

Education Resource

# RISTING TIDE

Film and Video works  
from the MCA Collection



Circular Quay West  
Sydney Australia  
Open 7 days 10am–5pm  
[www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au)

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# INTRODUCTION

This resource has been produced by MCA Learning to support the exhibition *Rising Tide: Film and Video works from the MCA Collection*. It is aimed at teachers and students in secondary levels but can be adapted for primary and tertiary studies. It is designed for students of visual arts, photographic and digital media. This exhibition also provides enrichment and extension for many key learning areas including English, Drama, Human Society and its Environment, ESL/NESB and ITC.

## THIS RESOURCE OFFERS

- An introduction to video art
- A historical and critical context for contemporary video art
- An exhibition overview
- A separate downloadable resource detailing all 14 artists in the exhibition.
- Four case studies on key works and artists  
(three of whom appear on the DVD resource MCA Artist's Voice Series 3)
- A series of focus questions and activities
- A summary of key themes in the exhibition and relevant artworks
- A comprehensive glossary of terms

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource provides an insight into key works and artists in the exhibition and offers information, focus questions and suggested activities for further study. A special feature is the case studies on artists who appear in the MCA Artist's Voice Series 3 DVD resource, enabling students to view the featured video works then hear the artists discuss their practice.

The MCA Artist's Voice DVDs are available to view online at <http://www.mca.com.au> or order your free copy by email [artistvoice@mca.com.au](mailto:artistvoice@mca.com.au)

The material in this resource is designed to compliment a visit to the exhibition and be used in conjunction with other exhibition resources. Use the images, activities and ideas to assist with pre-visit preparation, as a guide during the gallery visit and to develop post-visit activities and discussion. Teachers can adapt the case studies to suit their students' needs or integrate areas of this resource into existing classroom units of study.

Key terms in bold are defined and included in the glossary at the end of this resource. A guide to additional publications and resources has been provided to assist further study.

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

## SECONDARY

(can be adapted for Primary and Tertiary)

For secondary audiences the study of artworks in a gallery environment during their class visit to the MCA provides a valuable learning opportunity. *Rising Tide: Film and Video from the MCA Collection* is the ideal context for the study of Artist's Practice, the Conceptual Framework and The Frames (with particular emphasis on the Postmodern and Structural Frames). See the focus questions and activities for further syllabus-linked teaching and learning ideas.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt syllabus links from the list below to suit the system of their school's state. Please use this list as a starter for planning, or talk to MCA Learning staff for further ideas.

## VISUAL ARTS/ CREATIVE ARTS

- The role of the Curator
- The role of the Contemporary Museum
- Conceptual framework - Artist, Artwork, Audience, World
- Artist's practice
- Art History, Art Criticism
- Diversity of media and techniques
- Postmodernism: appropriation and recontextualisation, language and text, multiple readings, humour and irony
- Art which is challenging and provocative
- Art and politics, art and current events, art and personal histories
- New Technologies
- Sculpture and installation

## PHOTOGRAPHIC & DIGITAL MEDIA; TIME-BASED ART

- Allusions to popular culture
- Video as documentation – truth and artifice
- The moving image – video and installation
- Multimedia presentations

## ENGLISH

- Analysing visual texts
- Oral and research skills
- Response to visual stimuli
- Creative writing and response
- Critical essays and reviews

## **DRAMA**

- Performance art
- Dance and movement
- Allusions to popular culture
- Self portraiture and portraiture
- Humour and irony

## **PHOTOGRAPHIC AND DIGITAL**

- Allusions to popular culture including film
- The moving image portrait and self portrait
- Photography and film as documentation - truth and artifice
- The Moving image - video and installation
- Multimedia presentations

## **SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT**

- Visual Arts as reflection of contemporary culture
- Visual arts as reflection of cultural and personal identity

## **ESL/NESB/CALD**

- Developing a visual arts vocabulary list
- Written and oral responses
- Cultural identity and issues in the visual arts

# VIDEO ART: A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL CONTEXT

## II PAUSE/STOP: WHAT IS VIDEO ART?

In contemporary life, video is an exciting & pervasive medium. Video's uses and applications are many and varied; from domestic home-theatre use to complex immersive works by contemporary video artists. Affordable hand-held digital video cameras, off the shelf and 'freeware' video post production software packages have empowered a generation of young emerging film and video makers. Television & closed circuit surveillance systems are now accepted as mediating many aspects of public life. Commercially available and affordable video production hardware and software has opened up the accessibility of image making and presentation via the internet, television, the independent film genre, and museums and galleries being readily utilised by artists in their practices.

The history of video art can be traced back to the German artist, Wolf Vostell (1932-98) who included working television sets in his assemblages in 1959<sup>1</sup>. The artist attributed as the pioneer of the video art genre, however, is usually regarded as Nam June Paik<sup>2</sup> who realised early in the 1960s that magnets applied to points outside a live TV screen could distort its kinetic image. Paik further explored this technology by placing an electrified wire across a reel of recorded videotapes, thereby causing erasure every few seconds. He was one of the first artists to assemble the **cathode ray tube television** monitors into a unified object, called **video sculptures**.

Video producers could use switchers and other devices to combine image in live time, such as splitting the screen and juxtaposing foreground images against differing backgrounds<sup>3</sup>. As the cost of video hardware decreased and became more accessible, artists began utilising the technology in their practice.

**But what separates video art from its closest relatives, film and television<sup>4</sup>?**

Video art evolved as a reaction to television, as technology became less expensive and more portable, artists began to subvert the medium for their own purposes. Artists began working outside accepted cinematic practice exploring the possibilities of non-narrative structure, the infinite duration of a continuous loop and multi-channel delivery. Artists became interested in exploring the context of the work as situated in the gallery and museum. The work of artist Matthew Barney signals a recent return to cinema, evidenced in his series of feature length films, *The Cremaster Cycle* which utilises cinematic conventions and screens in movie theatres as well as gallery spaces.

The commercial accessibility of technology has allowed greater domestic applications for artists and filmmakers to immerse the viewer in the work and inhabit space. Home theatre systems indicate the expectation of the audience to immerse themselves in the whole audio visual experience, and artists continue to exploit or subvert this increasing familiarity with the medium.

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1. Cited in Chilvers, Ian, *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2003. p.620

2. Ibid.

3. Kostelanetz, Richard *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, 2nd Edition, Schirmer Books, New York, 2000. p.644

4. For an interesting discussion on 'Video as art', refer to Rush, Michael. *New Media in Art, New Edition*. Thames and Hudson, London, 2005.p.87

## But what about changes in the technical qualities of video?

Audio-visual material can be stored on **analogue** tape based media formats (magnetically stored information on tape) or **digitally**, as data stored as code. While each mode of storage has its benefits and challenges, accessing the content is entirely dependent on having the playback facility to view the material. Playback formats may be comprised of hardware, software or a combination of both. A DVD player, for example is hardware designed purely to 'read' DVDs, whereas a digital video file, such as a QuickTime file stored on USB requires both a computer (hardware) and an operating system like Windows (software) to 'read' the stored data.

The storage of digital files on hardware or stored on disc based hardware requires compression of the file, and necessarily, a compromise in quality as the media loses information in order to conserve space. The quality of a video work is therefore dependent on the level of compression taken place to store the data and play it back.

Digital video allows data to be preserved in its original format; offering opportunities for later manipulation or reformatting. Analogue film, on the other hand, is a sequence of individual images visible on the celluloid to the naked eye, when projected mechanically, creates a moving image.

