



EXPERIMENTA

EXPERIMENTA UTOPIA NOW INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL OF MEDIA ART

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EXPERIMENTA

UTOPIA NOW

INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL OF MEDIA ART

Ominous To Optimistic / Innovative And Interactive

INTERACTIVE ARTWORKS / VIDEO INSTALLATIONS / SHORT FILMS / SCREEN ARTS

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NAVIGATING PARADISE UNDER A DIGITAL SKY

NEW MEDIA ART AND THE RECOGNITION OF UTOPIA

AMY BARCLAY

EXPERIMENTA CURATOR

If 'the shock of the new' was the key term signifying the diversity and strength of art and ideas in the 20th century, one might wonder what kind of phrase will unify the 21st century's technologically ravenous multiplicity of art and creative production. Those being shocked were, of course, the audience. The artists, entirely comfortable with the overthrow of tradition, embraced purely abstract representation of form (such as Agnes Martin's eloquent linear accounts of landscape), new materials (Chris Ofili's use of elephant dung, for example), and the value of concept over physical object (Felix Gonzalez-Torres' candy spills are not only touched but also consumed by the audience).

A decade into the new millennium, new materials and 'new media' now require sharper definitions. Starting with high-definition video capture and extending to nanotechnology, biotechnology and intelligent machines, artistic practice is witnessing a determined – if occasionally forced – shift toward the digital. While no one is claiming the death, again, of painting, artists are increasingly exploring where technology can take them in theory and in practice.

If the interactive and screen-based works in Experimenta Utopia Now – Experimenta's 4th International Biennial of Media Art – are any kind of benchmark, the audiences for the next century's creative endeavours are likely to find themselves suitably challenged. Channelling each artist's hopes and concerns for the world as they see it, the artworks presented here demonstrate a rich capacity to unnerve the viewer, provoking complex responses to informed and disquieting proposals.

The scene is set. Today, utopia is obscured by the dappled shadow of dystopian chaos, emerging and receding before our eyes. The

artists of Experimenta Utopia Now may hold vivid revelations of the ideal, but demonstrate that the path to it is tremulous and unpredictable. Their excitement, however, is palpable. A new armoury is proposed, a new vocabulary required. Collectively, and metaphorically speaking, they propose that the paper maps and old keys to the world as we knew it are already redundant. The new generations are not literate in analogue materials; only the most advanced technologies can be relied upon to navigate a safe route to utopia now. Optimism and bliss are hunted, desired, but humanity's resolution and strength of vision is being consistently tested by capricious and at times volatile means. Certain artworks in Experimenta Utopia Now endeavour to provide time for gentle contemplation, or for critical reflection on social or historical success or failure. Others resolutely search for perfection. Overwhelmingly, however, there is a pervasive concern with new social tensions, revolutionary terrors – not least in the face of ever more sentient technologies – and anxieties about the future of the human condition.

The impossibility of utopia has haunted society ever since Sir Thomas More's treatise of the same name was published in 1516. Rendered unstable due to the duelling definitions assigned by More of 'happy place' and 'non place', the utopian ideal captivates and taunts those who dare hope for it while remaining utterly fictitious, at least in a truly tangible sense. To date, any given concept of social, religious and political utopia has only ever united a limited segment of like-minded and self-selecting citizens.

Utopia as an expression of a society's hopes became truly prominent during the early 20th century as governments and communities committed to rebuilding cities devastated by World War I. Charged

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with developing informed policies and strategies for the use of land, resources and funds, such architects sought to consider a community's structural, social, economic and cultural needs. The notion of town planning as an organised profession was effectively born in this era.

Modernism as an applied ideal and philosophical force also gathered pace during this time. It dispensed with decoration and history, striving instead for innovation, originality and functionality. Championing advances in industrial, scientific and political spheres, Modernism became central to the agenda for designing a new world. From the spiritual to the rational, revitalised concepts of art and design uniting beauty and practicality were heralded as the path to recovery for the human spirit. Modernists held a utopian desire to create a better world. They believed in technology as the key to social improvement and in the machine as a symbol of that aspiration.

Contemporary society can no doubt see the ease technology brings to daily living, and advocates of reason and science have punctuated the history of Western philosophy for centuries. Today's 'techno-utopians' believe that the true path to utopia can lie only in the impassioned embrace of the most advanced technologies, and that utopia will be achievable when advanced science and technology provide the means for ideal living standards to exist. It's the articulation of 'ideal' that rattles us. If the (bio)technology revolution is capable of endowing scientists with unprecedented power to transform human nature – and, indeed, the world we live in – the question of how this superlative intelligence should be employed captivates and divides experts and the general public alike. On such matters art becomes a form of social commentary,

carving its own dynamic discussion. On the fraught highwire between utopia, dystopia and techno-utopia, prophetic visions of catastrophe, perfection and uncertainty balance together.

As is characteristic of an Experimenta exhibition, this Biennial unites works of art that are interactive, unique, digitally savvy or technologically exceptional. From high-definition video to singularly original adventures in interactive media, intimate animated worlds to the creation of paradises virtual and impossible, these works showcase the breadth and depth of conceptual dexterity and technological skill fused precisely by each artist.

In light of the concept of techno-utopia, it seems highly relevant that the artists in Experimenta Utopia Now are so technologically informed. Yet as common threads and themes emerge from the exhibition it becomes apparent that the artists' openness to the most sophisticated technology does not necessarily imply a conviction in its overarching ability to deliver a better future.

A dystopian perspective may be seen as the flipside or the reality of utopia, underscoring the impossibility of its existence. AES+F and Ms & Mr each see a collapse in the future, expressed as a vision for society or a more personal battle. Russian collective AES+F is represented by the immersive, three-channel-projection work Last Riot. As its title implies, it proposes the climactic and catastrophic scene awaiting the end of history, of time and society. Victim and aggressor are seamless, too beautiful to be told apart as they trap, slash and stab their opponents. The mutant landscape suggests a paradise gone wrong. Yet no blood is shed, no act of aggression penetrates; they are caught in an endless cycle of destruction against a backdrop of military commotion and natural disaster. In this dystopic state of affairs, the threat is visceral and the end is

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nigh but it cannot ever be reached. Caught in a similar situation of no resolve are Ms & Mr, who plunder their own histories in order to facilitate a series of parallel worlds in which they can always be united. In an animated landscape of icebergs and snow, Mr appears in *Two Figures in a Landscape*. Though buoyed by Ms's gestures, he struggles in vain to reach his love, a shadowy figure appearing a short but treacherous walk away in deep snow, and she vanishes into the blinding landscape just as he reaches her. Looped, Mr's tale is tragically and repeatedly ill-fated.

In the face of such inescapable madness, the warmth of humour and the acceptance of the absurd can be a most welcome device. Kuang-Yu Tsui unwittingly battles an endless series of water leaks in his apartment (Amstell 88 III) and even his clothes (Sealevel Leaker). In *The Hunt*, Christian Jankowski reverts to hunter-gatherer methods of securing life's necessities, becoming the 'bargain hunter' of the contemporary supermarket, and Stuart Ringholt's videos *Merri Creek* and *Anderson Rd* illustrate that even the most ludicrous of events can be received without fluster and coded normal – or simply accepted as natural – if we so choose. Indeed, the French duo behind *Scenocosme* positively welcome the supernatural with *Akoumaflore*, an enchanted hanging garden of plants that, with the use of sensors, are rendered aware of human presence, 'singing' as they are approached or their leaves are gently caressed. Utopia is perhaps the capacity to laugh in the face of the incomprehensible, and be enlightened by the experience.

The digital era has rewritten humanity's control over that which historically was immutable. The sacred natural state of the human body and other life forms is tested in light of new biotechnological fields such as genetic manipulation and cloning. Michael Burton's

Nanotopia envisages a disturbing scenario in which the human body is a site for consumer product growth and can be farmed for profit; the similarities between his vision and the abilities of contemporary medical technology suggest they are separated by not so vast a chasm. In Laurent Mignonneau and Christa Sommerer's interactive sculpture *Life Writer*, each letter of the alphabet typed contributes a code that affects the behaviour and outcomes of the insect-like creatures that burst forth onto the page from the resultant text. The artists highlight the lack of control we have over the results of our acts or instructions, whether these are performed deliberately or unwittingly. Marco Bresciani's distinctive face-reading and morphing software that becomes *The Digital Picture of Dorian Gray* alerts us to the care deserved by the world and the bodies we inhabit today. The technologies that create these works bring an entirely unique experience for the audience. To touch, to affect, or to find oneself read and reflected by an artwork is to unite with the machinery that articulates each concept. Together these works propose that although the era of digital and genetic modification privileges desire – in that it can increasingly cater to individual taste, personal or reproductive 'improvement' – engineered invincibility may not offer the best possible results for the human race.

For a number of artists, the warp and weft of history and future, the virtual and the real form a fabric most intricately yet dubiously woven. The capacity of available technology to help disentangle the strands and reveal inherent beauties and weaknesses is vitally employed. Some artists commentate on the possible state of utopia – or dystopia – as it may appear on earth today, or reflect on the consequences of past social or environmental practices or behaviours.

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Kit Wise presents a seductive rendition of the idealised city in Xanadu . The apparently faultless unity of so many aspects of urban and Arcadian perfection elicits an emotional flux between angst and desire, and provokes interrogation of the qualities of our own reality. Rendered in full HD and composited of imagery of real places, it is sinuously captivating even while problematising one's judgement and comprehension. The only shadows sabotaging this virtual paradise are the specious absence of cultural diversity and the disembodied sense of place and time. Perfection, even in virtual paradise, can feel remarkably destabilising.

As designed by certain historical and dictatorial figures, the 'perfect world' ultimately lead to war and carnage; the unity required by their utopias eventually coerced silence and absorbed the existence of the 'other'. William Kentridge's anamorphic installation *What Will Come* calls into question the very nature of perception and truth and underscores the nature of history as an account told only by the vanquishers. Rendered in his expressive charcoal drawings are the events and atrocities of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) that began in 1935. The complex scenes that unfold offer an uncertain conclusion; the play of the dual visual planes serves to unsettle the confidence with which the audience grasps the fractured narrative.

The world's future – or at least humankind's ability to look after it – is also cast into doubt by the history being written today. Shilpa Gupta's affecting interactive installation *Shadow 3* playfully foretells the consequences of shirked responsibilities. In a dark room the viewer's shadow is projected life size before them, while 'string' from above attaches to the unwitting silhouette. An assortment of cast-off debris slides down the string, like a cable to all we've

ever discarded, and the shadow is slowly buried by the bulk of the subsequent cargo. Gupta prompts individual reflection: in your world, is everything in its right place?

A quality of uncertainty in life and living permeates screen-based works by Cao Fei, Patrick Bernatchez and Christopher Fulham. Embedded with irony and sadness, Cao Fei's finely nuanced film *Whose Utopia* captures moments of individual expression by young workers, emigrants from inland China. They are situated amid hundreds performing relentlessly repetitive tasks in vast a lightbulb factory in the leading economic region of the Pearl River Delta. Utopia there might well stand for the courage to have hope for a better life at all. Patrick Bernatchez's enigmatic film *I Feel Cold Today* offers an ambiguous narrative journey into an abandoned office into which some unnamed force majeure has seeped, displacing every last worker. Heralding an awkward sense of foreboding, the room is rendered open to the blustery elements; the floor begins to fill with snow. Here, familiarity with one's environment neither ensures predictability of events nor confidence in daily existence. Christopher Fulham's study of shoppers descending an elevator critiques the ability to acquire happiness in the modern world. With jaded expressions and arms full of recently obtained desirable commodities, satisfaction with life and the world still appear elusive.

Isobel Knowles and Van Sowerwine's stop-motion animation *You Were In My Dream* creates a comfortable space to interact with a choose-your-own-adventure style narrative while allowing opportunity for the unpredictable to occur. Seated at a booth with a mouse for control, the viewer provides the facial expression that is fed live onto that of the central character, animating the animated.

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A feisty cast of hand-cut paper human and animal characters explore their dreamy forest environment until alternative paths are revealed and the viewer makes a selection via a click of the mouse. This mode of interactivity invites a direct and intimate experience for the audience; however the original sense of being in control of the adventure is slowly destabilised as captivating escapades turn fraught with fickle comrades and occasionally volatile results. Even the joy of choice is embedded with precarious risks.

