

PLAY

**Portraiture + Performance in Video
Art from Australia + New Zealand**

15 October – 5 February 2006

PLAY:

Portraiture and Performance in Video Art from Australia and New Zealand

PLAY features work by ten artists from Australia and New Zealand. These artists explore the relationship between the documentary aspects of video and its formal, fluid qualities to capture the performative elements of everyday life. Their works act as small disturbances to the conventional ways in which we see and experience the world around us.

Each of the artists in this exhibition explore the pervasive presence of video in contemporary culture. It is an aesthetic style, a personal record and a form of social and commercial communication, that includes home movies, fiction, advertising, documentary and reality television.

The artists in *PLAY* share an interest in the extent to which our personas are influenced by a consciousness of the omnipresent lens, and the persistent practice of 'looking' in contemporary society. These artists, however, seek to reinvest this world-weary televisual condition with both personal meaning and small acts of social revelation.

The works in *PLAY* explore patterns of engagement, linking individual experience and consciousness with the structures of public space and social conventions. Crucially, each artist achieves this through their skilful understanding of the complex materiality of video, and how it acts as a mode of representation that can potentially transform our experience of the world.

PLAY is a collaborative project developed by Performance Space (Sydney) and the Adam Art Gallery, curated by Blair French and Sophie McIntyre.

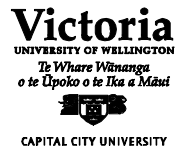
Performance Space is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, and the NSW Government through the Ministry for the Arts.

Catalogue written and produced by Adam Art Gallery, New Zealand

PLAY: Portraiture + Performance in Video Art from Australia + New Zealand organised by:



ADAM ART GALLERY
Te Pātaka Toi





MLADEN BIZUMIC

Born Yugoslavia, 1976
Lives in Vienna and Auckland

I Like New Zealand and New Zealand Likes Me (1999)

For *I Like New Zealand and New Zealand Likes Me*, Bizumic who immigrated to New Zealand in 1990, dances in the corridor that channels arriving passengers from Customs to the arrivals lounge at Auckland International Airport. This thoroughfare is under continuous video surveillance tracing passengers' movements and in this case Bizumic's dance as he performs for the camera. Bizumic's private, jouissant dance performance is then projected in the arrivals terminal alongside advertisements promoting the Pacific Islands.

BIOGRAPHY

Mladen Bizumic has had solo exhibitions at Korridor Galerie, Berlin; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; ARTSPACE, Auckland; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; amongst others. In addition his work has been included in major group exhibitions at museums such as Zacheta National Museum of Art, Warsaw; Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius; KuenstlerHaus, Vienna; Kunsternes Hus, Oslo; and the Wellington City Gallery. In 2004 Bizumic was recipient of the prestigious Frances Hodgkins Fellowship.



RONNIE VAN HOUT

Born Christchurch, 1962
Lives in Melbourne

I Remember Nothing (2004)

Van Hout often uses his own face and body in his videos, sculptures and installations to explore issues of identity. In this work, van Hout draws on the genre of the Zombie film to explore the complex relationship between the artist and the viewer.

In *I Remember Nothing* van Hout is seen in disguise staggering through a strangely unpeopled, post-apocalyptic, urban setting, blindly making his way toward the city skyline that looms at the edge of a grassy plateau. His direction is uncharted, his motivations unclear and the incongruous terrain is dense with potential, and yet somehow on hold.

BIOGRAPHY

Ronnie van Hout has exhibited widely throughout New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the USA with solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales; ISP, New York; The Auckland Art Gallery; The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery; and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, amongst others. The Dunedin Public Art Gallery recently toured a major survey of Van Hout's work entitled *I've Abandoned Me*, to museums throughout New Zealand. In addition he has been included in major group exhibitions such as *Bright Paradise*, Auckland Art Gallery; and *Toi Toi Toi*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel and Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand. Van Hout has been the recipient of numerous grants and residencies including at the ELBA Art Foundation in Nijmegen, Holland (1994), the International Studio Residency Programme in New York (1999), and he was a finalist in the prestigious Walters Prize in 2004.

DAVID CROSS

►
Born Melbourne, 1968
Lives in Wellington

Embellishment (2005)

Cross's new media installations typically investigate the construction and representation of masculine beauty. In this work Cross's face is held steady within the video frame as his portrait is drawn by a caricature artist at a flea market. The viewer observes Cross, as the portrait artist might, noting and detailing the various spasms and expressions that occupy his mask-like face as he poses for his portrait.