Analogue video relies on magnetic tape, laser, disc or other storage media that is unrecognisable to the eye, disassociating it technically from directly illustrating reality<sup>5</sup>. Take, for example, the difference between film and digital photography. Photographs taken on film can be viewed on the negative strip, whereas the encoding of a digital photograph is unrecognisable to the human eye, but translated by the computer into a format ready for preservation or manipulation by creative software.

Technically, video depended on advances in the technology of magnetic tape (previously used for sound recording), and it is still a medium in a state of flux. Technological innovation in hardware means that videos can now be produced and edited solely on a computer. Similarly, video may be stored and exhibited in a number of ways, from large format projection, to transportable forms of DVD and USB, external hard drives and the small screen format of mobile phones. In his recent work, *The Tristan Project*, Bill Viola projected *Fire Woman* (2005) and *Tristan's Ascension (The Sound of a Mountain Under a Waterfall)* (2005) inside St Saviour's Church at Redfern, further questioning how audiences respond to the moving image in changing contexts.

Artists continue to challenge the applications of video in order to separate it from its better known domestic and commercial uses, and its associations with film and cinema. Many artists use the audience's familiarity with the moving image to communicate their ideas. For example, Isaac Julien's critique of **Blaxpotation** films in his highly polished work, *Baltimore* (2003), exhibited at the MCA in 2006 as part of the exhibition *Centre Pompidou Video Art: 1965-2005* (14 December 2006-25 February 2007), demonstrates how some artists emphasise strong production values and associate their work with popular and mass cultural influences.

This section has been written with reference to the following texts:

Kostelanetz, Richard *Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, 2nd Edition, Schirmer Books, New York, 2000.

Martin, Sylvia. *Video Art*. Taschen, Cologne 2006.

Rush, Michael. *New Media in Art*, New Edition. Thames and Hudson, London, 2005.

Thank you to Mark Brown, Audio Visual Coordinator at the Museum of Contemporary Art for his generous assistance in providing information on the technical and historical aspects of video art.

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5. Martin, Sylvia. *Video Art*. Taschen, Cologne 2006.p.6

## ▶ FAST FORWARD: INTRODUCTION TO RISING TIDE

*Rising Tide: Film and Video works from the MCA Collection* is an exhibition of moving-image art works drawn from the Museum of Contemporary Art's permanent collection. It introduces twelve contemporary Australian artists and artist collectives, and presents a range of visual and conceptual approaches to this widely embraced art form. Exhibited works employ single or multiple screens, wall-based projections and sculptural elements, some creating environments which viewers enter into and are surrounded by.

*Rising Tide* is the second exhibition in a two-part collaboration between the MCA Sydney and the MCA San Diego, California USA. Focused on the art of today, and the artists of their regions, the two institutions undertook the first stage in their collaboration with a major exhibition of works by West Coast Californian artists at the MCA Sydney in 2008. *Rising Tide* has recently been presented at the MCA San Diego, where it introduced Californian audiences to the work of Australian contemporary artists, many for the first time.

Artists in *Rising Tide* explore diverse themes through their work, from the personal through to the satirical, and the political. Ideas about family and portraiture are central to Kate Murphy's poignant five-screen installation *Prayers of a Mother*; while Todd McMillan and Tony Schwensen use the self-portrait to comment playfully on art history and recent Australian politics respectively. National identity and the mythology of the Australian outlaw are themes explored in TV Moore's multi-screen installation, *The Neddy Project*; and Sydney's Tangara train network forms a backdrop for Shaun Gladwell's inverted self-portrait which sees the artist, suspended as though in a zero-degree gravity environment, from a set of carriage handrails.

Assumptions about race and identity form themes in the work of Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser, who film two young children performing before the camera with masks. Sydney's female drag artists The Kingpins also perform for the camera – humorously presenting themselves as track-suited warriors in an urban jungle populated by Starbucks Cafés.

Susan Norrie comments on our impact upon the environment, sounding a note of warning through her haunting, black-and-white imagery shot in New Zealand and Australia. David Noonan uses the superseded medium of **Super 8** film to create a silent, gothic vision of owls at night time that is reminiscent of 'film noir'; while Patricia Piccinini's vast projection of a young woman within a turbulent ocean setting creates an unnerving commentary on human evolution.

Daniel von Sturmer creates an immersive environment with five small screens that weave their way across the gallery floor; abstracted images of pouring paint, and the objects and detritus found on the artist's studio desk, create a hypnotic effect. Jess MacNeil's two projections use digital means to create a similarly ambient mood – one showing boats drifting down the Ganges River in gently synchronized motion, and the other, abstracted shadows of people walking up and down the Sydney Opera House steps.

Text by Rachel Kent, Senior Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Curate your own exhibition of videos from the collection of work on You Tube. What key themes do you want to explore with your selection? What videos would work together and how will you display them? Exhibit them to your class on DVD and then hold a peer critique on the curatorial process.
- What are some of the things a curator has to consider when installing two video artworks next to each other in a gallery?
- What advantage might video artists have over painters or sculptors, in terms of sending and exhibiting their artwork around the world?

## ◀ REWIND: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The increased prominence – and some would say dominance – of video art over the past decade has resulted in one of the most noticeable and significant shifts in the production and presentation of contemporary art. In galleries and museums around the world, projection spaces, plasma screens, and sculptural monitor banks now appear everywhere, featuring ever more sophisticated electronic imagery. Formerly restricted primarily to small televisions and dark screening rooms, video art has rapidly expanded into mainstream institutions, often in room-scale, **multiple-channel installations** that ‘hug the architectural envelope rather than produce a second informational circuit within the container of the gallery’<sup>6</sup>.

This new ubiquity has been attributed to a number of factors. These include the growing sophistication and economic accessibility of video recording, editing and projection technology; the dominance of the moving image in everyday life and culture; and the art world’s insatiable desire for the new.

Yet video is hardly new, of course. It was launched in the United States in 1956, and used initially in television production. This was also the year that television was introduced in Australia, in time for the broadcast of the Melbourne Olympics. A decade later, the introduction of portable video equipment, notably the **Sony Portapak**, enabled artists to produce their own video works. The spontaneity that video provided was utilised by a number of artists, particularly those who directly critiqued the processes, content and effects of television.

According to video historian Michael Rush<sup>7</sup>, there were two major streams of video practice in its early days of the late 1960s and early 1970s; ‘activist driven documentaries linked with alternative news reports and more properly-so-called art videos’. In Australia, some of the earliest video works were made in the late 1960s by experimental filmmakers such as Michael Glasheen and the Ubu Films collective, and by the early 1970s, video was being used in performance works by artists such as Tim Burns, Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy. In 1974 the Film and Television Board of the Australia Council established ten video access centres and two resource centres around the country, in suburban and regional locations, with the aim of broadening the possibilities for individuals and communities to represent themselves through this new technology. These were often communities that had been unable to access art or film funding, and the centres became associated to a degree with **activism**.

