



Jennifer Mathews

UNIT

20 September - 4 October 2024

Location

Level 1, 158 Edinburgh Rd
Marrickville NSW 2204

Opening hours

12 - 5pm, Fri & Sat
& by appointment

Contact

e: info@laila.sydney
ig: [@laila_sydney](https://www.instagram.com/laila_sydney)

LAILA.

20 SEPTEMBER — 4 OCTOBER 2024
OPENING SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER
4-6PM

Unit

JENNIFER MATHEWS

LEVEL 1
158 EDINBURGH RD
MARRICKVILLE, SYDNEY
AUSTRALIA 2204

In 2019 I was talking to Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley about *Aesthetic Suicide*, their wall piece consisting of an X containing a quote by the enigmatic playwright and Warhol-shooter Valerie Solanas. Nearby was their work *Barbara Hepworth Table*, a slab of raw timber with natural holes in it, riffing on the idea that Hepworth was the first person to put a “hole” in sculpture in 1931. Justin Clemens interjected and asked “And who was the first person to put a hole in Andy Warhol?” It was the last time I remember genuinely laughing in an artist talk.

Alongside X’s and O’s in Mathews’ works I have been thinking not of Warhol’s work, but of the way various permutations of the idea of “stock” pervaded his life. The factory; stock yards; stock images; the stock of the soup can; something distilled into its essence or median. Mathews’ recurring glint of silver and forms distilled from stock feeders remind me that Warhol first talked about his floating silver balloons as meandering cows free from the gallery architecture (consider the urban imagination - conflating emancipation with cows). The recurring motif of a gate or window in Mathews’ work reminds me that Solanas only stopped shooting everyone in the factory repeatedly because the silver elevator doors unexpectedly opened behind her, mid rampage, and Fred Hughes yelled “There’s the elevator! Just take it!” She ran back in and the doors closed.¹

Mathews’ works are conjured from the intelligence of clamps, wheels, gates, fences, windows... basically tacit guides for how to move and look. Just like elevator doors (or a gun), their appearance alone implies an action. Mathews’ pieces are handmade and technically functional, but also diagrams - the size of humans; the boiled down ingredients of industrial agriculture and modernist museum design. In all my time in art schools, galleries, and perusing media, work that is most successfully “comprehended” is usually somehow in conversation with a room, approachable by a human. Comprehension of design is a treat and confusion by design is a threat; understand the assignment and get fed. Understand meaning, and get fed. Dwell in not-knowing and receive the stick. I imagine that by the time the human species ends, in some kind of mass-fermentation/ripening event where humans “go off” because of the relentless humidity; such a large portion of the world will be adapted to human dimensions that other aspects of nature will begin to parasitically adapt to them too. Consider the native white Ibis; the bin is a feedlot; a dump is a sanctuary; they scour the city; the city is a dump.

Like Hepworth’s hole, stock images were developed in the early 20th century, to save publishers money. As media and communication sped up, stock images were used for education and most recently memes. Their progression into tools for meme making demonstrate how an image that is developed to quickly communicate an idea can have its meaning internalised through repetition, and understood to mean something different. The absurdity of representing the carrot

