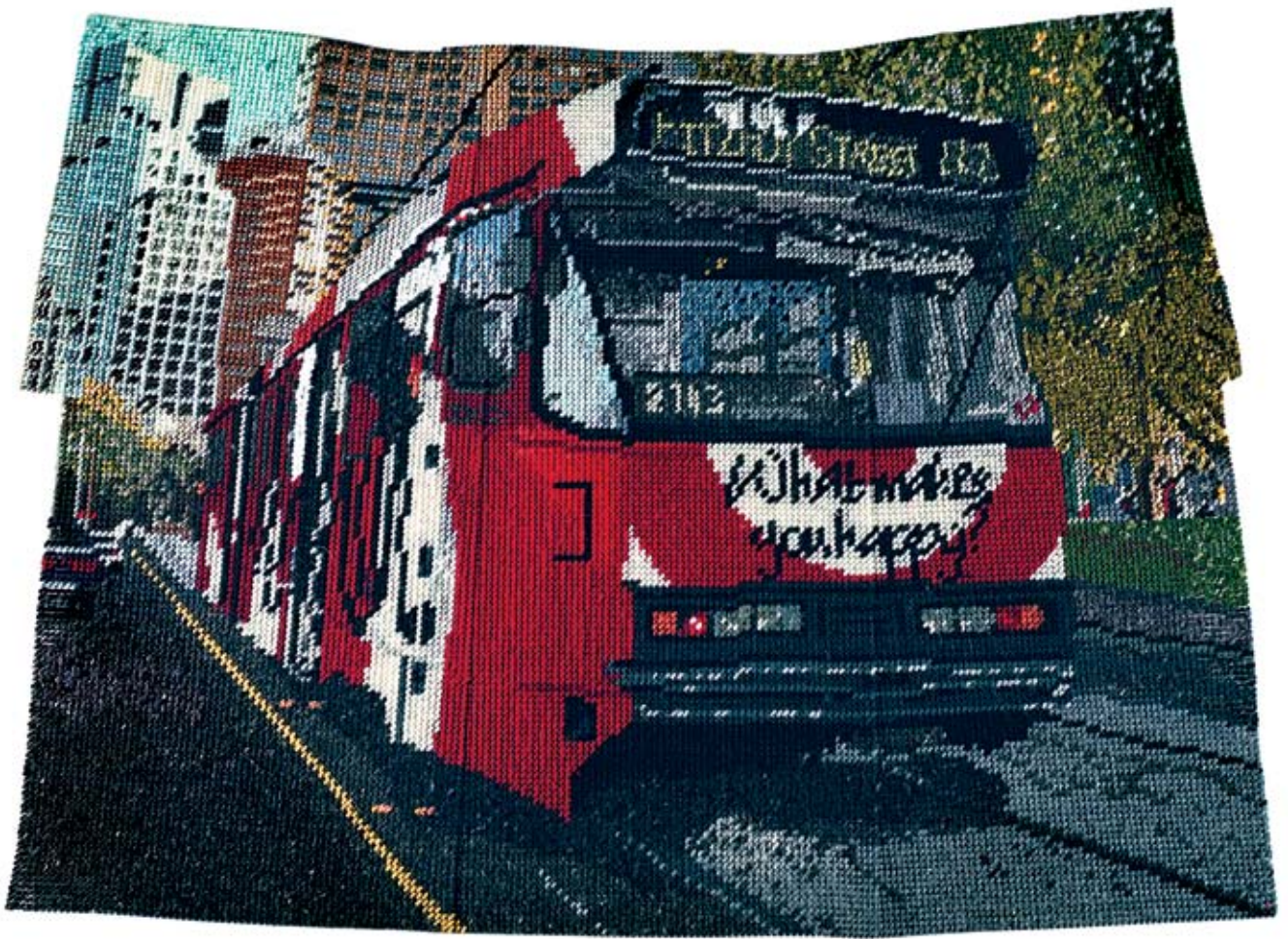
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The work of Michelle Hamer captures moments in time; moments in time that enquire into contemporary functions of society and impermanent points between spaces and places. By translating photographs of freeway billboards and signage from urban arteries onto tapestry, her practice narrates fleeting moments on the road and transient time gone by, bringing forth a sense of the travelogue and the cinematic.