Video art in Australia continued to gain momentum, helped along by the video festivals that sprang up in the 1980s as well as growing institutional and commercial interest. From the late 1970s, video artists such as Nam June Paik, Bill Viola and Les Levine visited the country, introducing local artists and audiences to new forms of video practice, and from the early 1980s, video began to be shown more widely in commercial galleries and museums. The 1980s saw an increasing prominence of video in everyday life, from the newly available home VCR units to the emergence of music video as a vital cultural medium. New **editing** and effects technology enabled artists to manipulate the image as never before, making video an ideal tool for experimentation in new **hybrid** forms. By the 1990s, as critic Daniel Palmer notes, ‘many erstwhile video artists had now become video and computer artists, or more broadly ‘media artists’. It also drew practitioners from other fields—as video curator Brian Langer wrote in 1994, video’s ease of use and increased malleability ‘attracted individuals far better known as painters, sculptors, writers and independent filmmakers’<sup>8</sup>. This

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6. David Joselit, ‘Inside the Light Cube’, *Artforum*, vol. XLIII, no. 7, March 2004, p.154. See also Liz Kotz, ‘Video Projection: The Space Between Screens’, in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (eds.), *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, pp.101-115 cited in ‘Video Logic’, by Russell Storer, in *Video Logic*. (Exhibition Catalogue) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2008, p. 9

7. Cited in Russell Storer, ‘Video Logic’ in *Video Logic*. (Exhibition Catalogue) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2008, p. 9

8. Brian Langer, ‘Video as Art and the Australian International Video festival’, Nicholas Zurbrugg (ed.), *Electronic Arts in Australia* (Continuum), vol. 8, no. 4, 1994, p.259 cited in *ibid*.

tendency has intensified over the past decade, and as Palmer observes, 'video is now a part of the practice of many, if not most, of Australia's best known contemporary artists'<sup>9</sup>.

Adapted text from the essay 'Video Logic', by Russell Storer, in *Video Logic*. (Exhibition Catalogue) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2008.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Video art is also sometimes called '**New Media art**'. What might you consider being problematic about this term?
- These days, 'Video Art' in itself could be considered a misleading term. Why do you think that this might be?
- British celebrity artists Jake and Dinos Chapman made a video in 1999 called *Sacrificial Mutilation and Death in Modern Art* in which they used props to re-enact well known events in the lives famous figures from Art History. Imagine making a video about the key moments in the history of video art - what details would you include and how would you go about enacting and shooting it?

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9. Daniel Palmer, op. cit., p.20 cited in ibid.

# **VIDEO: DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE MEDIUM**

This section is designed to promote and refine ideas about the distinct features of video as an art form. Use the questions and activities below to explore the unique ways video art is made, presented and viewed by the audience. These questions also provide an opportunity to explore the conceptual framework, especially the relationship between the artwork and the audience.

## **FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

- If you watched every work in this exhibition in its entirety, it would take nearly 8 hours. Do you think the curator intends you to watch all the works in the show from beginning to end? And if not, why include them all?
- Have you ever been annoyed by missing the beginning of a movie at the cinema? Videos in galleries rarely have start or “session” times. Why do you think that is?
- Some artists upload their video art to You Tube, while others “edition” their work, creating for example, just 8 copies for people to buy and own. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of each of these methods of distribution?
- Look at the methods and materials used by the artists in the show and make a list of all the different technologies you could use to make a video art work.
- Some artists work with a single projection, while others create multiple channel installations that fill a room. How do these different presentations affect the way you view the work?

# VIDEO ART/ ARTWORLD TIMELINE

## VIDEO ART

## ARTWORLD

**1950s:** The era of Pop art begins, championed by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenburg.

Op art becomes the avant garde form of abstract art.

Mark Rothko paints *No. 10* (1950), continuing his interest in abstraction and colour field painting. Rothko abandons titles and begins to number his works continuing his experimentation with floating tiles of colour and shape.

**1956:** Videotape invented.

Television launched in Australia, in time for Melbourne Olympic Games.

**1956:** Time Magazine dubs Jackson Pollock “Jack the Dripper” because of his unique painting style. He dies later that year in a car accident.

**1958:** Yayoi Kusama arrives in New York and exhibits her large *Infinity Net* paintings in 1959.

**1959:** German artist Wolf Vostell incorporates a television into his work *Deutscher Ausblick* (meaning *German View*). It is widely considered to be the first work of art using a television.

**1960s:** Donald Judd continues his investigation of Minimalism in his sculptural work, exhibiting widely in the US, Europe and Japan.

**1963:** South Korean-born American artist Nam June Paik has an exhibition titled *Exposition Music - Electronic Television* at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany. It includes 13 televisions.

**1963:** International collective of artists Fluxus publish their manifesto and enter their most active period that lasts for two decades. The network of artists, composers and designers include Nam June Paik and are renowned for blending different artistic media and disciplines.

The advent of photorealism, a form of meticulous photo-like realism achieved with paint. Championed by Richard Estes and Chuck Close.

**1964:** The seminal pop art exhibition *The American Supermarket* is held in Paul Bianchini's Upper East Side gallery. The show includes Warhol's paintings of a can of Campbell's soup (priced at \$1,500) while each autographed can is sold for \$6.

**1965:** Sony Corporation introduces the Portapak, an affordable videotape recorder.

**1965:** Nam June Paik uses his new Sony Portapak to shoot footage of Pope Paul VI's procession through New York City. Later that day, he plays the tapes at the Café à Go Go, and states 'As collage technique replaced oil paint, so the **cathode-ray tube** will replace the canvas.' Video art is born<sup>10</sup>.

**1965:** Andy Warhol begins showing underground videos at a railroad space below the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York. Making two thirty minute tapes of Edie Sedgwick, he incorporates the tapes into his first double-projection film, *Outer and Inner Space*.

The first multi-channel video art (using several monitors or screens) *Wipe Cycle* is made by Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette. It is comprised of 9 television monitors combining live images of gallery visitors, found footage and shots from pre-recorded tapes. The material alternates from one monitor to the next in an elaborate choreography.

**1965:** Experimental film collective Ubu Films is formed in Australia at Sydney University. Its founding members include Albie Thoms, David Perry, Aggy Read and John Clark, and in later years include Matt Carroll, Peter Weir, Phillip Noyce and Bruce Beresford.

**1969:** The exhibition 'TV as a Creative Medium' is shown at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York

**1969:** English collaborative duo Gilbert and George make their work *The Singing Sculpture*. Covering their heads and hands in multi-coloured metalised powders, they sing and dance to the track 'Underneath the Arches', sometimes for days at a time.

Jeanne-Claude and Christo wrap the coast of Little Bay in Sydney, Australia with the aid of 130 volunteer art and architecture students working a total of 17,000 hours.

**1970:** Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy, Sydney artists and pioneers in Australian video art, establish *Inhibodress*, an artists' cooperative and alternative space for conceptual art, performance art and video.

**1971:** The Yellow House artists cooperative document the installation of Bruce Coppings sculptural work at the Inhibodress from 2 to 19 July. The Australia Council for the Arts supports this group project by providing it with an Akai ¼" Portapak and 30 hours of tape to record the installation on video.

**1971:** Feminism is on the rise as artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Judy Chicago explore gender politics in their work. Linda Nochlin creates much discussion by publishing her essay "Why There Are No Famous Women Artists" in ARTNews.

**1972:** Sony launches the first portable colour video recorder and introduces a standard system for video cassettes

**1973:** Australian artist Michael Glasheen co-founds *Bush Video*, a seminal video collective in Sydney.

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10. Michael Rush, *New Media in Art*, 2nd Edition, Thames & Hudson, London, 2005

**1974:** American artist Bill Viola works for two years as technical director at Art/Tapes/22, a pioneering video studio in Florence, Italy. Here, he encounters video artists Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci.

**1974:** The Film and Television Board of the Australia Council establishes ten video access centres and two resource centres around the country.