Amid such visions of ambiguity, absurdity and doubt, where lies optimism? Can utopia exist on earth? Who has found room for hope, and how does it sustain; how is it expressed? In a selection of works a proposal emerges: utopia is found in pockets of time, in moments, or in the appreciation of an idea. It is identified perhaps by one individual alone, or a small number of people. Optimism is not alien; hope not absent. Carefully metered, maybe, but present nonetheless. The Dutch duo forming Blendid Interaction Design create a welcoming interface in the technologically savvy TouchMe. Viewers are invited to press their bodies against a huge glass panel and then press a button to be 'scanned' by the machine. Conceived for use in a fast-paced and impersonal public space, Blendid's work recognises that being reflected in one's environment is central to a sense of belonging. Hans-Peter Feldmann's Schattenspiel assembles a personality-laden cast of kitsch figurines and found objects on a series of slowly rotating turntables before a bank of lightbulbs. Utilising old-school technology in a manner reminiscent of the precinematic zoetrope, Feldmann expresses paradise as a neverending play of shadows rendered in pale layers dancing across a wall. In this world there is no leading role, no hierarchy; every character has its 15 seconds in the sun, again and again.

Demanding more than mere spectatorship, the technologically augmented art championed in Experimenta Utopia Now: International Biennial of Media Art delivers a significant return on the audience's investment of time. The selection of works considered here reveals a network of interconnected and concurrent themes that tap into the utopia-dystopia spectrum.

The knowledge that an ideal or project may fail, or face unfamiliar dangers, has never before stopped humanity from striving for success. If our aspirations help define us as much as the things we reject, looking for utopia now may not seem so preposterous a mission. In this context, phrases such as 'think global, act local' can carry their known environmental meanings while inviting fresh associations. Awareness of the overarching benchmarks for society's betterment is important, but perhaps utopia is best determined by the individual, in the moment, using more modest points of reference; closer to art, life and home.

¹ In 1980 the UK's BBC produced a landmark television series titled *The Shock of the New* presented by renowned art critic Robert Hughes, which examined the key cultural movement of the 20th century.

² See http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1331_modernism/the_exhibition.html for the archive on the exhibition *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914-1939*, V&A Museum, 2006.

³ For a robust discussion on this matter see Dinesh D'Souza's article 'Staying Human: The danger of techno-utopia' in *National Review*, January 22, 2001 <http://www.nationalreview.com/>

⁴ Marco Bresciani's *The Digital Picture of Dorian Gray* is an Experimenta Commission.

⁵ See also Catherine Bernard's paper 'Bodies and Digital Utopia', in *Art Journal*, Winter 2000, pp 26-31.

⁶ Kit Wise's *Xanadu* is an Experimenta Commission.

⁷ Isobel Knowles and Van Sowerwine's *You Were In My Dream* is an Experimenta Commission.

HOW TO BE A UTOPIAN NOW

DAINE SINGER

EXPERIMENTA ASSOCIATE CURATOR

Utopia, a fantasy of a perfect world where the failings of our own world no longer exist, has been employed as a form of social critique by some of history's most influential thinkers. Throughout the ages the concept of utopia has embodied a hope for a better future and the need for radical change to our social and economic systems in order to achieve it. At their core, utopian aims spring from the desire for social transformation, and it follows that utopias are based on an interrogation of human interrelations. Typically a utopia is a place of just governance and joyous citizens free from suffering, with all their needs fulfilled.

The various ideas of what specific form a utopia might take (and the means of achieving it) make the utopian genre rich and frequently eccentric. Utopian ideals have taken many forms: socialist, capitalist, nostalgic, futuristic, technological or Arcadian. More recent concepts of ideal interpersonal relations (and how best to achieve them) have been variously debated in the economic extremes of model socialist utopias (the most notable being Communist China and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and capitalist utopias (for example, the free-market ideals that have come under renewed scrutiny since the recent global financial crisis). Utopian visions can be nostalgic, such as William Morris's idyllic view of medieval industry, or can take the form of technological and futuristic visions.

Utopias can be political and social ideals intended to be practically implemented, but utopianism is also a literary and artistic genre. Dissatisfied with the current state of society, artists have used utopianism in two ways: by envisaging a better state of affairs or by concentrating on the assumed dystopian state and its causes. More frequent in recent times are dystopian visions that focus on the negative consequences of following through on utopian plans or view our current circumstance through a dystopian lens. In the

cynical 21st century — an era of much dystopian science fiction — utopianism is eyed with suspicion. Heavy with the memory of too many failed utopian dreams and a prevailing scientific climate of impending doom, 'utopian' has become a pejorative adjective, at best denoting unrealistic, naïve and overreaching plans and at worst bringing to mind totalitarianism.

Some of the earliest ideas of lost paradises have influenced the model for utopian fantasies since. In the Judeo-Christian tradition Heaven and the Garden of Eden are the most obvious models for utopian visions, but there have been many paradises and religious ideal worlds, such as the New Jerusalem and the Promised Land. In medieval times the popular fantasy of the Land of Cockaigne gave the people a peasant utopia composed of the earthy pleasures of food, sex and wine, where the structures of society were inverted and people were free of the work and hardships of daily life. In the Renaissance, concepts of ideal living harked back to Classical times and references such as Plato's Republic. It was during this period that utopian literature developed as an allegorical means to criticise existing social structures and conditions.

The English statesman Sir Thomas More first brought the term 'utopia' into parlance in the sixteenth century, in his fictional account of an ideal society.¹ *Utopia*, according to More's nomenclature, is a non-place (from the Greek *ou-topia*) but also a happy place (*eutopia*).² His *Utopia* of 1516 was not the first example of utopian literature, but it introduced the term and popularised a genre. More's satirical *Utopia* allowed the author the space to critique the problems of his society and propose alternative practices, though as a whole the work should be taken as fiction and not as representing More's ideal world. Other influential works of utopian fiction to follow included Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1624), a place of science and learning, and Tommaso Campanella's

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theocratic society presented in *The City of the Sun* (1623), both of which expressed the authors' own beliefs on good governance and society under the guise of fiction.

Thomas More's *Utopia* forms the model of the typical utopia, based on the integral contradiction: perfection for some realised through an exclusion of the majority. In order to provide an actual or imagined place of asylum and comfort, the model of utopia requires two particular elements: a dystopic environment from which to escape, and boundaries of separation. Often there is a great journey to be overcome in order to find the hidden or previously undiscovered utopia (such as in *New Atlantis*, *Shangri-La*, Erewhon or stories of the New World). This formula can be repeated from the island utopia or city-state to the individual haven of the home. As they are based on exclusion, many utopian communities are formed through normative rather than transformative community building. By creating a uniform community, room for dissent and otherness is reduced.

Not that it has stopped many from trying to establish alternative utopian 'intentional communities' in the real world, some of which have flourished on a small scale. In the first half of the 19th century in America and again in the 1970s across the world, small utopian and new-age communes and intentional communities flourished, often based on new ideas of family life, living in coexistence with nature, and new ethical and moral codes.³ These range from dystopic cults that began with utopian intentions to relatively 'mainstream' alternative collectives, some of which have achieved small-scale utopian visions of harmonious communal living.⁴

While intentional communities often have an ecological utopian focus, recent times have also seen the rise of techno-utopianism in social and artistic discourse. In the late-20th-century rise of new technologies in our lives there are echoes of the way that technology was discussed in the 19th century. In the different theories of 19th-century social reformists including Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint-Simon and even Marx and Engels, as well as in fiction (such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, written in 1888) was an underlying belief in science and technological advancement serving the utopian reconstruction of society. The general 19th-century belief that technological advancement served social improvement is an extension of the

Enlightenment's faith in progress, a belief that suffered many blows in the 20th century. Of the fate of techno-utopianism in the current day, historian Howard Segal writes that "The technologically assisted horrors of the present age — its world wars, its genocides, its nuclear threats — make any hope of major improvements in human behaviour seem farfetched".⁵ Today it would be hard to find an artist working with new technology who does not share Segal's viewpoint. And when new-media art is criticised for being too utopian, it is the techno-utopian elements of its history that are alluded to, not the complex ways in which artists today explore the place of technology within our lives.

1960s antecedents of new-media art were utopian in their belief in technology and the possibility of a cybernetic society. Charlie Gere identifies "a utopian 'systems aesthetic', in which the combination of new technologies and ideas about systems, interaction and process would produce a better world".⁶ In a number of theories percolating at the time was a move away from formalism towards the study of interrelations, or systems, and of the connections between different disciplines.⁷ Likewise, visionaries such as Marshall McLuhan interpreted technical advancement in terms of its future of social revolution, with the ability to expand and redefine the "psychic and social complex".⁸

The trajectory and framing of media art, net art and art using new technologies closely parallels that of the internet (the site of some of its production). In its early days the internet was framed with utopian rhetoric and imagined as a place of digital democracy where participants create the content, freely access information, create identities free of corporeality and spatial bounds, connect with each other across geography and create communities based on their own ideals.⁹ The internet was often seen as democratic and empowering because it was thought to be outside the realm of ordinary power-systems. However, even the most enthusiastic proponents of the digital communication revolution now acknowledge that some aspects of communication experiences are devalued by the new technologies and they can be as prone to power abuses as any other space or technology.

The messianic positivism of artists involved in technology underwent a critical reappraisal in the 1970s in light of changing social circumstances. As the earth-shatteringly destructive forces

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of technology were felt around the world in the advent of the Vietnam War, the Cold War and the threat of nuclear holocaust, artists — like other members of society — no longer saw advances in technology as the natural progression of civilisation, but as uncontrollable and potentially destructive forces.

Today we can place technology's benefits and accept its infiltration with a greater awareness of its pitfalls. Likewise, artists working in the realm of new technologies are now more likely to grapple with the commercialisation and corporatisation of the internet, for example, or the political struggles and power-imbalances of the use of new technologies, than to be trumpeting the future of an interconnected and harmonious world. That is not to say that within a number of years new media has fallen from a utopian to dystopian practice, but that those working within it understand the impossibility of true utopia. Indeed, new media artists, with their connections to technology and the literary and cinematic genres of cyberpunk and steampunk have been more involved in a critique of technological utopianism than most.

Many theorists have noted the distrust of utopian thinking prevalent in the late 20th century,¹⁰ attributing its downfall to a postmodern rupture of modernist faith in progress and grand narratives. The 20th century saw the social implementation of a number of utopias and also saw their spectacular failures, which affected the concept's reputation in all manifestations. The different implementations of utopian thinking in Nazism and Communism have both illustrated the potentially disastrous consequences of carrying through on utopian thinking. Now utopianism is often automatically associated with totalitarianism. Even the free-market utopia that that has dominated our times has taken a battering now that the global financial crisis has reinforced how spectacularly markets can fail.

In our supposedly post-ideological age, can utopian hope still exist, and can it exist without being equated with totalitarianism? There are a number of ways in which artists continue to engage with utopian thinking. Often, dystopian exaggeration is used as a point of criticism for social ills. Alternatively, where artists can once again look to utopias with hope rather than suspicion it is not necessarily evidence that utopian failures are forgotten. Nor does it prove that the world is a more disastrous place in need of utopian dreams, or a place of hope allowing for that dreaming. The change lies in

the scope of this utopian hope. The emergence of a moderate utopian imperative in contemporary art is notable outside of new media in theories of participatory and interactive art and the artists associated with Relational Aesthetics. In it is a movement towards a scaled-down and quotidian 'microutopianism' rooted in everyday relations, interconnection, simple pleasures and ethical living.

While history has taught the folly of attempting to implement utopian perfection on a grand scale in the real world, the utopian trope has continuing value as an artistic and fictional means of proposing alternate ways of living. Rather than try to achieve actual utopia, a better way to be utopian is to hope for more than can be achieved and to use utopianism as an imaginative means of debating changes that could result in practical steps towards a better world.

1 Thomas More, *Utopia* (translated from the Latin by John Sheehan and John P. Donnelly) (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984)

2 "Wherefore not Utopie, but rather rightly/ My name is Eutopie: a place of felicitie." Edward Arber (ed), Sir Thomas More, *Utopia, translated into English by Ralph Robinson, His second and revised edition, 1556* (London: Alex Murray & Son, 1869) p.167

3 Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and community: communes and utopias in sociological perspective*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) p.166

4 There are many still existent utopian intentional communities in Australia including Tunttable Falls near Nimbin, Crystal Waters near Brisbane, Moora Moora in Healesville and Gondwana Sanctuary in Byron Bay.