BIOGRAPHY

David Cross has a Masters degree in Visual Arts from Monash University and is currently completing a PhD through Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. He has been exhibiting regularly since the early 1990s, and his work has been included in major exhibitions such as *Perspecta 1999*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. In addition Cross has presented performance works at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and *2003 Interactions5*, Poland. Cross has also presented performances locally at The Physics Room, Christchurch; the City Gallery Wellington; and Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington. He is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, and is a regular contributor to Australian and New Zealand arts publications.

RACHAEL RAKENA

►
Born Wellington, 1969
Lives in Palmerston North

Pacific Washup (2004)

In her work Rakena explores the innovative concept of 'toi rerehiko', which the artist states "centres, claims and names digital space within a Maori paradigm in art". In *Pacific Washup* Rakena explores this concept further highlighting the symbolic importance of water to Māori and Pacific Island peoples. Water like cyber-space is analogous with movement and migration. In this work the metaphorical qualities of water are extended through the presence of figures wearing 'refugee bags' being washed up on a beach. The work becomes an illustration of forced migration and describes the experience of being an asylum seeker.

This video was created during a Pacific Wave residency at Performance Space, Sydney in 2004, in collaboration with Samoan artists Fez Fa'anana and Brian Fuata

BIOGRAPHY

Rachael Rakena has exhibited her work throughout New Zealand, Australia and Europe in important group exhibitions such as *The Greenhouse: Multimedia Art from New Zealand (2004)* Frankfurter Welle, Frankfurt; *Techno Maori (2001)*, City Gallery Wellington; and *Whare (2002)* SoFA Gallery, Christchurch. In addition she has shown her multi-media installations in museums and galleries such as the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Performance Space, Sydney; and Dunedin Public Art Gallery, amongst others.

Rakena received a MFA (Distinction), PGDipArts (Distinction) and a BA from Otago Polytechnic, in Dunedin.

▶ **KATE MURPHY**

Born New South Wales, 1977
Lives in Sydney

Joe Hill (2003)

Murphy's video works explore the nature of fact and fiction in documentary practice, and the tensions underlying these notions. In her work, Murphy is interested in showing a multiplicity of viewpoints including that of the camera, the subject, the director, the observer and the viewer, exploring how these unfold in video portraiture. She investigates these roles by adopting a process of multiple synchronized cameras to observe her subjects, while at the same time placing a camera in the hands of her subjects to document themselves.

In *Joe Hill* the viewer witnesses the private act of a man, alone, in the middle of the night, creating a video to leave to his family. This video carries his testimony; the song he wants played at his funeral: "Joe Hill", performed by Paul Robeson. The solitary act of this man's demonstration is recorded by two cameras: the one the subject sets up to record himself, and a second, more distantly placed and controlled by the artist.

BIOGRAPHY

Kate Murphy has exhibited her videos and video installations throughout Australia and in New Zealand at museums and galleries including, Performance Space, Sydney; Newcastle Regional Art Gallery; Canberra Contemporary Art Space; National Portrait Gallery, Canberra; A.C.M.I, Melbourne; National Gallery of Australia; Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; Melbourne International Arts Festival; New Zealand Film Archives, Wellington. Murphy was recipient of the 2004 Helen Lempriere Travelling Artist Scholarship.

▶ **SHAUN GLADWELL**

Born Sydney, 1972
Lives in Sydney

Loco Tapes (2004)

Loco Tapes is a series of experimental video portraits in which subjects engage with their immediate environments in various acts of metaphysical speculation. These range from discussions with Mormon missionaries in a public park, through a private tour of a suburban house with a strange rumoured history, to small performative acts in lifts and upon street furniture.

Storm Sequence (2000)

Storm Sequence features Gladwell undertaking a set of freestyle skateboarding manoeuvres on a wet Bondi promenade as a storm gathers in the distance. Taking a cue from the British artist William Turner's famous renderings of an ocean sublime, the work reflects on the romantic notion of the isolated artist. Slowed to a stuttering, hypnotic velocity, the body of the artist asserts a compelling presence, an affirmation of self, in the midst of both the natural disorder of the storm and the artificial 'storm' of electronic noise created by sound artist Kazumichi Grime.