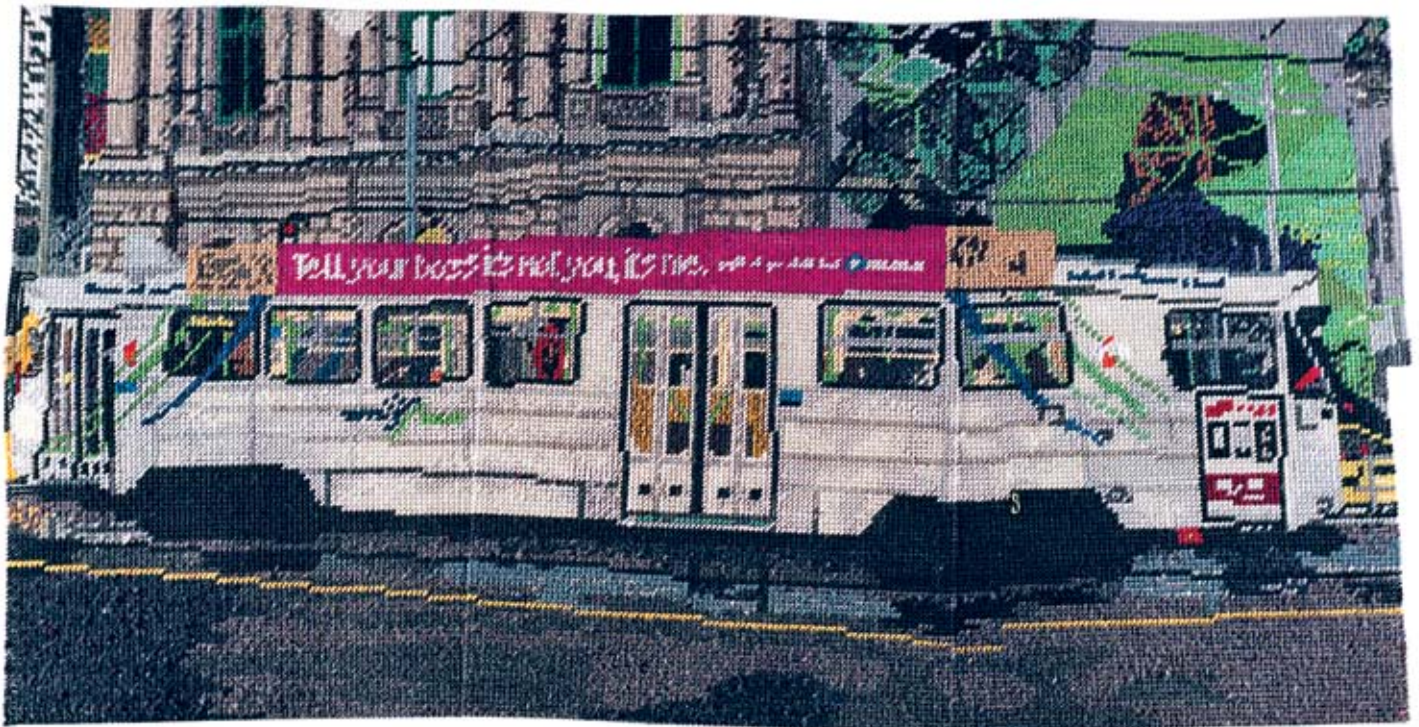
This new body of work, *Tramspotting*, offers a change of perspective. From once concentrating on advertising that is passed by, these new frames pass the viewer by. Picking up on specific signage upon inner city Melbourne trams, Hamer presents the Melbourne streetscape, exploring societal codes and consciousness. Hamer explains, 'through drawing out the simultaneous iconic and everyday elements of interstitial spaces, the artwork reflects on our changing communal reality and aspirations'.

Capturing a photographic image involves a process of including and excluding; representing what is in the frame as well as what is outside, or moreover what has been omitted from the image. In this exhibition Hamer includes peripheral flashes of the everyday and excludes original context to re-situate public transport signage and re-establish their literal meaning along-side their ambiguity, allowing the viewer to bring forth their own adaptation and experience.