5 Howard P Segal, *Technological utopianism in American culture*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p.156

6 Charlie Gere, 'New Media Art and the Gallery in the Digital Age' *Tate Papers* (Autumn 2004) www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/04autumn/gere.htm, (accessed 22 November 2009)

7 Luke Skrebowski, 'All Systems Go: Recovering Jack Burnham's 'Systems Aesthetics'' *Tate Papers* (Spring 2006) www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/06spring/skrebowski.htm#fn19 (accessed 28 November 2009); Jack Burnham, 'Systems Esthetics', *Artforum* (September 1968), pp.30-35 www.volweb.cz/horvitz/burnham/systems-esthetics.html (accessed 28 November, 2009)

8 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964) p4

9 Laura J. Gurak, 'Utopian Visions of Cyberspace,' *Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine* (May 1997) www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/may/last.html (accessed 28 November, 2009)

10 Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (USA: Columbia University Press, 2005); Krishan Kumar & Stephen Bann (eds.) *Utopias and the Millennium* (London: Reaktion Books, 1993)



AES + F

LAST RIOT {2007}

Last Riot 2007 (video still)
 Multichannel HD digital video, audio, 19:24
 Image courtesy of the artists & Multimedia Art
 Museum, Moscow

A beguiling blend of visual pleasures and conflicting narratives, *Last Riot* presents a dystopian landscape in which the final clash of all civilisations is frozen at its most devastating intensity. *Last Riot's* aesthetic unites that of futuristic computer games, Baroque compositional strengths and staged fashion photography. It euphorically heralds the end of history, time, ethics and ideology.

A massacre of sorts is unfolding: impeccably presented, androgynous teenagers are at once victims and aggressors. In bloodless battle they tote guns, threaten to slit throats, and work as a blindingly beautiful heroic team to dominate the oppressors — if only they could be told apart. The perilous and mutating landscape, dotted with symbols of mixed historical age and virtue, does little to identify them or aid their situation. Industrial machinery grinds away through nuclear-force winds, volcanoes explode and missiles fly overhead, their target uncertain; paradise and catastrophe are inseparable. The cause of this calamity is ambiguous; us and them, right and wrong have long since conflated.

TATIANA ARZAMASOVA b. RUSSIA {1955}

LEV EVZOVITCH b. RUSSIA {1955}

EVGENY SVYATSKY b. RUSSIA {1955}

VLADIMIR FRIDKES b. RUSSIA {1955}

Tatiana Arzamasova, Lev Evzovitch and Evgeny Svyatsky have collaborated since 1987. From 1995 they also worked on a regular basis with photographer Vladimir Fridkes. Their skills combine conceptual architecture, graphic arts, animation and photography.

Their work has often involved imagery form video games, media and science fiction, subverting the images we expect to see. Their works are held in many collections, including Centre d'Art Contemporain Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

They have been involved in many exhibitions, biennials and festivals; including the 53rd Venice Biennial (2009); Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2009); Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA (2008); the 4th International Video Art Biennial in Israel (2008); European Media Art Festival, Germany (2008); 2nd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2004).



PATRICK BERNATCHEZ

I FEEL COLD TODAY {2007}

I Feel Cold Today 2007 (video still)
16mm film transferred to SD video, audio, 13:28
Image courtesy of the artist

A mysterious sense of anxiety accompanies the camera's lyrical journey through the familiar environment of an ageing modernist office block in *I Feel Cold Today*. A furtive-sounding, science-fiction-inspired soundtrack builds tension as an elevator's doors open suspensefully onto a workplace floor. The scene is entirely devoid of people, desk chairs sit empty and the wind blows papers, as if these spaces were abandoned only moments ago.

The trigger for this sudden evacuation is never articulated, yet mere boredom — or a united, overwhelming desire to be liberated of capitalist drudgery — seems unlikely. A residual sense of foreboding and instability lingers despite the routine surroundings. This office block first appears no less hermetically sealed from the world outside than any other; then snowflakes begin to flutter in, collecting alarmingly quickly around the deserted rooms.

Bernatchez reveals the unseen while withholding his own viewpoint. He addresses a future of social decay and urban entropy through the collective setting of an office, yet his film invites an ominously personal connection.

PATRICK BERNATCHEZ b. QUEBEC, CANADA {1972}

Montreal-based Patrick Bernatchez has exhibited in Canada since 2000 and more recently also in Europe and America. Since 2006 his major project has been the *Chrysalides Trilogy*, which has encompassed painting, drawing, installation, sound, film and photography. The Fashion Plaza, an imposing building located in Montreal's Mile-End district, is a constant inspiration for his research on metaphoric metamorphosis, reflections on industry and power and their impacts on real life. In 2008–2009 Bernatchez undertook an arts residency in Basel, and he lives in Berlin where he works at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, supported by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec.



BLENDID INTERACTION DESIGN

TOUCHME {2004}

TouchMe 2004 (installation view)
Interactive installation
Image courtesy of the artists

TouchMe is an interactive installation that encourages the audience to leave a personal mark in public space. The user presses a button and then holds his or her body against the smooth interface of a sheet of frosted glass. *TouchMe* scans the glass screen and the resulting full-colour image of the viewer is retained and displayed until the next person approaches. Its interface invites direct interaction from the user, at once creating a sense of ease and playfulness while bridging people with creative technologies.

Blendid seek modes of interaction that borrow their behaviour from real-world activities. In opposition to the fast-paced modern spaces built to resist constant wear from a faceless, transient public, *TouchMe* is determined to keep record of those who interact with it. All images are stored and played back on the glass screen when the work is not being used. Engaging with the very human desire to belong, *TouchMe* welcomes human imprint and suggests that utopia may be a world in which we can see ourselves reflected in our community and environment.

DAVID KOUSEMAKER b. AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS {1971}

TIM OLDEN b. AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS {1981}

Blendid is a collaborative team of two interaction designers: David Kousemaker and Tim Olden. They are interested in designing digital technology that breaks away from traditional frameworks in order to have a more natural interaction between people and computing technology. Kousemaker and Olden studied at Utrecht School of Art and Technology and have received Master's degrees in Interactive Design.

After graduating they formed Blendid, and have worked on projects ranging from prototype products to interactive art pieces and performances. Blendid's projects have shown at various festivals including: Polderlicht, Netherlands (2009); Cinekid Festival, De Balie, Amsterdam (2006); STRP Festival, Strijp-S, Eindhoven, the Netherlands (2006); and Digifest/ New Voices, Ontario Science Centre, Canada (2005).



MARCO BRESCIANI

THE DIGITAL PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY {2010}

The Digital Picture of Dorian Gray 2010 (installation view)
Interactive installation
Background art and animation by Darin Bendall
Image courtesy of the artist
An Experimenta Commission

Bringing a classic tale to a contemporary medium, Bresciani's *The Digital Picture of Dorian Gray* provides a spellbinding glance into a deeply personal future. The viewer is seated before a digital 'portrait' and their face, captured by a camera, emerges on the portrait's screen. Within a few moments, a gentle but ominous soundtrack and subtle, animated cityscape background herald a transition into the future. Slowly, alarmingly, the viewer's face and features age as they watch: eyes sink, skin becomes wrinkled and translucent and hair starts to grey.

First printed in 1890, the gothic horror novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written by renowned Irish playwright, poet and author Oscar Wilde, who was known for his biting wit. Wilde's tale addresses themes of corruption, hedonism and humankind's desire for perpetual youth. Presently, as medicine, cosmetics and genetic engineering are increasingly capable of facilitating extreme measures for those who desire to preserve their youth, Bresciani's at once engrossing and confronting work serves as a reminder to be respectful to ourselves and the environment and to pursue our desires with caution.

MARCO BRESCIANI b. MANLY, AUSTRALIA {1960}

Marco Bresciani is a Melbourne-based artist. Bresciani's interactive installations involve computer animation, motion sensors and image manipulation technology. Through his work, he seeks to deconstruct visual reality and reassemble it into animated reflections of the human condition. His work often incorporates the viewer's own image and seeks to present viewers with a reinterpreted vision of themselves and the world around them.

Bresciani has previously exhibited with Experimenta in 2003 in *Experimenta House of Tomorrow*.



BROERSEN & LUKÁCS

PRIME TIME PARADISE {2004}

Prime Time Paradise 2004 (video still)
SD video, silent, 11:00

Collection of Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam
Image courtesy of Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam

Margit Lukács and Persijn Broersen's spatial montage, *Prime Time Paradise*, underscores seminal communication theorist Marshall McLuhan's position that the media through which a message is received must contribute to the impact on individual understanding of that idea. Compiled of myriad frozen images from television news footage, *Prime Time Paradise* presents a dystopic and disjointed series of events and disasters attended only by uneasy silence. The multiple sources from which the imagery is drawn refer to media's responsibility for the construction of news reports and the accompanying narratives that make individual critical reflection more challenging.

The characters in *Prime Time Paradise* remain fixed as the camera flies over the pop-up simulacra united in one landscape. Stripped of their true context, the images generate new connections between themselves. Here, the speed and saturation of the world's news does not permit time to recognise these events or consider their impact. *Prime Time Paradise* demonstrates the complex ways in which the narratives presented by the mass media can come to constitute whole worlds for an audience that absorbs them too passively.

PERSIJN BROERSEN b. DELFT, NETHERLANDS {1974}

MARGIT LUKÁCS b. AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS {1973}

Persijn Broersen and Margit Lukács live and work in Amsterdam. They create smoothly edited video montages that employ footage in a number of ways, including scenes they have filmed themselves, images appropriated from television news reports and digitally animated segments.

They both studied graphic design at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam and then continued on to a Master of Design and Fine Arts at the Sandberg Institute, Amsterdam.

Their work has been exhibited throughout the Netherlands and in various other countries including China, India and Japan. Selected recent exhibitions include: the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009); Montevideo, Amsterdam (2009); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008) and Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (2008).



BU HUA

SAVAGE GROWTH {2008}

Savage Growth 2008 (animation still)
SD Flash animation, audio, 3:52
Collection of the Neilson Family, Sydney
Image courtesy of White Rabbit Collection

A young girl stands upon a wall and conjures a flock of paired hands, white and flying like doves. They replicate swiftly and take to an ominous sky. So begins the Flash animation *Savage Growth*, a coming-of-age tale in which true grit and a slingshot can do little to shield the plucky protagonist from the dark state of immediate urban affairs. Bu's vision of an unchecked, dehumanised city of the future unfolds through her unique colour-saturated woodblock print aesthetic. Her symbols are vivid: two headless figures in business shirts — white and blue suggesting conflicting nations — slap hands and ideologies until they disintegrate. The city is devoid of other humans, symptomatic of mass migration in the face of incoming threat. The dove-like hands are pecked bloody and brought down by aggressive bomber bird-planes sent by each nation, as skulls smoking cigarettes spark in the sky. Armed only with her slingshot, the girl traverses her town, determinedly dismissive of the foreboding omens and uncanny chaos surrounding her. This dystopic account of urban alienation warns of the hazards of ambitious and unmonitored global expansion while offering hope for individual mettle in the face of adversity.

BU HUA b. BEIJING, CHINA {1973}

Bu Hua is a Beijing-based artist who works in computer animation. After graduating from the Central Academy of Art & Design in Beijing, Hua went to Holland for further study at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, Academie voor Beeldende Vorming. Hua originally studied painting, but was drawn to animation via her interest in films and the way in which *Flash* facilitated the creation of animations. Bu Hua has exhibited internationally with shows in China, Taiwan, Australia, France and Germany, including the 2008 Shanghai Biennale, the 2006 International Digital Art Awards (IDAA) in Australia and the 2005 International Animated Film Festival in France.



MICHAEL BURTON

NANOTOPIA {2006}

Nanotopia 2006 (video still)
SD video, audio, 8:00
Image courtesy of the artist

Nanotechnology is the science and technology of precisely manipulating the structure of matter at a molecular level. Burton's unsettling and dystopic video *Nanotopia* hypothesises a future world in which the body, enabled by nanotechnologies, is a viable site for the production of clinical or pharmaceutical commodities. In *Nanotopia*, a man lies down while small growths develop on his face and upper body. These apparently desirable protuberances are harvested by another person wielding a scalpel, and later consumed by a woman with eyelashes of surreal length, which appear to inform her sense of her own beauty. Imagining a world in which people farm their bodies for income is not so disconnected from ethically uncertain transactions in human organs. Burton, however, casts the marketability — and manipulability — of the human body at molecular level in a cold new light, while considering the potential impact nanotechnology may have on the chasm between rich and poor, and the greater global socioeconomic balance.