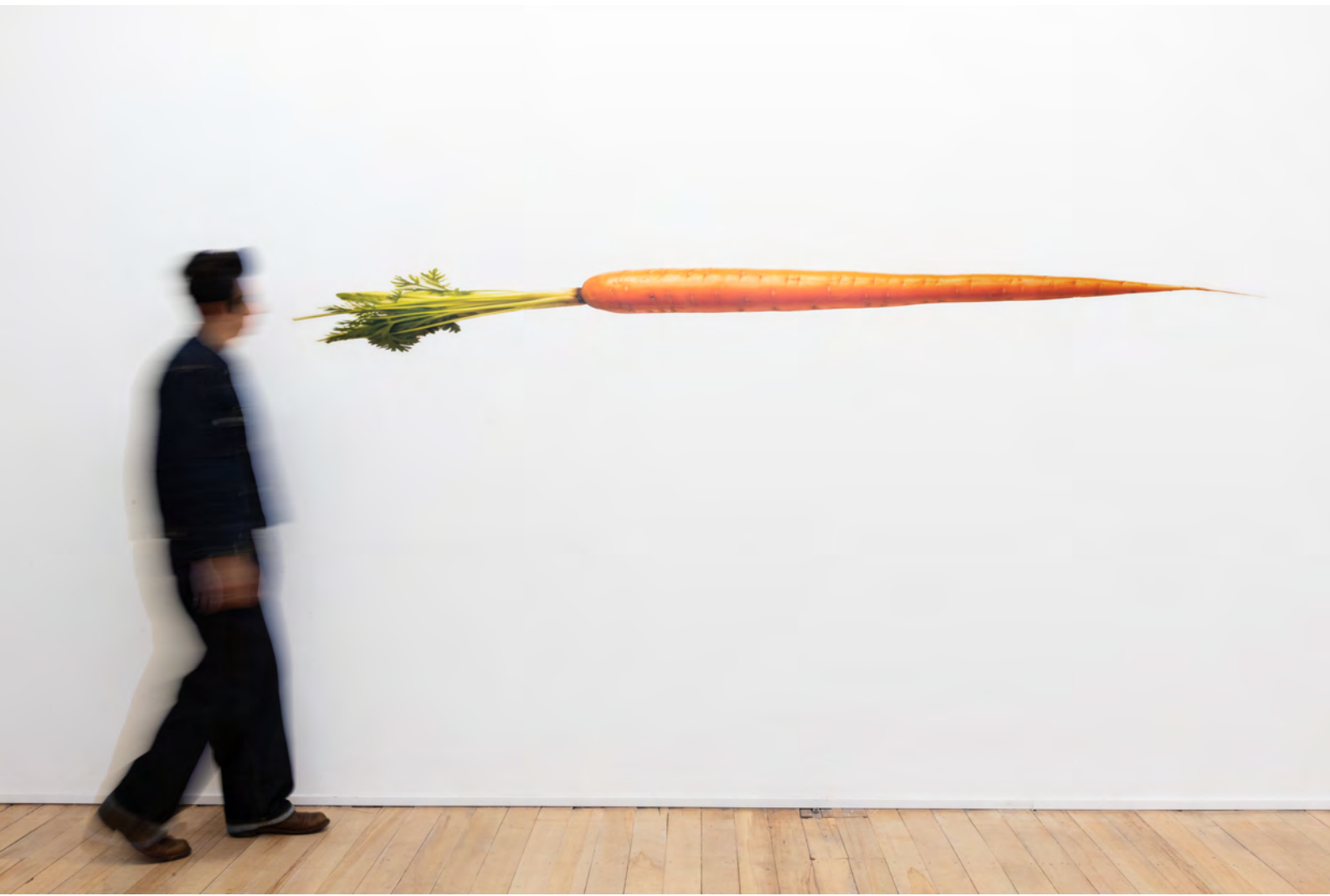
¹ And then, out of the blue, the rupture: on June 3, 1968, Valerie Solanas took the elevator up to the 33 Union Square West office and shot Warhol. “No! No, Valerie! Don’t do it!” he shouted. He remembered: “As I lay there, I watched the blood come through my shirt and I heard more shooting and yelling. (Later—a long time later—they told me that two bullets from a .32-caliber gun had gone through my stomach, liver, spleen, esophagus, left lung, and right lung.)” His friend Mario Amaya had also been hit, though not severely; she almost shot Fred Hughes, too, but he stopped her by saying, “Please! Don’t shoot me! Just leave!” Warhol remembered: “Right when it looked like she was about to pull the trigger, the elevator doors opened suddenly and Fred said, ‘There’s the elevator! Just take it!’” - Wayne Kostenbaum

and the stick metaphor visually is that it is also internalised. In Mathews' work, three median-human-sized feeders represent the internalisation of the carrot and the stick. Reward and discipline is distilled in each form.

The images are stretched out to the limit of the gallery. This is an obedient nod to the authority of the gallery dimensions. Do they hold up? The images' distortion is only the most subtle challenge to our comprehension. They signify incomprehension, but never commit fully to full-blown confusion. It's tonal, like, *ccaarrroott* and *ssttiicckk*. We are at this point now, where the master's tools are the same as the slaves, and transcendence comes through variations in voice and tone. All the ingredients socialise in the same stock. Consider it a concentration camp for looking.

Text courtesy of George Egerton-Warburton

LILA.



LILA.



LAILA.





Plateau of productivity (faceless grazing), 2024
hot-dipped galvanised steel, epoxy resin
61 x 83 x 5 cm





Trough of disillusionment, 2024
hot-dipped galvanised steel, epoxy resin
121 x 62 x 3.5 cm





Peak of inflated expectations (snoring, glaring multiples), 2024

hot-dipped galvanised steel, epoxy resin

106 x 76.5 x 5 cm



LILA.





Feeder (child), 2024

powder coated steel and aluminium

120 x 34 x 34 cm



Feeder (young adult), 2024
powder coated steel and aluminium
163.4 x 49 x 49 cm

LILA.



Feeder (senior), 2024
powder coated steel and aluminium
158 x 60.5 x 60.5 cm



Carrot or the stick, 2024

photographic prints on adhesive vinyl
300 x 30 cm each

Editions available upon request (various sizes)

LILA.



LILA.