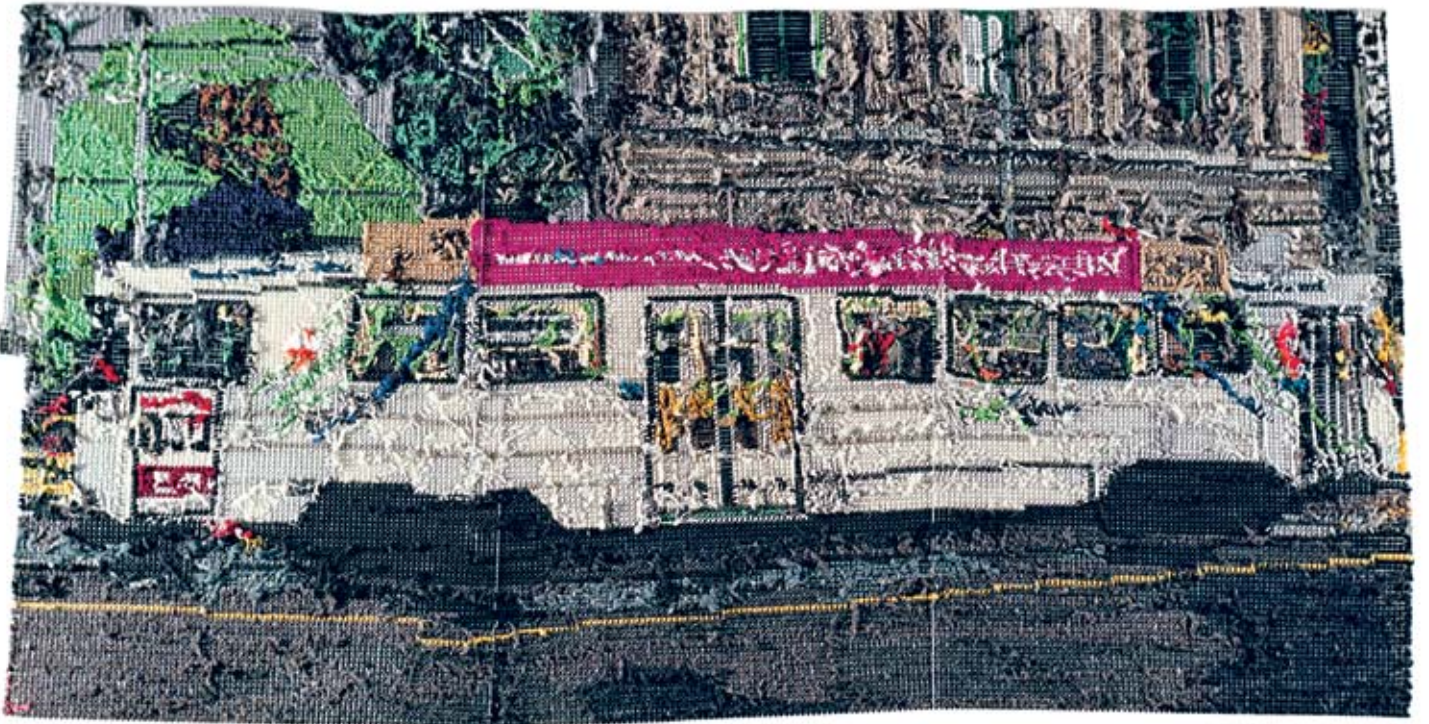
A Commonwealth Bank advertisement demands, '*Give up your day job...*' and a Target sign questions, '*What makes you happy?*'. The images in this exhibition play on bywords that by marketing senses intend to appeal to inner city commuters but moreover reflect the ideals and integrity of contemporary culture. This work explores hard realities of everyday life through the fine and tactile image-making of tapestry; articulating an insightful human narrative.

Olivia Poloni

Olivia Poloni is a curator and writer based in Melbourne, Australia.



TOP *What makes you happy* (2009) 78 x 59.5cm **MIDDLE** *Survive a crash and a virus* (2009) 101 x 29cm **BOTTOM** *Tell your boss it's not you, it's me* (2009) 105 x 52cm



**Limits, rules, a field of operation.
An infinite number of possible
permutations and combinations.
The object of the game is to recreate
the photo, which is itself a recreation
of reality, limited only by the colours
available (*wool colours change seasonally*).**

Re-presentation. The art of tapestry has a long history. An instant history: Needle-point *Home Sweet Home* versus *Give up your day job* – an archival version of a photograph, with more historic weight.

Is Michelle Hamer's work in fact a form of sculpture? The works have a front and a back. Although the back stage view shows you the scaffold and the loops and shortcuts of the process. The process of making is evident and forceful. A dry process, unlike painting, it is all in the selection of subject, the choice of medium, the selection of colours... the actual *assembly* of the work is straightforward, if time-consuming. "How long does it take you to do that?"

Paint has the ability to smoothly morph from one colour to the next, to mimic photographic realness. Tapestry starts with a grid, and the scale the image Hamer creates dictates how smooth or disjointed the image will appear. A 1cm x 1cm work would appear abstract, a 100m x 100m work would appear photo-real. The images faithfully reproduce the disjuncture between tones of collaged snapshots. They do not smooth over these discrepancies. She also presents the composition of rectangular plastic grids in a way that mimics the uneven edge of a photomontage – and the works are literally reproductions of photomontages. She does smooth over these joints between plastic grids, so even while she leaves the disjuncture between photographs remain intact, the image of the photomontage as a whole is smooth.

Initially Hamer's work centred on decaying LED freeway signage, also pixelated in their representation. Text. Yellow on black. Her medium mimicked the medium of her subject. A subject that failed to represent accurately, where a glitch in the machine; in the process; in the system; caused unintentionally humorous/ironic results. "Sorry" says the tram.

Toby Horrocks

Toby Horrocks is an architect and writer with an abiding interest in the visual arts.



IMAGE *Sorry* (2009) 67.5 x 135cm