# Lou Hubbard – Audio Transcript 2

I’m Lou Hubbard, a competitor in the 2015 Guirguis New Art Prize. My work, Dead Still Standing comprises a life-size latex rubber horse straddled across Coalbrookdale cast aluminium furniture with a small plastic sausage dog poised on a 90’s skateboard. The dog’s plastic lead is outstretched and its handle is perched on a small ledge under the centre of the table.

The horse has been in my art practice for several years dating back to 2006 when a three-centimetre rubber horse was used in a video entitled *Hack*. On that occasion I pulled the horse across a table top through a number of obstacles.

I initially scaled up the horse from three-centimetre to life-size in rubber to use this in a work at ACCA *New 10*. After that exhibition I put the horse into storage. In July last year I took it out of storage to give it another run in the paddock so to speak. I wanted to rework it in an ambitious size room project at West Space Gallery in Melbourne. I wanted to see whether in its distressed state without its bloated sponge rubber stomach - a feature of the 2010 iteration - I could perhaps bring life back into it and get it to stand up.

I’ve worked with the aluminium furnishing for some time as well with various lightbox forms and I felt on this occasion the culmination of a work from two very clear lineages of materials would perhaps be a good confluence, an energetic clash in the context of this particular competition and exhibition being situated in Ballarat. Ballarat in our cultural heritage is an historic gold mining town in the early 1800’s and the horse was hard-working in a vital time of prosperity, optimism and economic growth.

I received a horse from my father upon the announcement that he was moving out of the home to live with another woman. So in his absence I was given this gift of a horse. I was eleven years old at the time and obviously that’s a critical time in any child’s development and presumably I was considered old enough to look after a horse especially as I didn’t come from a horsey family and I probably took on that responsibility in a type of pride in being able to serve that horse as if it was a stand-in for the absent father. And this explanation is clearly a much more mature adults reckoning of that time in my life. When my children – I think they were in their late teens – gave me a gift of a small three-centimetre rubber horse. Upon lifting the lid of the box its little feet and legs were fibrillating, like how a fur might move when you brush past it. I had such an emotional and I immediately knew I needed to… I had such an emotional response to it that I needed to work out those feelings in a piece of art. I set about putting this horse, on its back and dragging it through a number of obstacles and it became the video *Hack.*

A few years later I was asked to be in a show at ACCA – the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. This was a real privilege and a prestigious opportunity for an emerging artist to make a significant work. I decided that I would return to the horse, and scale up the three centimetre rubber horse and bring it into relationship with another aspect of my childhood: the lenses of my eye-glasses. I was born cross-eyed and I had worn glasses since I’d had several operations from about the age of three to six so I’d grown up always wearing eyeglasses. I modelled huge plate glass – very thick glass – on the shape of my eyeglass lenses. These glass forms weighing a couple of hundred kilos pressed down on to the stomach of this horse lying on its side on the gallery floor. To me that action was a type of reckoning – again this is with hindsight – it was a type of reckoning of the personal, of me becoming conscious literally through my eyes, through my lenses pressed on to the belly of that horse. My father hadn’t long died, I think in 2002 so enough years had passed for me to feel that I could reconcile something of that relationship with him and my developing consciousness of my own mortality as well. That work became Dead Still.

Mid-way through last year I decided to bring the horse out of storage and work further with this horse to make it upstanding. The work for the Guirguis New Art Prize 2015 is titled Dead Still Standing and it obviously refers to that first iteration but on this occasion it straddles the Coalbrookdale furniture which is a 19th Century garden cast-iron furniture that came out of Coalbrookdale in England known for its iron ore smelting. Today that furniture has a domestic vernacular that’s very common. For decades they’ve been produced in aluminium and they’re available in different qualities. You can buy them in second hand shops and antiques shops, or even garden shops It is sometimes described as “shabby chic” but actually this is the furniture that my husband and I inherited from his parents who died in the 90’s. The horse being an ode to my father and the furnishings coming from my husband’s family bring together symbols of absence from very personal influences in my life.

My work is usually generated by using domestic objects, found objects, objects that trigger an emotional response in me. My job is to rescue those objects then work through the psychology of why they affect me. I have to locate that narrative and play it out so the work is part performance, partly a re-enactment.

So now my horse has entered a domestic vernacular alongside the furnishing: I guess through racing, pony-clubbing and equestrian events the horse too has been domesticated and is not so much the utilitarian, functioning animal of old.

There’s a type of sad optimism to this piece. The horse is standing as if engaged and raring to go with the little dog underneath it a bit Trojan-like sneaking into the gallery as if to say “come on, let’s go” and of course there’s a futility to that aspiration.