MICHAEL BURTON b. ELY, UNITED KINGDOM {1977}

London-based Michael Burton works on the edge of speculative design and art. He creates objects, images and films as insights into richly imagined scenarios of the future. His work explores health and climate challenges and the choices we face in evolving as a species.

Burton exhibits internationally, most notably at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He leads a collaborative practice, working with organisations and individuals including scientists, performers, choreographers, designers and architects.

He graduated from the MA Design Interactions program at the Royal College of Art, London in 2007. Previously, he worked in Contemporary Dance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire and earned a BA in Fine Art Sculpture at Bretton Hall, Leeds University.



CAO FEI / CAO FEI & CHINA TRACY

WHOSE UTOPIA {2006} / THE BIRTH OF RMB CITY {2009}

Whose Utopia 2006 (video still)
SD video, audio, 20:00
Image courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space

The title of Cao Fei's moving 2008 film comes without a question mark. Implicit in the syntax of *Whose Utopia* is the understanding that the film addresses neither the artist's nor the characters' notions of what utopia might mean for them.

Whose Utopia is set in the OSRAM Foshan light bulb factory in Guangdong, China. In three sequences, reminiscent of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*, an endless production line unfolds as workers engage in excruciatingly repetitive tasks and the factory's industrial machinery drones through its cyclic functions. Amid the factory's collective functions Cao provides an escape from reality for four workers, each of whom comes to life as they enact their other lives, dreams or true selves; their colleagues are apparently unaware of this transformation. A ballerina with wings pirouettes slowly; a dancer is in jeans, then in costume, graceful and rhythmic; a man breakdances his way down an aisle; another strums his electric guitar. The scene is tainted with irony as lightbulbs, the factory's *raison d'être*, can be seen to symbolise the ideas of the individual.

The China in which Cao has grown up espoused traditional politics and collective ideologies, even as it allowed for her immersion in an increasingly technologically-driven consumer society, abounding in machines and techno-gadgets that service the individual.

Continuing her survey of the fractures between real, dream and virtual worlds, Cao Fei is also known as China Tracy, her avatar in the online world Second Life. China Tracy has produced and directed her virtual *RMB City*, (RMB is Chinese currency) a spectacular, 3D, candy-coloured island mélange of fantastic and dystopic buildings and enormous proportions. *The Birth of RMB City* charts its construction from every possible angle, the camera flying past industrial smoke stacks, golden high-rises, futuristic architectural adventures, dynamic shipping ports, infinity pools, defence headquarters and even a prison. Decorated with a floating panda and a Ferris wheel, it's hard not to feel the pull of Chinese urban perfection, as seen through China Tracy's eyes.

CAO FEI b. GUANGZHOU, CHINA {1978}

As part of the younger generation of Chinese artists, Cao Fei has grown up in a world of ostentatious advertising and with the growth of the Internet. She graduated with a BFA from Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

Her work has been exhibited extensively, including: the New Museum Triennial (2009); Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2008); Prospect.1 New Orleans (2008); Yokohama Triennial (2008) and Istanbul, Lyon, and Venice Biennials (2007); P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York (2006); Serpentine Gallery (2006); Art Basel, Miami (2005).



JEN DeNIKE

HAPPY ENDINGS {2006}

Happy Endings 2006 (video still)
SD video, audio, 2:09
Image courtesy of the artist

Artist Jen DeNike stands on a grassy slope in a bucolic setting beside a river. Appearing in a summer dress, she is bathed in — and somewhat obscured by — bright sunshine. “THERE ARE NO HAPPY ENDINGS” proclaim the placards she holds up, one by one, word by word, for the camera. Can it be true? Can nothing good at all come of life, even in this brilliant setting? Or is this a more oblique reference to the nature of storytelling, if not life as a young woman or artist, in the 21st century?

Within this short cycle of frames — the phrase is repeated just twice before the film ends — DeNike seems at ease as she lingers on the hopelessness of the moment. Yet there is an underlying tension in the variant interpretations of this performance. The video camera may be recorder, mirror or audience, and, despite her bleak prophecy, DeNike stands defiant. This life may have claimed her innocence but her determination to stand tall perseveres. The events that have led to this cheerless declaration do not reveal themselves. Nonetheless, there is sunshine.

JEN DeNIKE b. NORWALK, USA {1971}

Jen DeNike lives and works in New York. Her dream-like videos create portraits that often draw a line between stereotypes and archetypes where a sense of detachment supports powerful images.

Her work has been shown internationally including at: the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2006); Sweden (2007); Site Gallery, England (2007); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2009); and PS1, New York (2008) and Performa Biennial 09. She is represented by Smith-Stewart, New York.



JEAN DUBOIS & CHLOÉ LEFEBVRE

BY MEANS OF A SIGH {2008}

By Means of a Sigh 2008 (video still)
Interactive video installation
Image courtesy of the artists

In the age of climate change, many of planet Earth's 6.7 billion human inhabitants do not daily see or recognise the true 'shareability' of resources. Bringing attention back to the globally uniting matter of air as the elixir of all life, Jean Dubois & Chloé Lefebvre's *By Means of a Sigh* is an interactive screen-based video installation, designed for exhibition within a public arena, that invites empathy for oneness in humanity and the destruction of the other.

Two faces in profile look at each other from two sides of a large screen. Each blows a gum bubble of ever-changing size and fragility. Viewers are prompted to call a number on their phones, which links them to one of the faces onscreen; blowing gently into the receiver directly affects the life of one bubble. The bubbles — perhaps symbols of individuals, nations, or invisible connections between one another — grow, shrink, kiss and collapse as two people participate. Tantalised by the responsibility and power they now hold over this tenuous and public relationship, users find it hard to resist the urge to pop the shimmering bubble of gum. Dubois and Lefebvre demonstrate with poetic beauty that within the range of one breath lies a host of symbolic potential for connectivity to humankind's vital presence and history worldwide.

This project was generously supported by: Fonds Québécois de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FQRSC) & Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec (CALQ)

JEAN DUBOIS b. MONTREAL, CANADA {1964}

CHLOÉ LEFEBVRE b. MONTREAL, CANADA {1970}

Jean DuBois and Chloé Lefebvre are Canadian-based artists who have worked in close collaboration since 2001. Their work involves interactive installations that explore the relation between the spectator and the screen. The observer can obtain a level of intimacy with the fictional characters the artists have created through lyrical encounters facilitated by touch-screens and other technology.

DuBois teaches at the École des arts visuels et médiatiques at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM), and his productions have been presented in Brazil, Japan, China, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, United States and at various other museums and artists' centres in Canada.

Lefebvre has a diverse artistic practice that includes video, photography, installation and sculpture. She is a member of Galerie Clark and sits on its board of directors. She holds a Master's degree in visual and media arts from UQÀM.



HANS-PETER FELDMANN

SCHATTENSPIEL (SHADOW PLAY) {2005-2009}

Schattenspiel (Shadowplay) 2005 (Installation view)
Trestle tables, turntables, lamps, electric motors, plastic figurines
Image courtesy of the artist and the Konrad Fischer Galerie

The simple visual allure of shadow puppets, magic lanterns and zoetropes ('wheels of life') has arguably never been diminished by the advent of film or its digital cousins. The beguiling choreography of the dancing shadows in *Schattenspiel* stands gallantly in the face of contemporary forms of animation. An apparently shambolic assemblage of kitsch figurines and anti-objets d'art are brought to life with little more than strong light and the aid of some turntables. Every item is accorded equal treatment; no one item is privileged or allowed a lengthier solo performance.

Feldmann's passion for the unstructured amassing of ordinary things and personal treasures has fed his reputation as a collector extraordinaire. Gleefully dispensing with any need for traditional nomenclature, Feldmann humanises the exhibition space with his informal grouping of familiar objects. While his works often refer to the accretions and residues of time passed and life lived, there is nothing mundane about the resulting production. *Schattenspiel's* dizzying sequences seamlessly meld one moment to the next, entrapping the viewer in a fantastical and ever-changing new world.

HANS-PETER FELDMANN b. DUSSELDORF, GERMANY {1941}

Hans-Peter Feldmann lives and works in Dusseldorf, Germany. Known for his conceptual works that manipulate found materials, Feldmann rose to prominence in the late 1960s.

Feldmann has exhibited widely, including shows at the Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York (1993), 303 Gallery, New York (1992, 1996, 2000) and Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2003). His work also appeared in Documenta 5 & 6 in Kassel, Germany (1972, 1976) and the Venice Biennale 2003 and 2009.



CHRISTOPHER FULHAM

(DIS)SPIRITED {2008}

(Dis)spirited 2008 (video still)
HD video, silent, 5:24
Image courtesy of the artist

The immediacy of digital media as documenter has seen it become integral to contemporary life in personal technologies, visual communication, and even online social networking. In *(Dis)spirited*, Fulham uses digital video to observe rather than scrutinise the ordinary and the everyday in the time-warped surroundings of quasi public/private spaces. Shot from a distance, yet imbued with a peculiar emotional intimacy, *(Dis)spirited* randomly surveys members of the public descending an escalator at an unidentifiable shopping centre.

Either sated or denied by their immediate activities, there is little difference between these consumers' expressions, and no sense of pleasure or satisfaction in their body language. The film is slightly slowed and the frame does not change; the escalator alone drags this parade of the disconnected before the camera. Non-narrative, yet highly revealing, *(Dis)spirited* spends time engaging with the ebb and flow of time and life in the theatre of the everyday.

CHRISTOPHER FULHAM b. PERTH, AUSTRALIA {1973}

Christopher Fulham is a Canberra-based artist working across a range of time-based media including digital video and photography.

Fulham's work has been exhibited both in Australia and internationally including at: CarriageWorks, Sydney (2009); Urban Screens 08, Melbourne (2008); BOOM Taiwan–Australia New Media Arts Exhibition, Taiwan (2007); National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (2006); and at the Opera House, Sydney (2005).

He has been shortlisted for the Churchie emerging art prize and the Phoenix Prize for spiritual art. His work has featured in the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) *Filter* magazine. Fulham also works as a lecturer in Video and Internet Art at the ANU, Canberra.



SHILPA GUPTA

SHADOW 3 {2007}

Shadow 3 2007 (installation view)

Interactive installation

Image courtesy of the artist and Yvon Lambert Gallerie, Paris

Commissioned by Mac Val

Between *Shadow 3* and its accompanying abstract poem, Gupta sharply critiques consumer culture and implores greater self-reflection in the face of a world that finds it easier to turn a blind eye. This interactive video projection captures the viewer's silhouette and projects it life size. A 'string' drops down and attaches to each shadow. Over time, consumer detritus slides down the rope, collecting on top of each person's shadow and adding weight and bulk to their form: their conscience. Alarmingly, the shadow is left to drown in years of accumulated debris of unrecyclable products. Gupta states: "Both the conceptual and aesthetic are interlinked in my artistic practice. The work stems from living in an urban environment in the migrant city of Mumbai which has been experiencing rapid change. The aesthetics of my work are connected to the media that it is produced in, which is part of our everyday lives, electronics, internet, mechanisation of action and also thought!"¹

SHILPA GUPTA b. MUMBAI, INDIA {1976}

Shilpa Gupta lives and works in Mumbai. Her work uses interactive video, websites, objects, photographs, sound and public performances to probe and subversively examine such themes as desire, religion and notions of security. She has held solo exhibitions at Yvon Lambert, Paris; Galleria Continua, San Gimignano and at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, hosted by Vadehra Gallery. She has exhibited in biennales and triennials in the USA, Europe, Australia and Japan. Gupta has also exhibited at institutions including: Tate Modern, London; Serpentine Gallery, London; Daimler Chrysler Contemporary, Berlin; Mori Museum, Tokyo; Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, NY; New Museum, NY; and Queens Museum, NY.

¹ As quoted by interviewer Amrita Gupta Singh in http://www.artconcerns.net/2007April1/html/interview_silpa.htm



ADAD HANNAH & NIKLAS ROY

INTERNATIONAL DANCE PARTY {2007}

International Dance Party 2007 (installation view)
Interactive installation
Image courtesy of the artists

You're at an incredible party; the scene is electric and the music is pumping. But just as you charge up and break into your best dance moves, the DJ cools it down. Oh, why can't the DJ read the crowd's mood better? And where was *International Dance Party*, right when you needed it? Artists Adad Hannah and Niklas Roy know exactly how you feel. In no more than the space of a flightcase, Hannah and Roy have employed sophisticated radar-sensing technology, an ear-blasting 600W sound system, psychedelic lights and laser effects to make the ultimate in mind-reading DJs: a veritable party-in-a-box.