**1975:** The first Beta system VCR was developed, making it possible to record TV-broadcasting on video tape. Known as 'Betamax', this device used ½ inch wide tape within a cassette approximately the size of a paperback book.

**1976:** Nam June Paik and collaborator Charlotte Moorman visit Australia, appearing in over forty performances in Sydney and Adelaide.

**1976:** Video features at the 2nd Biennale of Sydney.

**1977:** The Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris establishes a photo-film-video- department and begins collecting the work of approximately 50 video artists.

**1979:** An Australian program of video tapes is shown in the US and Canada, and a year later shown as part of the Architecture edition of the Biennale of Venice.

**1982:** Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney first shows video art commercially with works by Joan Brassil, Jill Scott, John Gillies and Peter Callas.

**1991:** A shark is caught by a fisherman in Australia for Damien Hirst's breakthrough sculptural work *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*.

**11 November, 1991:** The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney is officially opened.

**1994:** Matthew Barney begins the *Cremaster Cycle*, a series of 5 feature-length films that he completes 8 years later.

**1995:** Peter Callas exhibits his Video Project at the MCA exhibition, *Peter Callas: Bilderbuch fur Ernst Will/Ernst Will's Picture Book: A Euro Rebus* (26 May – 2 July 1995).

**1996:** The MCA exhibits *Burning the Interface <International Artists' CD-ROM>* (27 March-13 July 1996), comprising of 34 CD-ROMS representing 76 artists and 3 magazines. Exhibition tours to Ngapartji Cooperative Multimedia Centre, Adelaide; Experimenta/Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, and in 1997 to Perth Institute of Contemporary Art; Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery and Museum

**1997:** Sony launches the first digital Camcorder in the USA

**1997:** The infamous *Sensation* exhibition of Young British Artists is shown at the Royal Academy of Art in London and later tours to Berlin and New York. Initially planned to show at the National Gallery of Australia in 1999, it is cancelled after controversy surrounding the artwork.

**2000:** Shaun Gladwell produces *Storm Sequence*, featuring the artist skateboarding at Bondi Beach.

**2001:** The Museum of Contemporary Art, exhibits the work of internationally renowned British filmmaker Isaac Julien in the exhibition '*The Film Art of Isaac Julien*', (15 February-22 April 2001)

**2004:** The Anne Landa Award is established at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. It is the first award exhibition in Australia dedicated to moving image and new media arts.

**2004:** *Garçon a la Pipe* (1905) by Picasso sells at Sotheby's New York for \$104.2 million, making it the highest priced painting ever sold at auction.

**2006:** *No 5* (1948) by Jackson Pollock, sells privately for US\$140 million, making it the most expensive painting ever sold.

**2007:** Shaun Gladwell is selected by Artistic Director Robert Storr for inclusion in the 52nd Venice Biennale 'Think with the Senses-Feel with the Mind'. His DVD *Storm Sequence* (2000) later fetches \$84,000 at auction. The DVD is the first digital installation work of its kind to be auctioned in Australia.

The MCA presents the landmark exhibition, *Centre Pompidou Video Art: 1965-2005* (14 December 2006-25 February 2007), a major exhibition tracing the development of video art from 1965-2005, drawn from the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou, Paris. The MNAM showcases its dedication to collecting video installations and tapes since 1977, when most museums refused to consider video as art. Exhibition curated by Christine Van Assche.

**2008:** The 16th Biennale of Sydney, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, prominently features digital media. Cockatoo Island is used as a unique new venue primarily for film and video including works by Australians Shaun Gladwell, TV Moore, Richard Bell and Mike Parr are included.

The MCA showcases the diversity of practice amongst Australian artists using video, in the exhibition *Video Logic*. The exhibition includes works ranging from single-channel videos to sculptural installations and multi-channel environments.

The Premier of Queensland's National New Media Award is established at the Queensland Art Gallery, recognising the work of Australian and International Artists using video and film as an artistic medium.

**2008:** *Triptych* (1976) by Francis Bacon sells at Sotheby's New York for US\$86.3 million, becoming the most expensive work ever sold at auction by a contemporary artist.

Damien Hirst makes history, bypassing his art dealer and selling his work directly at a Sotheby's auction entitled, *Beautiful Inside My Head Forever*. Hirst breaks sales records, making £111 million, and making him the highest selling solo artist in history.

**2009:** *Rising Tide: Australian Video Art from the Museum of Contemporary Art*, opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, USA (22 February-21 June 2009).

Bruce Nauman is selected to represent the United States of America at the 2009 Venice Biennale. Although Nauman has shown 5 times in Venice since 1978 at satellite venues, it is his first exhibition in the US national pavilion.

Shaun Gladwell's work is chosen to represent Australia at the 53rd Venice Biennale, showing his work, *MADDESTMAXIMVS: Planet & Stars Sequence* (2009). Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro, who also represent Australia at Venice exhibit *Life Span*, comprised of 195, 774 VHS video cassettes arranged into a single form the size of a sea-going container (480 x 318 x 524 cm) creating a visual monument to the average life span of a person's life; 66.1 years represented by the combined running time of all the videos.

*Rising Tide: Film and Video works from the MCA Collection* opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (26 June-23 August 2009).

# LIST OF ARTISTS

## **DESTINY DEACON**

Born Maryborough, Queensland, 1957. Lives and works in Melbourne  
People: KuKu (Far-North Queensland) and Erub/Mer (Torres Strait)

## **VIRGINIA FRASER**

Born Melbourne, Lives and works in Melbourne

## **SHAUN GLADWELL**

Born Sydney, 1972. Lives and works in Sydney

## **THE KINGPINS**

Angelica Mesiti, born Sydney, 1976

Técha Noble, born Sydney, 1977

Emma Price, born Sydney, 1975

Katie Price, born Sydney, 1978

Live and work in Sydney

## **JESS MACNEIL**

Born Inverness, Nova Scotia, Canada, 1977.

Lives and works in London and Sydney

## **TODD MCMILLAN**

Born Sydney, 1979. Lives and works in Sydney

## **KATE MURPHY**

Born Queanbeyan, NSW, 1977. Lives and works in Sydney and Dublin

## **SUSAN NORRIE**

Born Sydney, 1953. Lives and works in Sydney

## **DAVID NOONAN**

Born Ballarat, Victoria, 1969. Lives and works in London

## **PATRICIA PICCININI**

Born Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1965. Lives and works in Melbourne

## **TONY SCHWENSEN**

Born Sydney, 1970. Lives and works in Boston, USA

## **DANIEL VON STURMER**

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1972. Lives and works in Melbourne

## **TV MOORE**

Born Canberra, 1974. Lives and works in Sydney

# KEY THEMES

This section outlines some of the reoccurring themes in the exhibition. They can be used as an entry point in developing understanding of video art. Several artists' names have been included as a suggestion for further study. Artists who have been included as one of the 4 focus case studies later in the resource appear in **bold**. Some artists could be considered under more than one theme.

## SELF PORTRAITURE

### SUBJECTIVE FRAME

### STRUCTURAL FRAME

**Self portraiture** refers to the use of the artist's own image in their work. In video art, this is strongly linked to a performative approach to an artist's practice. In 1976, American conceptual artist Lynda Benglis noted that 'video is a mirror. And it is natural to use it as a mirror at first'. The exploration of body and identity, particularly through performance art has always been integral to the development of video art, particularly with its function as a documentary device.