BIOGRAPHY

Shaun Gladwell has been exhibiting since the late-1990s. As a Samstag Scholar in 2001 he studied at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He has held recent solo exhibitions at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2005), Sherman Galleries, Sydney (2005 & 2003); and Perth Institute of Modern Art (2004). Gladwell's work has been included in major group exhibitions in Paris, London, Sydney, Los Angeles, New York, New Plymouth, and Melbourne as well as in the Asialink / Australian Centre for the Moving Image touring exhibition *I thought I knew but I was wrong: New Video Art From Australia*. Gladwell has just completed a new commissioned video work for the 2005 Yokohama Triennale



EMIL GOH

Born Malaysia, 1966
Lives in Sydney and Seoul

between (Hong Kong) (2003)

between (Hong Kong) is one of three 'between' works that Goh has made featuring cities he has lived in for periods of time (other works were made of London and Seoul). The work is a mix of documentary and panoramic photography, as well as personal and anthropological video. It operates as a form of orientation to both the private and public spaces of the city. Situating his camera on a revolving platform on the window ledges of his friends and acquaintances' houses, Goh examines the relationship between domestic and public, and interior and exterior city spaces. His subjects simply go about their day to day activities as the video camera continuously pans, providing us with a glimpse of the daily life and environments of Hong Kong.

BIOGRAPHY

Emil Goh has exhibited widely in the areas of video, photography and installation including recent solo exhibitions in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, London and Amsterdam. Goh was awarded the 1996 NSW Travelling Arts Scholarship, undertaking study at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He held an Asialink Artist's Residency in Seoul during 2003-04. His curatorial projects include the *New Releases* exhibition of international video art for Gallery 4A in Sydney (2002) and the Video Screenings program accompanying the 2002 Biennale of Sydney. His video works are documentary in ethos, concerned with mapping random 'structures' of movement through, and occupation of public and commercial space, often through setting his camera—whether stationary or moving—within particular sites that themselves determine strange but strangely familiar views



ANGELICA MESITI

Born Sydney, 1976
Lives in Sydney

Been Here Before (2003-04)

Been Here Before is part of a series entitled 'Cartographies' that Mesiti created in New York City. The artist explores the potential of video to map a site by recording interweaving layers of information, including spatial, cultural, imaginative and remembered. The work documents the artist's passage through the everyday spaces of New York City – walking down the street, shopping at the corner bodega and catching the subway. Text scrolls across the screen providing a mediated perspective of place in the form of books, films and songs. This combination of the everyday and its cultural representations maps the space between learned and lived experience and shows how one must navigate this culturally laden terrain.

BIOGRAPHY

Angelica Mesiti was a founding member of Imperial Slacks Collective and curator of the *Serial 7s* series of video catalogues. She is also a member The Kingpins whose performance, video, photography and installations have been shown at Arspace, Sydney; Artspace, Auckland; in *Primavera 2003*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Performance Space, Sydney; Australian Centre for the Moving Image and at the Gwangju Biennale, Korea.



TONY SCHWENSEN

Born Sydney, 1970
Lives in Sydney

Straightening Up (2005)
Thinking About Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube (2005)
One for You and One for Your Dog (2005)

These three works are part of Schwensen's ongoing video performance project where the artist extends a variety of repetitive activities to the limits of their possibility. Schwensen's spare, stripped back video language allows him to explore the relationship between his real and mediated presence, whilst also maintaining a sense of the sculptural. The actions he engages in are not evacuated, endlessly simulated, cyclical acts, but are instead representative of the 'real' presence of the body and mind in space and time. These works also show Schwensen's commitment to exploring the intersections of metaphysical presence within everyday experience through performative video self-portraits.

BIOGRAPHY

Tony Schwensen has had numerous solo exhibitions, including at The Performance Space, Sydney; 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne; Casula Powerhouse Arts Center, New South Wales; and Artspace, Sydney. His work has been shown in a number of recent group exhibitions including at Campbelltown Arts Centre, New South Wales; Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane; and at the Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Switzerland.



STEVE CARR

Born Gore, 1976
Lives in Auckland

Tyson (2002)

Carr's short films involve him playing naïve and often slightly anarchic games that highlight the complexities of pleasure and its exchange. In previous works, Carr videos himself playing Cowboys and Indians with small children, allowing them to tie him to the clothesline and shoot at him with water pistols; he has had pyjama-party pillow fights with cute young girls, and demolished an old van with skater-boys.

In *Tyson*, Carr enters into a Mexican standoff over a drool-drenched tennis ball. The pair is locked in an endgame scenario, neither moving first, in an infinite moment of suspense.

BIOGRAPHY

Steve Carr's video and sculpture works have been included in group and solo exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout New Zealand including *Prospect*, City Gallery Wellington; *Pressing Flesh*, Auckland Art Gallery and at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Carr is a recent graduate of the Masters programme at the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. He was also the co-founder of the Blue Oyster Gallery in Dunedin and has been a board member of Auckland's Artspace. In addition Carr was the 2005 recipient of The Norsewear Art Award.