Flashing the invitation "dance to start the party", the inbuilt dance activity radar detects and evaluates real-time motion. The harder you dance, the more the box transforms to reward you with bigger beats and funkier laser lighting, and, as your dance moves reach their zenith-ground effects and a dazzling blue beacon. As you slow down, IDP just packs its party punches away.

ADAD HANNAH b. NEW YORK, USA {1971}

NIKLAS ROY b. NUREMBERG, GERMANY {1974}

Berlin-based Niklas Roy focuses on building artistic electro-mechanical sculptures, machines and devices. In addition to creating interactive stand-alone installations, he also carries out performances.

Previously Roy has worked as a director, 3D animator and as visual effects supervisor for several international film productions. His works have been shown at: SIGGRAPH, USA; Ars Electronica, Linz; Microwave, Hong Kong; Transmediale, Berlin; VIPER, Basel; Emergences, Paris; LABoral, Spain; and at many other festivals and museums. He has received several international awards.

Adad Hannah was born in New York and has lived in Montreal since 2001. He has exhibited at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2008); the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2008); Zendai MoMA, Shanghai (2009); Ke Center for Contemporary Art, Shanghai (2008); the Vancouver Art Gallery (2007); the National Gallery of Canada (2006); Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2006); and the 4th Seoul International Media Art Biennale (2006). Hannah is represented by Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.



CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI

THE HUNT {1992 / 1997}

The Hunt 1992/1997 (video still)
SD video, audio, 1:11
Image courtesy of the artist

Championing process over end product and illustrating that art and humour are not entirely mutually exclusive, Jankowski's sharp observational wit fills every second of *The Hunt's* brief screen performance. Filmed in just over one minute, a man locates his required food source and acquires it by shooting it with a projectile. Never mind the Paleolithic or Elizabethan hunting eras; Jankowski enters a small shop in an urban street and, armed with a kid's plastic bow and arrow, is happily reconciled to securing no less inanimate prey than a six-pack herd of yoghurt and an unsuspecting frozen chicken. Uniting this quasi-traditional act with modern commerce and subverting his earlier traditionally masculine or natural behaviour, he then presents his skewered groceries in a shopping trolley for purchase the common way at the checkout. Playing on the notion that man's regard for himself depends on how well he plays his roles — from hunter-gatherer to the contemporary businessman — Jankowski appears perfectly satisfied with the success of his mission. *The Hunt's* hallmarks underscore Jankowski's commitment to improvised situations and the fickle involvement of unprepared others, while testing the boundaries between fiction and documentary, art and commerce.

CHRISTIAN JANKOWSKI b. GÖTTINGEN, GERMANY {1968}

Christian Jankowski is a Berlin-based artist. His video productions, films, photographs and installations explore the relationship between the artist and institutions of art, the media and society. Jankowski gained international recognition in the 48th Venice Biennale curated by Harald Szeemann in 1999, and has exhibited in several solo shows throughout Europe, the USA and Asia. Jankowski has a professorship at the Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design.



WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

WHAT WILL COME {2007}

"I am interested in a political art, that is to say an art of ambiguity, contradiction, uncompleted gestures and uncertain ending — an art (and a politics) in which optimism is kept in check, and nihilism at bay."¹

At the heart of Kentridge's beguiling anamorphic film *What Will Come* is the invitation to see the image — and read the narrative — twice. Projected atop a circular table, a lyrical stop-motion animation of distorted charcoal drawings depicts wartime atrocities and misanthropic events of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. Yet it is only in the central mirrored cylinder that the real shape of the story unfolds; a sophisticated choreography of twisting projections and visual correction reveal the impending terrors brought by military occupation and war.

Seen accurately in the mirror, the images circumnavigate the column and appear somehow truer, easier to understand, as though there is something fundamentally different about one vision from the other.

As it continually erases and rebuilds the political histories illustrated, *What Will Come* encourages active responsibility

What Will Come 2007 (installation view)
Installation with anamorphic projection: 35mm film transferred to SD video, table, chromed stainless steel cylinder, audio, 8:40
Image courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery

for the construction of our world here and now. Central to Kentridge's politically and historically infused practice is his ongoing investigation into the nature of human perception, and the forms of fragmentation and self-reflection that a modernist understanding of the world presents.

¹ http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/kentridge_w.htm

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE b. JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA {1955}

William Kentridge lives and works in South Africa. Working across a wide range of media that includes stop-motion films of his own charcoal drawings, etching, collage, sculpture and the performing arts, Kentridge explores politically charged themes with poetic delicacy. He is a prolific artist who has been shown extensively on the international stage, including at: the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (2009); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (2009); 5th Seoul International Media Art Biennale (2008); 2008 Sydney Biennale, Tate Modern, London (2007); Edinburgh Festival (2007); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006); and the 51st Venice Biennale (2005).



ISOBEL KNOWLES & VAN SOWERWINE

YOU WERE IN MY DREAM {2010}

You Were In My Dream 2010 (animation still)
Interactive installation with stop-motion animation, audio
Programming: Touch My Pixel; Carpentry: Duncan Jack; Sound Design:
James Cecil; Booth design concept: Tin & Ed and Isobel Knowles
Image courtesy of the artists
An Experimenta Commission

You Were In My Dream is an exhilarating interactive installation that involves the viewer directly, inviting them to leap and cavort from the enchanted to the fraught in mere moments. Seated at a simple wooden housing, the viewer places their face in a small hollow from which the image of their expressions is fed live onto the face of the child character featured on the computer screen within. Using a mouse, the viewer navigates through a choose-your-own-adventure style narrative.

Within the dream, the child discovers a stop-motion paper animation world of charmed beasts and mysterious forest characters. With just one click a path is chosen and the journey begins, but the illusion of control over the future of any character or narrative soon unravels. The viewer's expressions remain central to the story, even as they morph between a cast of spirited human and animal forms in pursuit of their unique adventure. Aesthetically sublime and richly engaging, *You Were In My Dream* offers an allegory for the unpredictable and risky nature of life's choices for the immediate future.

ISOBEL KNOWLES b. BALLARAT, AUSTRALIA {1980}
VAN SOWERWINE b. MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA {1975}

Melbourne-based artist Isobel Knowles's multidisciplinary practice encompasses animation, music video, installation, visual art, film soundtrack and music. She has screened, exhibited and performed nationally and internationally, most notably at the ICA, London (2006), FACT, Liverpool (2006) and Seoul New Media Biennale (2004). She has held various exhibitions with Experimenta and ACMI in Melbourne and her animated short films have been shown around Australia.

Melbourne-based artist Van Sowerwine works across the areas of stop-motion animation, interactive art, sculpture and photography. Her work explores ideas of childhood and its darker underpinnings. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the ICA, London (2006); FACT, Liverpool (2006); Seoul New Media Biennale (2004), at the Art Gallery of NSW (2004) and as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival (2005). Sowerwine has also previously exhibited with Experimenta. In 2004 Sowerwine and Knowles created the short film *Clara*, which received a Special Mention at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival as well as a Golden Hugo for best animation at the Chicago Film Festival.



KWON MILLER PRODUCTIONS

THE NAURU ELEGIES: A PORTRAIT IN SOUND
AND HYSOGRAPHIC ARCHITECTURE {2010}

The Nauru Elegies 2010
Interactive installation, sound
Image courtesy of the artists

The Nauru Elegies is a multi-media portrait through the approach of an architect and composer. The Republic of Nauru is a small island in the South Pacific Ocean. With a land surface of just 21km², it is the world's smallest independent state and at its core, represents a place at the most remote extreme of the planet. Its seemingly utopic geography and landscape stages a dystopic economy and society. Investigation is based on on-site research of the subject, the island-nation of Nauru. The portrait reclaims a new architecture within local hypsographic territory at a culmination of global currents and posits a deep structural connection between digital media, landscape, and new forms of compositional strategies based on the "de-territorialized" aesthetics of a world economy that mirrors the geopolitical tensions of the early 21st century.

Polyphonic issues include matters of ecology and raw material (phosphate), geo-political history, virtual-banking and economic corruption, global climate issues and information networks. Architectural structures and sound compositions are formed by scripts embedded in this landscape of erasure. The Nauru Elegies unveils a heterotopic, remote island at the core of modern life through visual and invisible flows and patterns.

The poet Goethe once wrote: "architecture is nothing but frozen music."

The Nauru Elegies asks how does one create a landscape portrait of an island in sound, architecture, and above all — digital information?

ANNIE K. KWON b. PORTLAND, USA {1977}

PAUL D. MILLER AKA DJ SPOOKY b. WASHINGTON, D.C., USA {1970}

Kwon Miller Productions approach art through architecture and sound.

Paul D. Miller is a composer, multimedia artist and writer. His written work has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *The Source*, *Artforum* and *Raygun* amongst others. Miller's work as a media artist has appeared in the Whitney Biennial; The Venice Biennial for Architecture (2000); the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany; Kunsthalle, Vienna; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Venice Biennial 2007, and the Miami/Art Basel fair of 2007. Miller has published *Rhythm Science* and *Sound Unbound*, by MIT Press.

Annie K. Kwon is an architect and artist who was a head designer with Skidmore Owings and Merrill in New York and EMBT in Barcelona. Her most recent projects as the founder of Kwonix are the design and construction of James Turrell's studio in New York City and the scenography design for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Her work has been featured in *A+U: Tall Buildings* and *Abstract* of Columbia University. She is a professor at Pratt Institute and Parsons School of Design and curator of contemporary architecture + performance in New York and Seoul.



ANGELICA MESITI

RAPTURE (SILENT ANTHEM) {2007}

Rapture (silent anthem) 2009 (video still)

HD video, silent, 10:10

Video still & cinematography Bonnie Elliot

Image courtesy of the artist

The silent soundtrack accompanying *Rapture*, a slow-motion video of teenagers in the front row at a Big Day Out rock festival, serves only to further intensify its already high-definition visual content and the senses of those watching it. Shot from a concealed location beneath the stage, Mesiti's closely cropped and semi-suspended frame delivery rate exposes a mighty emotional fervour building and releasing through the crowd. As afternoon sun glides down the audience's limbs, water thrown into the air mixes with sweat to shower the atmosphere with millions of tiny crystalline particles. Hands wave and clap, and fingers gesticulate to signal their owners' connection to this collective state of ecstasy. Each individual appears utterly unaware of their animated, at times distorted facial expressions, the subtle emotional nuances of which are revealed moment by moment under Mesiti's watch. This level of unconscious abandon strikes a significant change of focus from the posed photographs found on social networking websites also favoured by this generation. Lost in the worship of the rock gods performing just out of reach, *Rapture* captures a cast revelling in complex states of longing, belonging and personal spirituality.

ANGELA MESITI b. SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA {1976}

Angelica Mesiti is a Sydney-based artist. She works within the traditions of video, performance and installation and generates material through a range of approaches including staged situations, site-specific performance, re-enactment and documentation to explore themes of cultural translations and time/space crossings. Her works have featured in projects at the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, Reina Sofia National Museum, Madrid and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. In 2009 she won the 58th Blake Prize for religious and spiritual art for her video *Rapture (silent anthem)*, the first time the prize has been awarded to a video artist. Mesiti is also a founding member of the Sydney-based collaborative performance group *The Kingpins*.



LAURENT MIGNONNEAU & CHRISTA SOMMERER

LIFE WRITER {2006}

Life Writer 2006 (installation image)
Interactive installation
Image courtesy of the artists

Through an innovative and intuitive interface design, Sommerer and Mignonneau's *Life Writer* engages participants in the very act of creation and destruction. An apparently analogue typewriter sits upon an old writer's desk holding a single sheet of paper onto which a projection is thrown from above. As the user begins to type, the text evolves into artificial life forms that appear to emerge directly from the machine. The creatures' behaviour depends on the letters typed, as if the user's thoughts dictate the genetic code generating each life form and its behaviours. Programmed with genetic algorithms, the creatures are semi-autonomous and pursue their own internal rules of conduct. Dependent of code, and quantity of letters typed, the creatures might eat sufficient text to reproduce and take over the screen, or the user may kill them by pushing them off the paper or squashing them back into the machine. *Life Writer* challenges its users to consider their relationship with technology in a world of increasingly intelligent machines, where the process of giving life to thought might mean letting the ideas themselves evolve, reconfigure and advance independently.