Many artists in *Rising Tide: Film and Video works from the MCA Collection* appear in their video and film works, using their own bodies as the focus of their art work. The Kingpins and Shaun Gladwell use the camera to capture their theatrical interventions in public space, while Todd McMillan records the endurance challenge undertaken in *By the Sea* (2004). Kate Murphy's approach owes more to documentary film-making than performance art, exploring issues of identity by turning the camera on herself and her family.

Artists exploring the theme of self portraiture include; Shaun Gladwell, The Kingpins, Todd McMillan, Kate Murphy

## REPRESENTATIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: artist-artwork-world

The landscape has been a persistent thematic concern for painters throughout history, and also plays a key role in the visual and conceptual interests of video artists. Todd McMillan's use of the coastal landscape is a very deliberate reference to this tradition, evoking the sublime forces of nature in the manner of the Romantic landscape painters of the 19th century.

Drawing inspiration from their own world, artists are increasingly exploring the terrain of the urban landscape in their video work. Shaun Gladwell uses the public transit system as the stage for his poetic urban interventions, while The Kingpins hit the streets of Sydney's CBD, mapping the network of Starbucks stores with their dance marathon. Jess MacNeil explores the iconic landscapes of the Sydney Opera House and the Ganges River, transforming these familiar sites into scenes that are haunting and unfamiliar.

Artists exploring the theme of landscape include; Shaun Gladwell, The Kingpins, Jess MacNeil, Todd McMillan, TV Moore

## **SOCIAL COMMENTARY**

### **CULTURAL FRAME**

### **POSTMODERN FRAME**

True to Australian video art's early history being rooted in political and social activism, many artists continue to use this medium to communicate their message. Several artists in *Rising Tide* explore issues surrounding their beliefs and criticisms regarding society, politics and the environment. Aboriginal artist Destiny Deacon and long time collaborator Virginia Fraser challenge stereotypes of Australian identity and the criminal legacy of White Australia in *Forced into images* (2001), while Tony Schwensen uses video to document performances broadly inspired by political and environmental propositions in *Be Alert but Not Alarmed* (2003), *This is Where We Live* (2003) and *Riverrun Reverse Assistance* (2003). Susan Norrie's multi-channel installation, *Passenger* (2003) offers a bleak vision of the global environmental future, and The Kingpins, *Welcome to the Jingle* (2003) critique the pervasiveness of multinational chain stores such as Starbucks, and the effect of globalisation on society.

## **FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

- Many of the artists in *Rising Tide* appear in their video works. If they are in front of the camera, who do you think is behind it? Pick two works that use self portraiture and discuss the ways the filming might have been achieved. Remember to look for clues such as whether the footage is a moving or still image.
- Several of the artists explore the Australian landscape or public space in their work. Closely investigate the videos of The Kingpins and TV Moore and make a list of the clues you can find to suggest that they have used distinctly Australian urban and rural locations. Consider how the work would be different if the artists had used an alternative landscape.

# ARTWORK ANALYSIS

**TODD MCMILLAN**



**Todd McMillan**

*By the Sea* 2004

16 mm film transferred to DVD

1:12 minutes

Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds provided by the Coe and Mordant families, 2006

Videography: Andrew Liversidge

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Todd McMillan is a Sydney-based artist who uses devices such as **endurance performance**, self-portraiture and repetition to create his signature brand of self-deprecating work. McMillan makes reference to the works of Samuel Beckett, Woody Allen, **film noir**, and **German Romanticism**, utilising their inherent humour, sadness and tragedy as raw materials for his videos and photographs. While McMillan makes light of the earnestness and melodrama of his romantic forefathers, his self-portraits also share a sense of their sincerity about the hopelessness of the human condition.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

In his **single channel** video *By the Sea* (2004), McMillan draws inspiration from a work by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea* (1809). In this painting, a tiny figure of a man is set against the dramatic landscape of the ocean and a vast mist-filled sky. Friedrich's monk is said to be a self-portrait and embodies the 'melancholy man' of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This was an era that was characterised by a value system that saw sadness and solitude as an ideal condition for the production of art. *By the Sea* presents a 72 second looped time-lapse sequence of a lone twitching figure. Here, the artist is depicted as a failed romantic in a filmed performance spanning dusk till dawn in which he stood facing towards the bleak ocean in search of **enlightenment**. Shot originally on 16 mm film, it has been digitally condensed into a few minutes. The sumptuous look of the **celluloid** creates a visual friction with the digital dimension of the time compression. Like Friedrich's monk, McMillan stands in exhaustive contemplation of the endless ocean view, revealing the insignificance of human existence in the face of the power of nature. The work conveys a cinematic beauty, grandeur and quiet humour.

## ARTIST'S PRACTICE

'Something I'm quite interested in is lampooning what you love, and in a way I really love that sense of romanticism and that sense of the bigness and the wonder. But in the same way I can't really see it having a real thing in my life, so it's a way of sort of making fun, but also paying homage as well to an idea that I find is quite beautiful...'

Transcript of interview with Todd McMillan, *MCA Artist's Voice DVD, Series 3* (2007). (Available to view online at <http://www.mca.com.au> or order a free copy by email [artistvoice@mca.com.au](mailto:artistvoice@mca.com.au)).

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

**Structural frame:** McMillan has said, 'I don't think the work could be made using video... it's the actual burning of the film that makes the work'. What effect do you think the quality of film gives the work? How might it look different if it had been shot using a format like high definition digital video, or a camera phone instead?

**Structural frame:** Todd McMillan uses compressed time to manipulate the passage of time in the footage of his 12-hour performance. Think about a movie that used this technique of accelerated time. Why do you think the director chose to use that technique? Find two other artists in the exhibition who also explore the use of **condensed** or **expanded time**.

**Structural frame:** McMillan's performance went from dusk till dawn, and yet his video only runs for 72 seconds. Discuss whether you think the performance or the video comprises the work itself. Draw up 2 columns and write what activities he might have undertaken which you consider to be his 'process' and what you consider to be the finished 'work'.

**Postmodern frame:** The artist references, or appropriates, Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Monk by the Sea* (1807). Research this 19th Century romantic painter and discuss the aesthetic and conceptual relationships that exist between the painting and McMillan's *By the Sea*.

**Subjective frame:** McMillan points out that 'There's a certain point in the film where you can actually see cracks of lightning and it starts to pour down raining and I was freezing and I was crying and it was truly horrific...' How are the artist's emotions conveyed in the work? What is your emotional response to the work?

**Conceptual framework:** How might a video self-portrait differ from a painted self-portrait? Find an example of another artist in the exhibition who has produced a video portrait. How is their work different or similar to Todd McMillan's?

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

◀◀ **REWIND:** The first time McMillan attempted this 12-hour performance he suffered exposure and collapsed, and had to be taken to hospital to be resuscitated. What do you think this story adds to his interest in the notion of the 'failed romantic'?

▶▶ **FAST FORWARD:** McMillan recently attempted to swim a section of the infamous English Channel. He recorded his failed attempt for his new video art work that will be released in July 2009.

## **FURTHER RESEARCH:**

Todd McMillan is exhibiting at GRANTPIRRIE Gallery from 30 July – 22 August 2009. See <http://www.grantpirrie.com>

Todd McMillan is featured in the resource MOVE Video Art in Schools -An edition of 12 contemporary Australian Video artworks and education materials published by Kaldor Art Projects and the Creative Arts Unit, Curriculum K-12, NSW Department of Education and Training.