LAURENT MIGNONNEAU b. ANGLONEME, FRANCE {1967}
CHRISTA SOMMERER b. GMUNDEN, AUSTRIA {1964}

Based at the University of Art and Design in Linz, Austria, Laurent Mignonneau and Christa Sommerer are internationally renowned artists who have been collaborating since 1992. Their intuitive interface designs apply scientific principles to explore themes of artificial life through interactive computer installations.

Their artworks have been shown in around 200 exhibitions worldwide and are installed in media museums and media collections, including the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, the Museum of Science and Industries in Tokyo, the ZKM in Karlsruhe, the Cartier Foundation in Paris, the Ars Electronica Center in Linz and the ITAU CULTURAL Foundation in Sao Paulo. Mignonneau and Sommerer have won major international media awards, notably the "Golden Nica" Prix Ars Electronica Award for Interactive Art 1994 (Linz, Austria). They work as researchers and professors and are currently heading the department of Interface Cultures at the University of Art and Design in Linz.



MS & MR

TWO FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE {1997 / 2008}

Two Figures in a Landscape 1997/2008 (video still)
HD video, silent, 1:20
Image courtesy of the artists and Kaliman Gallery

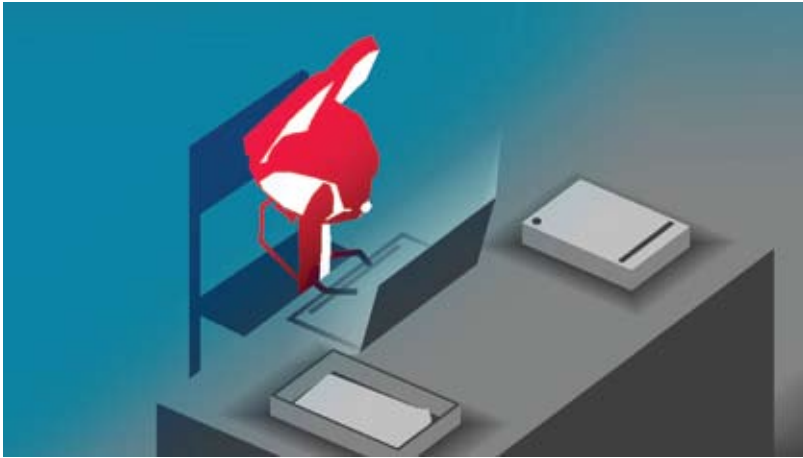
Ms & Mr, one in art and life, create a series of parallel worlds in which they can always exist together. *Two Figures in a Landscape* features Mr, in a tuxedo, collapsed on a blown-out white background. As he stands upright a surreal, animated landscape of icebergs and snow is revealed. He struggles to walk through thick snow covering the ground but is clearly on a mission, not to be deterred. With each step he is sinking; just as he completely disappears from sight, Ms's shadow emerges on the ground and retraces his steps across the ice. Back at the site of his departure, Mr appears to be encouraging Ms's shadow toward him but she submerges and vanishes from view just before he can grasp her. Conflating the material and the fictional, the work loops endlessly; Mr is condemned to begin again his passionate journey to find his love. Determined to erase the state of the individual even before they met at art school, Ms & Mr insert each other in their pre-relationship personal histories to create a new trajectory for their united past and future.

STEPHANIE nova MILNE b. SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA {1980}

RICHARD nova MILNE b. BURLINGTON, CANADA {1977}

Ms & Mr is the cumulative dialogue between Stephanie and Richard nova Milne that began when they met as teenagers in 1998. The Sydney-based couple use family archives such as VHS cassettes, photos and drawings to document their respective childhoods, which they then transform, regularly inserting their contemporary selves into each other's documented 'memories'.

Ms & Mr are currently undertaking their Master of Fine Arts by research at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. They have also been included in many curated and solo exhibitions, projects and screenings in Australia and overseas, including: Primavera, Sydney (2008); Kaliman Gallery, Sydney (2009 & 2007); Physics Room, Christchurch (2009); and Francis Baker-Smith, Sydney (2004). In 2005 they were awarded the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship (2005). They are represented by the Kaliman Gallery, Sydney.



DAVID OREILLY

PLEASE SAY SOMETHING {2009}

Please Say Something 2009 (animation still)
Digital animation, audio, 10:00
Image courtesy of the artist

Set in an indeterminate place and time in the future, *Please Say Something* is a melancholy animated tale of a troubled relationship between a loving, if needy, cat and an inattentive, workaholic mouse. Employing diverse yet refined technical methods, O'Reilly's deceptively simple design dynamic of isometric and perspective views is finessed with electric colours and a retro-inspired, stylised cartoon aesthetic.

The cat is rendered an insomniac due to her relationship insecurities, which the mouse — so absorbed in his work as writer — does little to alleviate. When the mouse pays a compliment to the cat about her scarf, which is promptly swept away in the storm outside their apartment, a tale of fractured domestic rhythms punctuated by communication breakdowns and 'what if?' scenarios unfolds. The anthropomorphised characters portray richly nuanced personalities, despite the economy of dialogue articulated only in text captions and expressed by tonal delivery of their incomprehensible verbal language. Cat to mouse: *Do you think it will always be like this?*

Comprising 23 episodes, each of exactly 25 seconds, *Please Say Something* is told at breakneck speed and appears impatiently edited, as if storytelling and detail are luxuries no longer affordable in an anxious, fast-paced future.

DAVID OREILLY b. KILKENNY, IRELAND {1985}

David O'Reilly is a Berlin-based artist who works in animation and filmmaking. O'Reilly's short animation *Please Say Something* has won several awards including the Golden Bear at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival and the Best Narrative Short at the 2009 Ottawa International Animation Festival. His other work has included several independent short films and various commissions, including the animation for the U2 song, *I'll Go Crazy if I Don't Go Crazy Tonight*. O'Reilly has done animation work with Shynola and has worked with animation production company Studio AKA.



STUART RINGHOLT

MERRI CREEK {2007} / ANDERSON ROAD {2009}

Anderson Road 2009 (video still)
SD video, audio 1:45
Image courtesy of the artist

Merri Creek and *Anderson Road* each invite the absurd directly into a familiar environment. In a local park near *Merri Creek*, Melbourne, a man wheels a small conifer tree on a trolley over to a hole in the ground. He adjusts his grasp of the tree as he hovers over the hole, perhaps sizing it up for planting. When he lets go, the entire tree swiftly disappears from sight in a high-speed reversal of its natural growth. As if nothing is out of order with this turn of events, the man turns and walks away.

The *Anderson Road* park is also host to an unlikely gardening event. Two men straddle a square opening in the ground. They wait calmly. The quiet, gas-propelled emergence of a well-grown, potted mandarin tree in full fruit from the recesses of the earth does not alarm them.

While several of Ringholt's performance works have involved the audience confronting their fears in a safe environment, the actions depicted in *Merri Creek* and *Anderson Road* take place in public spaces. Although the films' protagonists are not observed by other members of the public, the unguarded location of their performances allows for a level of anxiety to build as the viewer starts to question: can this be right? This sly

involvement of the viewers' emotional response is essential to Ringholt's modus operandi. These Dada-esque events force a re-evaluation of the boundaries of common normality — even reality — while providing a moment of unexpected humour in the world.

STUART RINGHOLT b. PERTH, AUSTRALIA {1971}

Melbourne-based artist Stuart Ringholt has an interdisciplinary art practice that grapples with our social environment, exploring ideas of perception and states of consciousness. At the 16th Biennale of Sydney (2008), Ringholt facilitated 50 *Anger Workshops* over the three-month duration of the exhibition, with 400 people participating.

Ringholt has had solo exhibitions at: Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne (2008); ACCA@Mirka, Melbourne (2007); RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, (2006); Display, Prague (2005); and group exhibitions internationally, including Magazzino d'Arte, Rome (2009); and Dumbo Arts Festival, New York (2005).



SCENOCOSME

AKOUSMAFLORE {2008}

Akousmaflore 2008 (Installation view)
Interactive installation, plants, audio
Image courtesy of the artists

A hybrid of plants and technology, *Akousmaflore* is an enchanting hanging garden that expresses its sensitivity to gentle human touch or close proximity by singing in response. Embracing the notion that inanimate objects can react when given human attention, and testing the boundaries by which the everyday world is experienced, *Akousmaflore* reaches out and communicates through a scream, a chorus or an acoustic vibration.

The human body continually emits an electrical aura, which, in close proximity to the plants is perceived by tiny concealed sensors. As the sensors are triggered, the interactive experience of conducting a floral concerto reaches saturation point. The *Akousmaflore* plants acoustically express a phenomenon that cannot otherwise be detected by humans, bringing to life a new understanding of the way the world is shared.

GRÉGORY LASSERRE b. ANNECY, FRANCE {1976}
ANAÏS MET DEN ANCXT b. LYON, FRANCE {1981}

Scenocosme is the French artist couple Grégory Lasserre and Anaïs met den Ancxt. Their work uses music and architecture to create interactive artworks in which the spectator is invited to be at the centre of a musical or choreographed collective performance.

Their work has been exhibited at: ISEA 2009 International Symposium for Electronic Arts; WRO 09 — 13th Media Art Biennale, Poland (2009); ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe; and 3rd Seville International Biennial of Contemporary Art (2008).

They have also participated in many digital art festivals in France including EXIT, VIA, Scopitone, Arborescence, Mal au Pixel, 38e Rugissant, as well as others internationally: Futuresonic, UK; WRO, Poland; Streamfest; SHARE, Italy; ACM; SIGGRAPH, Germany. Their work has been seen in art and cultural centres including: Kibla Multimedia Center, Slovenia; Carré des Jalles, France; and Maison Salvan, France.



MOMOYO TORIMITSU

MIYATA JIRO {1995}

Fighting the never-ending corporate battle, *Miyata Jiro* is a realistic, life-size robotic 'salaryman' (the Japanese expression for a white-collar worker), complete with suit, polished shoes, unwavering smile and spectacles. Rather than bow or shake hands in a traditional businessman's greeting, he lies flat on his stomach and crawls, focused and commando-style, up the footpath of a metropolitan business district. Dressed as a nurse, artist Momoyo Torimitsu attends him, takes care of his situation, diverts him from disaster and changes his battery. "He is smiling, and enjoys being a robot. That is part of the sickness of Japanese society",¹ she states. Torimitsu performed with *Miyata Jiro* first in Japan, but later at Wall Street in New York, as well as Paris, Amsterdam and London.

Miyata Jiro is a reflection of Torimitsu's sharp and critical understanding of the culture created by Japan's rapid economic rise as a superpower in the 1980s and '90s, and the socio-economic phenomena of the decades since. A symbol of individual sacrifice in favour of commercial success, *Miyata Jiro's* connection with the public that views him varies as time passes and locations change. Simultaneously embodying and subverting the roles of worker and robot, he taps into society's

Miyata Jiro 1995 (performance documentation, Wall Street, New York, 1997)
Robotic man: rubber, resin, hair, fabric, leather, battery
Collection of Peter Norton

corporate fears and anxieties about work-life balance and the respect accorded to each. Yet, reduced to a corporate warrior, he is pitiable; he needs his nurse to clear the path for a battle of most dubious virtue.

¹ As quoted by Kim Levin in <http://www.villagevoice.com/2004-01-20/art/crawling-toward-wall-street-dehumanization-in-several-guises/>

MOMOYO TORIMITSU b. TOKYO, JAPAN {1967}

Momoyo Torimitsu, based in New York since 1996, playfully critiques contemporary Japanese culture through works in sculpture, installation and video. She has performed and exhibited widely, including performances on Wall Street in New York and exhibitions in ISEA 2008, National Museum of Singapore, Momena Art, New York, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Tate Gallery, London and City Museum of Modern Art Rome. She has also been involved in programs like the P.S.1 International studio program, New York.



KUANG–YU TSUI

INVISIBLE CITY: AMSTELL 88 III {2006} /
INVISIBLE CITY: SEALEVEL LEAKER {2006}

Invisible City: Sealevel Leaker 2006 (video still)
SD video, audio, 1:46
Image courtesy of the artist

Amstel III 88 and *Sealevel Leaker* were each produced by Tsui during a residency in the Netherlands. The witty, futile actions performed by the artist and documented in his short films aim to reveal the unseen and mundane structures that govern human behaviour in everyday settings.

Amsterdam is formed of a vast network of interconnected canals and its relationship with water is longstanding and vital. In *Amstel III 88*, Tsui finds himself in a surreal state in which his apartment is performing the role of a dyke. Everything from the phone to the door and the drawer of the desk springs a leak, slowly drenching a perplexed Tsui who swiftly moves to block each successive transgression of the city's most important resource.

Sealevel Leaker documents Tsui traversing the paths from his home through Amsterdam's city centre. His clothes appear normal but immediately water leaks profusely from multiple points. It is as if the permeability of water through the city's inhabitants as well as its environment is ultimately inevitable. Though each action alludes to the desire of the 'other' to blend into his surroundings, even the most careful urban planning seems unable to hold back the force of the absurd in contemporary life.

KUANG–YU TSUI b. TAIPEI, TAIWAN {1974}

Kuang–Yu Tsui is a performance and video artist who is based in Taipei, Taiwan. Tsui's performance videos present contrasting actions and interactions with the surrounding environment. Tsui's work has been shown extensively. Most recently: The LAB / Dublin City Council, Dublin (2009); Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux arts de Paris (2009); Yokohama Triennial 2008; Taipei Biennial 2008; Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid (2008). Tsui has previously exhibited with *Experimenta* in 2007 in *Experimenta Playground*. He is represented by Eslite Gallery in Taipei, Taiwan.



LEVI VAN VELUW

LANDSCAPES {2008}

Landscapes 2008 (video still)
SD video, silent, 1:57

Image courtesy of Ronmandos Gallery

In the history of Western art, portraiture and later landscape became the two most enduring genres for the artist's canvas. van Veluw's video *Landscapes* deftly unites the two, and recasts them in three dimensions, as the artist's own head and shoulders provides the structure for the bucolic country scene that envelops him. One of a series of works in which van Veluw himself models as an 'everyman', his neutral facial expression, animated only by his blinking, becomes secondary to the activity going on around him. In the course of a day and a night, sheep nibble at the rolling green meadows, trees perch at precarious angles, a train slowly circumnavigates the track around his head and streetlights sparkle to life in the evening. Van Veluw, too, gradually revolves as if he has personified a small new world: one harmonious planet and its ecosystem.

These meticulous sculptures are intensely detailed in construction and resolution; the final version is without any digital manipulation. Van Veluw extends the artist's role by not only remaking the world as he sees it but also simultaneously becoming, or offering us to be a part of it.

LEVI VAN VELUW b. HOEVELAKEN, NETHERLANDS {1985}

Levi van Veluw is a multidisciplinary artist based in the Netherlands. His video and photographic work often involves manipulations of nature, using his own body as a model. van Veluw has exhibited extensively since 2006 and has won and been nominated for various awards in Europe and the USA, such as: the IPA International Photo Awards, Photographer of the Year (Fine Arts), USA (2007); Akzo Nobel Young Talent award, the Netherlands (2007); and Epson Photo Art Award, Germany (2006). His works have been included in exhibitions such as: Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria (2009); Medialab Enschede, the Netherlands (2009); 2008 Whitstable Biennale; and Media Festival, the Netherlands (2007).



KIT WISE

XANADU {2009}

Xanadu 2009 (animation still)
HD video installation, silent, 6:00; mirrored glass
Digital production by Darin Bendall
Image courtesy of the artist
An Experimenta Commission

Xanadu critiques popular representations of the increasingly virtual 'ideal city'; here conceived as a trans-cultural model of contemporary utopia. Seductively hyperreal in full HD, *Xanadu* depicts a vast and spectacular urban space of uncertain spatial, temporal and cultural origins. Selected details are flawlessly animated, providing an almost hallucinogenic quality of visual sensitivity.

In this intricate, almost symmetrical digital composition, Wise has synthesised imagery from various resources: found in open source archives; purchased from global stock agencies; still and video footage he recorded in Australia and abroad. His diverse reference sources include Western medieval narrative painting, traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* (floating world) landscapes, science fiction cinema, and the literature of Italo Calvino (*Invisible Cities*) and Guy Debord (*The Society of the Spectacle*).

Individual zones of 'truth' sewn with such convincing thread lend a disquieting sensation to the reading of the work. Wise has crafted a mesmeric no-place, a true utopia-in-Arcadia. *Xanadu's* megatropolis fulminates harmoniously within a natural paradise. While disorder and dissent seem unimaginable in a place so carefully conceived, *Xanadu* constantly tilts the kaleidoscope between the desirable, the attainable and the real.

KIT WISE b. PORTSMOUTH, UK {1975}

Kit Wise is a Melbourne-based artist, art writer and curator. He has held 11 solo exhibitions in Italy and Australia, exhibited in numerous group exhibitions in Australia and Europe and has published more than 30 articles, reviews and catalogue essays for journals.

He has undertaken residencies in Paris, Rome, New York, Tokyo and Melbourne. He has been included in exhibitions and screenings at: the Estorick Collection, London (2006); LOOP '08, Barcelona (2008); Urban Screens '08, Melbourne (2008); International Film Festival, Rotterdam (2009); and the Asian Art Biennial, Taiwan (2009). Wise is currently Acting Head of Fine Art and a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University, Australia.



YANG ZHENZHONG

LIGHT AND EASY {2002}

Light and Easy 2002 (video still)
SD video, audio, 1:00
Image courtesy the artist.

As if it were nothing but a trick, a man precariously balances the city of Shanghai upside down from the Oriental Pearl Tower's spire on the tip of his finger. Blending the artificial with what appears to be a real-time act, the man attempts to stabilise his balance while managing this unlikely task. The sparkling metropolis is an emblem for abstract concepts such as progress and development, which had previously been declared as collective goals. Here, Yang implies the lightness with which these goals were employed to distract from the hardships of daily existence for the people. Far from being weighed down by responsibility, this parody makes the act of distraction — physically or metaphorically — look as “light and easy” as the work's title. Yang is known for his creative gestures of discord and irony highlighting the inherent disparities in China's fast-changing socioeconomic and urban landscapes. Using absurdist humour and metaphorical allegory, Yang critiques everyday life in Chinese cities and the icons of national and social identity that anchor them.

YANG ZHENZHONG b. XIAOSHAN, CHINA {1968}

Yang Zhenzhong was born in Xiaoshan and is now lives and works in Shanghai. He graduated from the oil painting department of the China Fine Arts Academy in Hangzhou in 1993 and began working with video and photography in 1995. Yang Zhenzhong's work has shown at major biennales and triennials including the 50th Venice Biennale (2003), 4th Shanghai Biennale (2002), 1st Guangzhou Triennial (2002) and the 4th Gwangju Biennale (2002). Yang Zhenzhong has previously exhibited with Experimenta in 2005 in *Experimenta Vanishing Point*.

AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE NOW

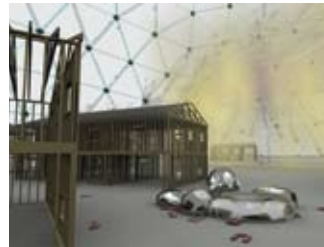
CURATED BY

CLARE NEEDHAM

An Australian Perspective Now showcases a diverse range of single-channel video works by eight contemporary Australian artists. Each work presents a unique visual and conceptual approach to the widely embraced yet complex terrain of video and explores ways in which we individually and collectively construct, navigate, survive, interpret and dream in the world in which we live.

Each artist featured in *An Australian Perspective Now* works with video as part of a multi-disciplinary practice that includes interactive technologies, installation, drawing, performance, sculpture and painting. In this context, the artists employ the medium of video as a physical material not unlike paint or plaster, as well as a conduit or 'canvas' for exploring and presenting myriad conceptual concerns. Whether bringing the inanimate to life, constructing virtual realities, assembling digital collages, re-presenting history, or documenting and critiquing moments, actions or sociological issues, the video works in *An Australian Perspective Now* showcase the gamut of video-making and its potential to change the way we view and understand the world.

Exploring diverse themes within their work, the artists in *An Australian Perspective Now* unpack the everyday. Somewhat absurd and often whimsical in their readings, they reimagine, reinterpret and represent contemporary reality in order to assess it, subvert it, expose it and attempt to rise above it. In the quest to make sense of the complex world around us, they offer solutions, dystopian visions and moments of hopeful reprieve, highlighting an Australian-centric view on how we might survive and navigate the present and the future.



Relics 2007
Digital animation, audio, 2:30
Image courtesy of the artist



Survival Skills #1 2008 (video still)
SD video, audio, 3:10
Image courtesy of the artist

PETER ALWAST

RELICS {2007}

Relics presents an idealised suburban development being constructed within a large geo-dome. Complete with the tranquil hum of wildlife and the silent bursting of fireworks, *Relics* presents an eerie image of domestic tranquillity and bliss. Surrounded by letters of the alphabet that have been scattered like children's toys, a series of large chrome blobs lies at the centre of the dome. The frameworks of the half-constructed homes above them take on a skeletal quality as they are reflected in the polished surfaces of the blobs. Imagery of MRI scans of the artist's body and the mirrored image of a girl on a swing are also reflected. The swing in motion references a chest that expands and contracts like breathing lungs. *Relics* engages with the internal and external construction of reality and the notion of the ideal.

PENELOPE CAIN

SURVIVAL SKILLS #1 {2008}

Overwhelmed by the piles of paperwork inundating her office, the female office worker in *Survival Skills #1* begins to sort. Through the industrious labour of her sorting, she constructs herself a whimsical cubby-like shelter made entirely of paperwork and office supplies. In a desperate attempt to remove herself from her evident reality, she takes refuge within it. The shelter shields her both physically and mentally from the anxiety and repetition of the office environment, offering a small moment of escape. Highlighting the psychological effects of monotonous work practices, the idealistic gesture is hopeful and comical, yet ultimately futile.



a.k.a 2001 (video still)
SD video, audio, 3:30
Image courtesy of the artists



Security. Illusion 2009 (video still)
HD video, audio, 3:60
Photography Christo Crocker
Image courtesy of the artist
and Sarah Scout, Melbourne



Wake Me If I'm Sleeping 2008
(animation still)
Animation: video content from interactive
audiovisual installation, audio, 0:40
Image courtesy of the artist



Universal Antigens 2009 (video still)
SD digital video, audio, 2:30
Image courtesy of the artist

LEON CMIELEWSKI & JOSEPHINE STARRS

A.K.A {2001}

Reminiscent of George Orwell's *1984*, *a.k.a* (also known as) documents a futuristic vision of a society saturated with universal surveillance. Everyone is watching everybody else; anonymity is a thing of the past. Desperately seeking privacy, people take extreme measures to avert the populace's eye, adopting an alias, a front, even resorting to wearing wigs and costumes, anything to confuse and distract the constant watchers. In our current era of technological saturation, when the boundaries between public and private are constantly shifting, *a.k.a* offers a surreal premonition of what is to come.

SUSAN JACOBS

SECURITY. ILLUSION {2009}

Security. Illusion inverts Yves Klein's famous 1960s photographic work, *Leap into the Void*, in which Klein is presented leaping euphorically into midair from a two-storey building, with apparently nothing to catch his fall. Dressed in a suit not unlike Klein's, artist Susan Jacobs mimics the famous leap. Yet where Klein leapt out, Jacobs leaps in: launching herself somewhat precariously from a trampoline on a scaffold in the alley below into the second-storey window of her house. In contrast to Klein's illusory jump, Jacobs' props are clunky and revealing and Jacobs bounces tentatively. The anticipation is palpable and a sense of foreboding accompanies her leap. Unlike Klein's utopian and triumphant action, Jacobs' leap is somewhat perilous and inevitably anti-climatic as the 'void' into which she jumps, visually obscured from the viewer, is in fact her own home.

JIMMY MCGILCHRIST

WAKE ME IF I'M SLEEPING {2008}

In the poetic time-lapse video *Wake Me If I'm Sleeping*, a weary *Spathiphyllum Lily*, commonly known as the Peace Lily and renowned for removing toxins from the air, struggles to remain upright. Elegant and hyperreal, the anthropomorphised lily is presented at the fore of an apparently infinite void. The lily breathes heavily as it endeavours to rouse itself fully and remain both physically and emotionally sturdy. Whether drowsy or deteriorating, the plant seems to carry an immense yet indeterminate burden.