See <http://www.kaldorartprojects.org.au/education/move-home> or <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/move/index.html>

# ARTWORK ANALYSIS

**KATE MURPHY**



Kate Murphy

*Prayers of a Mother* 1999

Super VHS transferred to DVD, 5 channel digital video installation with single channel stereo

14 minutes

Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds provided by the Coe and Mordant families, 2007

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Kate Murphy is a Sydney-based artist who aligns video art with social documentary. She describes her practice as 'using video to explore issues surrounding the nature of truth'. Inspired by the documentary film genre, Murphy uses the camera as a device to create portraiture. In her intimate videos, Murphy's friends and family discuss their lives, thoughts and interests. Through her works, Murphy sometimes challenges the idea of formal portraiture by allowing her sitters to interact by holding the camera and making parallel recordings from their viewpoints— these techniques raise pertinent questions about perspective, **authorship** and control. Murphy's signature documentary approach is about non-interference, employing a still camera to record the action.

## ABOUT THE WORK

*Prayers of a Mother* depicts eight children listening silently to their mother as she describes her life of prayer. This is a group portrait of Murphy's own family. Composed across 5 channels and shot on Super VHS, the eight children share just four screens flanking the central image of their mother. While the children's faces fade in and out of the works, we never observe her mother's face, the camera maintaining a close up of her hands holding a prayer book and rosary beads throughout. The five sisters and three brothers respond in unique and individual ways to the audio, their faces revealing empathy, surprise, sadness as well as moments of humour. The audience is a privileged **voyeur**, Murphy's video installation creating an intimate environment in which the audience is invited to listen and observe one mother's devotion to her family and religion, and her children's very personal responses to her testimony.

## ARTIST'S PRACTICE

'I wanted to centre the piece around my Mother. I wanted to hear her story, and the idea was that I didn't know what the work was going to be about but I wanted Mum to talk about her role as a Mother, and her role as a mother of 8 children, and how well she's really done. Personally, really, I just wanted to hear her story'.

Transcript of interview with Kate Murphy, *MCA Artist's Voice DVD, Series 3* (2007). (Available to view online at <http://www.mca.com.au> or order a free copy by email [artistvoice@mca.com.au](mailto:artistvoice@mca.com.au)).

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

**Structural frame:** Prepare to make a video portrait of your family. Think about how you would go about this in terms of: camera angles, mobile or static cameras, who you would film, what parts of their bodies you would focus on, what you would ask them, the mood you would create, and how many screens you would use to exhibit your work.

**Structural frame:** Murphy explains, 'it's the audio that carries this piece ... in terms of not revealing Mum's face I wanted the viewer to concentrate on the words of my Mother as I'd asked my 7 brothers and sisters to do'. Close your eyes so that you can only hear the audio for the work – how does that effect your interpretation? Now open your eyes to view the work, but block your ears. Do you notice anything new? Discuss how Murphy brings together sound and image to create this video portrait.

**Cultural frame:** Murphy says that she hadn't intended the work to be a religious piece, but that it ended up that way through her unscripted conversation with her Irish-Catholic mother. Think about your own family and other families you know – what cultural influences might be explored through an intimate family portrait?

**Subjective frame:** How does this work make you feel? Write down five words to describe your emotional response and then swap the list with the person next to you. What are the differences and similarities?

**Conceptual framework:** Murphy explains that although the original piece was 20 minutes long, she edited it down to just 14 minutes 'for durational reasons really, for the viewer, for the gallery space'. What do you think she means by that? Suggest how you might experience the work differently if it had been shown in its original length.

**Conceptual framework:** The artist has chosen to use a static camera to record her subjects and herself. What other choice of camera angle, framing or length of shot could she have made in order to document her family? List the ways in which these changes would alter the experience of the viewer.

Conceptual framework: Kate Murphy utilises her own family in this work. What do you think would be the difference if she was interviewing and recording these individuals as an outsider?

## DID YOU KNOW?

◀◀ **REWIND:** In 2003 Kate Murphy won the **Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship** for a portrait of an Irish girl named Brittaney Love. In the video the eleven year old girl sings and dances to Britney Spears songs and tells of her ambition of one day becoming even more famous than her American pop idol.

▶▶ **FAST FORWARD:** Seven years after that initial recording, Murphy returned to Dublin to re-interview Brittaney, now 18 years old. In the follow-up video, the young woman once again shares her hopes and dreams for the future. Think about the camera's ability to capture a moment in time. As a class, think of a Hollywood actor or actress that you have seen in movies when they were a child, and then again when they have grown into an adult. Now imagine turning these two movies into a 2-channel video installation by screening them next to each other in a gallery space. How do you think viewers might respond?

### What is the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship?

Formerly the NSW Travelling Art Scholarship, this award is offered each year by the NSW Government, with the generous support of the Helen Lempriere Bequest, managed by Perpetual Trustees. The purpose of the scholarship is to enable a visual artist at the beginning of their career to undertake a one to two year program of study or training overseas. This may be through a recognised art institution or participation in short-term workshops or study with a nominated artist.<sup>11</sup>

## FURTHER RESEARCH:

Kate Murphy is represented by Breenspace, Sydney.

Visit Kate Murphy's website at [www.katemurphy.com.au](http://www.katemurphy.com.au)

11. <http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/FundingOpportunities/FellowshipsandScholarships/HelenLempriereTravellingArtScholarship/tabid/206/Default.aspx>. Accessed 29th June 2009.

# ARTWORK ANALYSIS

## THE KINGPINS



### The Kingpins

*Welcome to the Jingle* 2003

2-channel digital video transferred to DVD

5:25 minutes

Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with the assistance of Dr Edward and Mrs Cynthia Jackson, 2005

### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The Kingpins are a Sydney-based artist **collective** with an all female line-up comprised of Angelica Mesiti, Técha Noble, Emma Price and Katie Price. Truly multi-media in approach, they work across the fields of video, installation, sculpture, photography, painting and textiles. At the heart of their practice; however, is their signature mix of drag performance, video and music resulting in a highly charged theatre that is often staged in public places. Using fast-paced choreographed dance and elaborate make up and costumes, they challenge gender stereotypes, commenting on the interrelationship between culture, politics and society. Their works are also heavily influenced by their longstanding interest in music and popular culture.

## ABOUT THE WORK

The 2-channel video *Welcome to the Jingle* uses **subversive** humour and spectacular 'drag king' costumes to highlight the artists' interest in the clash of corporate and popular cultures. Here we see the four girls dressed as acne-faced white boys busting some choreographed dance moves at the counter of various Starbucks cafes throughout the Sydney CBD, before jogging out of the store. For The Kingpins, Starbucks is a form of artifice or drag, a parody of the European style café. *Welcome to the Jingle* speaks of the **colonisation** of the city through franchised and **homogenised** chains of fast-food culture, masquerading as sophisticated networked meeting-houses. The jingle, that short and snappy sound byte, becomes a symbol for the contemporary experience of the City – in and out in less than 3 minutes. As The Kingpins run their Starbucks marathon, the words from Grandmaster Flash's rap song can be heard in the distance "...it's like a jungle sometimes; it makes me wonder how I keep from going under".

*Welcome to the Jingle* is a 2-channel digital video projection which also features a reference to the pop music video clips of bands like Kiss. The Kingpins examine misogynistic and highly manufactured bands as a parody in and of themselves, and satirise the image of the rock god as another globalised commercial construct.

## ARTIST'S PRACTICE:

'The Kingpins play with the gaps in and between with an infinite series of transgressive drag acts. Coming out of Sydney's drag scene, the female foursome utilise an aesthetic of remixing, with elements taken from mainstream media, pop culture and art history, to comment on issues of gender, sex, public space, consumerism and corporate branding. Their performances play with music, video and costume, and are presented as public interventions, sometimes in the form of 'surprise' actions, as well as gallery installations with posters, projections and soundtracks. Humorous, spectacular, grotesque and colourful, their work engages the audience in a subversive politics of pleasure'.<sup>12</sup>

Manray Hsu

Independent art writer and critic

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

**Structural frame:** Why do you think the artists have positioned the two parts of this work facing each other as a 2-channel installation? How might this contribute to how the viewer experiences the work?

**Postmodern frame:** The Kingpins have called their work *Welcome to the Jingle*. Do you know what they are referencing with this title, and why do you think they have added the word 'Jingle'?

**Structural frame:** Notice the handheld camera. Where do you remember seeing hand-held shots in TV or movies, and what does the shaky camera work usually suggest to the viewer?

**Cultural frame:** In this work, The Kingpins chose Starbucks, a coffee retail franchise, for the site of their performances. What do you think they might be saying about these kinds of stores? Get together in groups and imagine you were going to make a video based on an intervention or public performance about something you disagreed with or had a strong opinion about. What site would you use and what costumes would you wear?

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12. Manray Hsu, 2006, cited on <http://thekingpins.joshraymond.com/home.html>

**Cultural frame:** Identify another artist in the show that has explored the misuse of public space in their work. What are the similarities and differences between their approaches?

**Conceptual framework:** The Kingpins have performed live at drag concerts and music festivals. Consider the different audience responses when their work is shown in a gallery context as opposed to an outdoor rock concert. How would it be received differently?

## DID YOU KNOW?

◀◀ **REWIND:** Two members of the Kingpins, Emma and Katie Price, are sisters. Research two other artist collaborations that involve a pair of siblings or two people in a romantic relationship. Think about the advantages and challenges that would come with collaborating with a close member of your family.

▶▶ **FAST FORWARD:** In 2008 Starbucks announced a massive retreat from the Australian market, closing 61 stores around the country. The Kingpins responded with a 1-hour performance at Artspace titled *Starbucks Requiem*. Reprising their *Welcome to the Jingle* characters, they each shovelled grave plots out of ground coffee beans and reclined on them as if in death, laying their Starbucks personas to rest.

## FURTHER RESEARCH:

The Kingpins show *Cat of Nine Lives* at Wollongong City Gallery, 23 May – 19 July, 2009. see [www.wollongongcitygallery.com](http://www.wollongongcitygallery.com)

Visit The Kingpins' website at <http://thekingpins.joshraymond.com/home>

The Kingpins are represented by Kaliman Gallery <http://www.kalimangallery.com>

# ARTWORK ANALYSIS

## TV MOORE



TV Moore

*The Neddy Project* 2004

multi-channel video installation

43 minutes

Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with the assistance of Dr Edward and Mrs Cynthia Jackson, 2004

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST:**

Timothy Vernon Moore is a Sydney-based artist who works with video, film and theatrical forms. His practice engages with a variety of material using various tropes from both the popular and experimental film and music worlds. The artist is particularly interested in the space between things – the real and the unreal, the documented and directed, as well as those things that sit outside of the usual order of society – criminal elements, eccentrics, distorted psychological states and the paranormal. TV Moore is a storyteller, and yet his videos do not reveal these narratives from beginning to end. Instead, Moore often creates large-scale multi-channel installations and **immersive environments**, inviting the audience to construct their own narrative from the moving images.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

*The Neddy Project* is a 10-channel video installation that brings together the histories of two infamous men called Ned from Australia's criminal history. In the 1870s Ned Kelly stole the country's imagination as the outlaw from Victoria with the DIY iron armour. Over a century later, Arthur Stanley "Neddy" Smith emerged as Sydney's most famous underworld figure. In *The Neddy Project*, each video channel consists of stylised abstracted moments from the two Neddys' lives, arranged in an installation of six towering projections. The doubling of Kelly and Smith's stories has potent visual echoes in other aspects of the work, as the artist has digitally mirrored many of the images, spawning an uncanny doubling effect. Each of the scenes has also been fitted out with props crafted entirely from cardboard, including cars, carriages, horses, guns and even minutiae such as Smith's Rolex watch. At times the artist nods to amateur theatre through a comedic display of the cut-outs, but mostly the dynamic between this staged 2-dimensionality and reality is held in a highly charged tension.

## ARTIST'S PRACTICE:

'I'm obsessed with how an idea is going to be presented in a gallery for example, because it's obviously not a film, so it was important that it was an immersive environment, overwhelming. It would have been easy to make a play or a generic regular boring cinema piece, a one-screen, but to really make a 5 screen non linear installation it was important that I did make an environment for this project... When you come in, negotiating the space in some way, there's no right or wrong way of doing it, there are no rules. It's not necessarily about getting the linear structure of it, it's about choosing you own narrative with it... there's no necessarily correct way of experiencing it'.

Transcript of interview with TV Moore, MCA Artist's Voice DVD, Series 1 (2006). (Available to view online at <http://www.mca.com.au> or order a free copy by email [artistvoice@mca.com.au](mailto:artistvoice@mca.com.au))

## FOCUS QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

**Structural frame:** Does the way the artist has doubled the images against themselves to create a mirroring effect remind you of anything? Create a mirrored image using only paint and paper.

**Postmodern frame:** Even though TV Moore is intensely interested in cinema and music, he has said that it was the Australian painter Sidney Nolan's famous series of paintings of Ned Kelly that provided the greatest influence for this work. Research Nolan's practice and discuss the aesthetic or visual connections you can see between his paintings and the images in Moore's video installation.

**Subjective frame:** Often histories can be told in a strictly dry and serious way, and yet there is a playful approach to the way TV Moore creates and presents these scenes. Pick one moment that you find humorous. What comic conventions does the artist employ?

**Conceptual framework:** TV Moore talks about his desire not to just tell a particular history but his interest in 'playing with that history-punking that history, and manipulating it in the way that I wanted to'. Research the punk movement and discuss Moore's use of the word 'punking' and how it relates to his own approach to history and facts.

**Structural Frame:** Moore says that *The Neddy Project* took 'four years, and lots of people' to make. He describes his role as 'writing, developing, moving people and organising. And having great people around me to work with'. This kind of collaboration is common contemporary practice, in particular with artists using video and newer technologies. Discuss some of the reasons this might occur more often in this medium.

## DID YOU KNOW?

◀◀ **REWIND:** TV Moore stands for Timothy Vernon Moore. Why do you think the artist might only use the initials of his first and middle names?

▶▶ **FAST FORWARD:** TV Moore this year won the Anne Landa Award for video and new media arts. His winning work was an installation that included a video titled Nina Me and Ricky Jay, which showed the artist singing a Nina Simone song while under hypnosis. It is showing until 19 July 2009 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

### FURTHER RESEARCH:

*Double Take - Anne Landa Award for Video and New Media Arts 2009* is on at the Art Gallery of New South Wales 7 May - 19 July. See <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au>

TV Moore is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery Sydney. See <http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au>

# FURTHER READING & RESEARCH

## KEY AUSTRALIAN NEW MEDIA ARTS ORGANISATIONS

ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image)

<http://www.acmi.net.au>

ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology)

<http://www.anat.org.au>

d/Lux/MediaArts

<http://www.dlux.org.au>

Experimenta

<http://www.experimenta.org>

MAAP (Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific)

<http://www.maap.org.au>

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR NEW MEDIA ART

Centre Pompidou New Media Resources

<http://www.newmedia-art.org/>

Media Art Net

<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de>

MOVE Video Art in Schools -An edition of 12 contemporary Australian Video artworks and education materials published by Kaldor Art Projects and the Creative Arts Unit, Curriculum K-12,NSW Department of Education and Training.