ROWAN MCNAUGHT

UNIVERSAL ANTIGENS {2009}

In *Universal Antigens*, snippets of the everyday are collaged together in a kind of 'semiotic game'. Four distinct video grabs are united, highlighting hypothetical and serendipitous connections between them. Whether constructed or found, each grab presents a specific happening, which is then randomly interrupted by an element of absurdity. The reality presented is complicated and reimagined: computer servers sit on an outstretched hand and beat like an African drum troupe; a mass of furniture falls from the sky before a crowd of applauding spectators. Through a seemingly arbitrary yet poignant combination of familiar signs and symbols, *Universal Antigens* examines the distance between our experience of the world and its actual operation.



Mutatis Mutandis 2005 (video still)
Tea Leaves on paper/SD video,
black and white, silent, 2:40
Image courtesy of the artist

DOROTA MYTYCH

MUTATIS MUTANDIS {2005}

Exploring representation and reality, *Mutatis Mutandis* presents a haunting image of an SS trooper taking aim at a mother and child. Utilising video as a canvas, the image is scrutinised and subverted. At once horrific and confronting, the image suddenly disappears, reappearing in a new position, presenting a new perspective. Now in front of the woman and her child, the soldier offers protection from an unknown enemy. What is the truth? The ephemeral nature of the tealeaves that sweep across the screen and settle to reveal the multiple images causes their interpretation to be in a constant state of flux. Comparing two situations by changing the formal aspects of the composition, *Mutatis Mutandis* challenges notions of perception, interpretation and the complex nature of documentation.

PETER ALWAST b. WARSAW, POLAND {1975}

Peter Alwast currently divides his time between Currarong, Australia and New York. After completing a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1997, Alwast received a Samstag Scholarship, to complete his Master of Fine Arts at the Parsons School of Design, New York. Since graduating, he has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally and his work is held in collections in Australia and the USA. In 2008, Alwast received The Premier of Queensland New Media Award hosted by the Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland. Alwast's conceptually driven practice crosses genre and discipline, incorporating a range of media including video, computer graphics and painting.

PENELOPE CAIN b. ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA {1964}

Penelope Cain lives and works in Sydney. Her cross-disciplinary practice incorporates installation, photography, video and drawing. Stemming from her early training in animal science and her ongoing interest in the behaviours and instincts that underpin the contemporary human condition, Cain applies an observational, research-based approach to the subjects in her work. In 2001, Cain completed a Bachelor of Arts with Honours at the Australian National University. Since graduating, Cain has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in the UK, China, Italy, Taiwan and across Australia. Cain has been awarded several prizes and residencies including an Australia Council residency in Rome, Italy (2008), an Asialink fellowship and residency in Taiwan (2007) and an Experimenta New Visions Commission (2004).

LEON CMIELEWSKI b. ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA {1956}

Leon Cmielewski and Josephine Starrs live and work in Sydney. Their collaborative film, video and new media works have been shown extensively in Australia and overseas. Since 1994, they have worked together on numerous projects including *Downstream*, exhibited recently at the Australian Embassy in Washington, *Seeker*, a work exploring migration and human displacement and *Dream Kitchen*, an interactive stop-motion animation. Their work has been reviewed in a range of publications including *RealTime*, *Artlink* and *B* magazine, Berlin. They have also received many awards and residencies for both their individual and collaborative projects, including: a Future Lab Residency, Ars Electronica Centre, Linz, Austria (2009); Award of Distinction, Interactive Art, Prix Ars Electronica (2007); Asialink Residency, Sarai, Delhi, India (Starrs, 2005); and an Australia Council Tokyo Studio Residency (Cmielewski, 2002). Cmielewski lectures at the School of Communication Arts, University of Western Sydney and Starrs is a senior lecturer at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

SUSAN JACOBS b. SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA {1977}

Susan Jacobs lives and works in Melbourne. In 1997, Jacobs completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of Newcastle and in 1999, Postgraduate study at The Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Jacobs' work has been included in many solo and group exhibitions both nationally and internationally. Recent exhibitions include: *Security. Illusion*, VCA Margaret Lawrence Gallery, (2009); *Ubiquitous Slopes*, Utopian Slumps, (2008); *The Ecologies Project*, Monash University Museum of Art (2008); and *Side Effect*, The Narrows (2008). Susan Jacobs is represented by Sarah Scout, Melbourne.

JIMMY MCGILCHRIST b. CLARE VALLEY, AUSTRALIA {1982}

Jimmy McGilchrist currently lives and works in Adelaide, South Australia. He has studied in both Adelaide and Valencia, Spain, completing a Bachelor of Visual Arts specialising in new media, a diploma in screen media and a course in audio-visual production. In his current practice he focuses predominantly on the production of digital and screen-based content including interactive installations, site-specific audiovisual interventions and content for large public screens. McGilchrist also works in freelance post-production for live action and animation.

ROWAN MCNAUGHT b. MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA {1985}

Rowan McNaught lives and works in Melbourne. In his cross-disciplinary practice, McNaught utilises video, sculpture, sound and drawing in a haplessly handmade way to create a type of technological bricolage. In addition to his solo practice, McNaught also participates in project-based works with a number of artist collectives including Taylors Lakes Super Colony and CK Group. In 2009, he graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally in Melbourne, Canberra, South Korea, Thailand and the Netherlands. In 2009, McNaught undertook a Ne'Na Artist Residency in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

DOROTA MYTYCH b. ELBLAG, POLAND {1970}

Dorota Mytych currently lives and works between Australia, Poland and Italy. Inspired by photographic accounts of historical events, Mytych uses video as a canvas to create active drawings that challenge notions of interpretation and explore representation and reality and the spaces between. Since completing an Honours degree in Fine Art Painting in Florence, Italy in 1996, Mytych has exhibited extensively in Australia, Europe and the United States of America. Her work is held in public and private collections in Australia and abroad, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Gold Coast City Art Gallery. Mytych has undertaken artist residencies in Australia, Italy, Germany and France and is currently artist in residence as part of the Fellowship Roswell, USA (2009-2010).

AS SEEN BY EXPERIMENTA

PROGRAMMED BY

KIT VANE TEMPEST

Utopia Now: one title, two words and three ways to say it. The first looks at utopia now, as in here and now, and locates the concept/place/idyll in the relativistic mediasphere. Utopia now is what the individual makes it. Second, the voice of protest: “What do we want?” “Utopia now!” This is the scream warning that the dominant system just doesn’t work. Third, the history of a concept: looking back at ‘utopia’ now there are definite ideas that carry through each re/imagining. Each would be provided for according to their needs, the Earth would be the greenest green and lions and lambs would have slumber parties.

Nice place, I hear, very pretty. But can we get there from here?

The cynical ‘now’ crowd, suspicious of the stories of hope they pretend the old folks told, look elsewhere for this Arcadia. Every atom can be manipulated mathematically in the virtual space, busting constraints and allowing me to be anything at any time. It is okay to believe in fairy stories that ‘all is okay’ when every reality is equally real. If it’s not right, change it. Here I can be stronger, smarter and magnetically attractive because it is just a game. A game we don’t want to stop playing.

Aside from games and make-believe, it is easier to imagine the world as more of the same, just worse. When talking about the future, it makes far more sense to speak of insurance than assurance, to hope that when things go wrong — and very few of us doubt they will go tragically and spectacularly wrong — the vultures won’t come too quickly, we won’t be left on the ice floe too soon, and, as the world dies in flames and all we hold dear crumbles, somewhere there will be a place for us, a comfortable place that doesn’t leak too badly.

The future isn’t what it used to be. I can remember tomorrow being something amazing. Now, when it’s easier to expect less and thus avoid disappointment, tomorrow seems... well, at least it doesn’t leak. There was a place I heard of where the worst of the world had changed. Nobody was sick, there was no war and there was no fear. There was a world where the rain didn’t burn. I can’t remember if it is history or someone made it up. But how could we imagine such a thing? It seems more likely that we forgot. They say that too, that this place does exist; we just forgot how to get there.

As Seen By Experimenta pulls apart these three readings of *Utopia Now*. Contemporary hyper-reality is explored in *Second Skin*, a refreshingly unbiased documentary premiering on the big screen. This film explores the pros and cons of redetermining reality within the social phenomenon of multi-user online role-playing game World of Warcraft (WOW) and its ilk. Cautionary tales are told in the cult classic *Soylent Green*, and echoed by double-bill screening partner *Gristle*. Both these films look at a return to primal barbarism forced upon our future selves by our lack of foresight now. The quintessential utopian epic *Lost Horizon* closes the program and retreats back into Shangri-La, resolute that the world outside it will never reach utopia.



SECOND SKIN {2008}

DIRECTOR: Juan Carlos Pineiro-Escoriaza. RUNNING TIME: 94 Minutes. COUNTRY: USA. RATING: M. LANGUAGE: English. SCREENING FORMAT: Digi Beta. COURTESY: Hopscotch Films

Second Skin is an objective journey through shared virtual worlds and those who virtually live there. The temptations offered by these worlds are those of a self created society where one can find love and community. There is also the chance of escaping 'real world' confines of physicality or societal ills. The film offers a dialectic synthesis of utopian and dystopian ideas through a heterotopia, a hyper-reality that is neither pure utopia nor dystopia. Told through a polished media savvy voice, there is a conversation throughout this film between different and sometimes conflicting stories. If we see the virtual words as an aspirational point, then the conversations, either celebratory or denouncing, are questioning ideas of utopia and *Second Skin* introduces relativism to the positioning of the personal definition and experience of that utopia.

GRISTLE {2006}

DIRECTOR: Jonathan auf der Heide. RUNNING TIME: 3 minutes. COUNTRY: Australia. RATING: Exempt from classification. LANGUAGE: English. SCREENING FORMAT: Beta SP. COURTESY: VCA Film and Television.

Gristle is an absurdist meditation on the depletion of resources. There are two strongly caricatured 'Strine' Australians calmly talking about the world around them, people 'leaving' the neighbourhood, the quality of pies and their refusal to give up without a fight, despite it seeming that all may well be lost.

Reminiscent of the works of Beckett, with a lack of spatial and temporal certainty and the two characters blithely making small talk during the end game, this film places the viewer in a position of detachment. This combined with the open text invites the audience to engage intellectually with the themes whilst avoiding any feeling of the dire situation.

SOYLENT GREEN {1973}

DIRECTOR: Richard Fleischer. RUNNING TIME: 97 Minutes. COUNTRY: USA. RATING: M. LANGUAGE: English. SCREENING FORMAT: 35 mm. COURTESY: Potential Films.

Winner of a Nebula award, this classic sci-fi tale, based on a short story by Harry Harrison, examines the desperation of an insatiable society facing a scarcity of resources. The individual becomes a commodity in this dystopian environment. In this society women and men are dehumanised and seen as nothing more than products. It could be argued that the accused sexism in this film is just such a warning. We are people today, many more people tomorrow, and the day after that Soylent Green. The story is told with gritty noir intensity. It starts with a murder mystery and ends with a horrible revelation. As we follow the detective (Charlton Heston) through this unfeeling future we see a detailed city that has been shook as a result of acceptance, neglect and the refusal to act. When the mystery is solved, there is an all too human cry of acknowledgment, but the humanity comes too late.

LOST HORIZON {1937}

DIRECTOR: Frank Capra. RUNNING TIME: 128 Minutes. COUNTRY: USA. RATING: PG. LANGUAGE: English. SCREENING FORMAT: 35 mm. COURTESY: Sony Pictures. (Complete with original soundtrack.)

An adaptation of James Hilton's novel, Frank Capra's *Lost Horizon* tells the story of a group who finds a perfect utopia on Shangri-La. Their reactions challenge ideas and definitions of utopia. What is utopia, would we know it if we saw it and if we knew it when we saw it would we believe it?

With Capra's gloriously cinematic vision, this cinematic wonderland seems too good to be true. It is possible to smell the crisp freshness and marvel as the ubiquitous deer plays with laughing children. This starts to seem like a myth, a tempting fairytale, where it is all whimsy too good to be true. As part of the film program, *Lost Horizon* interrogates classical utopian idealism and ideals through the methods of pragmatic incredulity. One member of the group thinks it is the paradisiacal Elysium that they imagine. Another wants to reshape (redefine) utopia. One just doubts the whole utopian concept and wants to go home.

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