See <http://www.kaldorartprojects.org.au/education/move-home> or <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/move/index.html>

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego

<http://www.mcasd.org/>

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

<http://www.mca.com.au>

RealTime – Online Journal

<http://www.realtimearts.net>

Rhizome

<http://rhizome.org>

VIDEO ART: SHAUN GLADWELL at Art Space (Education Kit) [http://www.artspace.org.au/education/education\\_resources.php](http://www.artspace.org.au/education/education_resources.php)

Whitney Artport: Whitney Museum of American Art (portal to net art)  
<http://artport.whitney.org/>

## **FURTHER READING**

Frieling, Rudolf and Dieter Daniels (eds.) *Survey of Media Art*, Springer Wien New York, New York, 2004.

Leighton, Tanya (ed). *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Tate, Afterall, London, 2008.

Rush, Michael. *New Media in Art, New Edition*. Thames and Hudson, London, 2005.

Rush, Michael. (2007) 2nd Ed. *VideoArt*, Thames and Hudson, London. First published 2003.

*Video Logic*. (Exhibition Catalogue) Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2008.

# GLOSSARY

## ACQUISITION

To collect or purchase. Acquisition is usually mentioned in reference to a work which has entered a collection.

## ACTIVISM

Taking direct action to achieve a political or social goal. Activists may campaign in the form of strikes or demonstrations. Many artists have also used their artwork to highlight social and political issues and promote change.

## ANALOGUE VIDEO

Analogue video is a non digital video signal containing the luminance (brightness) and chrominance (colour) of the image which may be carried in separate or combined channels.

## ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

Using the form of architecture as a site for an artwork. Artists may 'intervene' in the space and use the site specifically as a part of their work.

## AUTHOR

The person attributed to the making of a creative work. The author of an artwork owns the conceptual and/or material qualities.

## BETA TAPE

Beta, otherwise known as Betamax is a now obsolete home videocassette tape recording format developed by Sony, and released on May 10, 1975. The cassettes contained ½ inch (12.7mm) wide videotape in a design similar to the earlier, professional ¾ inch (19.05mm) U-matic videocassette format.

## BLAXPOITATION

A term which unites 'black' and 'exploitation' to describe a genre of film that emerged from the United States of America in the early 1970's. Films featured primarily African American actors and were targeted to the urban African American audience. Soundtracks commonly featured funk and soul music. *Shaft* (1971), directed by Gordon Parks is commonly recognised as being one of the first blaxploitation films.

## CATHODE RAY TUBE (CRT)

Analogue display device that generates an image on a layer of phosphors that are driven by an electron gun.

## CELLULOID

Celluloid is a photographic film stock on which motion pictures and videos are shot and reproduced.

## COLLECTIVE

A collective is a group of people who share or are motivated by a common issue or interest. Artists may collaborate on a specific project. Artists who work together to make artworks become known as an 'artists' collective'.

## **COLONISATION**

A process by which a different system of government is established by one nation over another group of peoples. It involves the colonial power asserting and enforcing its sovereignty according to its own law, rather than by the laws of the colonised.

## **CONDENSED TIME**

Condensed time is also known as time-lapse photography; a cinema technique whereby each film frame is played at a faster rate than it was captured, so that time appears to be moving faster.

## **DIGITAL**

Digital is the term given to any mechanism (often computer-assisted) which converts an input to a numerical quantity, which are positive or negative impulses. Digital-to-analogue conversion refers to the process of taking material stored on computer and making it more accessible by transferring it to paper or analogue audio or video tape.

## **DVD**

An abbreviation for digital videodisc.

## **EDITING**

To modify filmed material and organize into a coherent whole. Editing may correct, condense or reassemble filmed material to create new meaning. Editing may also be referred to as 'cutting'.

## **EXPANDED TIME**

Expanded time is also known as slow-motion photography; a cinema technique whereby each frame is played at a slower rate than it was captured, so that time appears to be moving slowly.

## **ENDURANCE PERFORMANCE**

A performative artwork which takes place over an extended period of time, often requiring the artist to endure extreme discomfort, hardship, boredom or fatigue.

## **ENLIGHTENMENT**

Enlightenment is an instant, or a state of being enlightened related to achieving clarity of perception, reason and knowledge.

## **FILM NOIR**

Film Noir is a cinematic term used to describe stylised Hollywood crime dramas, particularly from the 1940s and 1950s. The term 'film noir' is French for 'black film' and the period is associated with a striking black and white visual style.

## **GERMAN ROMANTICISM**

A dominant art movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, featuring artists such as Caspar David Friedrich and Johan Christian Dahl. German Romanticism was characterised by artists who explored the sublime. Artists were interested in the emotional qualities of the grand landscape and the struggle between nature and humanity.

## **GLOBALISATION**

The increasing interconnectedness of countries through global corporate brands and capitalist economies

## **HOMOGENISED**

A word used to describe standardisation. Homogeneity relies on keeping things exactly the same.

## **HYBRID**

A composite or blend of two or more things. Hybrid may refer to the blending of artistic forms, for example, the combination of sculpture and video.

## **IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

Immersive environments are installations where the audience's awareness of physical self is diminished by being inside an engrossing total environment. The artist's approach often combines video technology with installation art, the installation aspect embodying all elements of the surrounding environment as a vehicle of affecting the audience.

## **MULTIPLE-CHANNEL INSTALLATIONS**

A multiple-channel installation is when an artist uses several monitors or screens in the creation of their video art work.

## **NEW MEDIA**

New media is a term for describing the art genre that encompasses artworks created with recent technologies, including film, video, digital art, computer games, animation and internet art. It can also be understood to include all those media which are considered 'old' or traditional, such as painting, drawing and sculpture.

## **SELF PORTRAITURE**

An artist's representation of their own physical identity

## **SINGLE CHANNEL VIDEO**

A video work with one source of video imagery.

## **SONY PORTAPAK**

The Sony Portapak was the first portable video recording device, introduced in 1967. Although a clunky and heavy device compared to more recent innovations, it enabled relative ease of transportation and operation, making it a more accessible medium.

## **SUPER-8**

Super-8mm film, also known as Super-8, is a film format released in 1965 by Eastman Kodak and was developed to replace the older 8mm home movie format and the Cine 8 format. The film is 8mm wide and has perforations on one side only, allowing for a greater surface area for exposure. The Super-8 also allowed for magnetic sound recording directly onto the film.

## **SUBVERSIVE**

An attempt to undermine something or someone. Usually a strategy that went unnoticed but subtly affected change.

## **USB**

An abbreviation for Universal Serial Bus. A USB is a connecting or storage device designed to allow peripherals to be connected using a standardised interface socket.

## **VHS**

An abbreviation for Vertical Helical Scan, or sometimes known as 'Video Home System' because of its domestic applications. VHS is a widely used method of recording audio and video electrical signals onto magnetic tape.

## **VIDEO SCULPTURES**

Artworks that utilise the physical aspects of video delivery in a sculptural form. Korean artist Nam June Paik is known as a pioneer of video sculptures. See also Tony Oursler and Bruce Nauman

## **VIDEOTAPE**

A magnetic tape used for recording visual images and sound in real time.

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