Portraiture in a digital age

FACE TO FACE

Presented by d/Lux/MediaArts

Supporting Partners

This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia
Welcome to *Face to Face*, a national touring exhibition presented by d/Lux/MediaArts in which we invite you to explore new expressions of portraiture in a digital age. Featuring works by fourteen Australian artists the exhibition includes a range of media including digital photography, video and interactive installation all of which provide a unique and engaging perspective on how digital technologies are reshaping our understanding and experience of contemporary identity.
Welcome

Face to Face comes with a menu of dedicated education resources where you can learn more about the exhibition, the artists and their works.

It can be viewed here and downloaded as a print friendly version.

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by Madeleine K. Snow

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Print all education

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New media art and portraiture

The internet, computer games, digital cameras and reality TV are amongst us with internet banking commonplace, a virtual life possible, robotic vacuum cleaners available and up to 65,000 videos uploaded onto YouTube every day, (a site which emerged as recently as 2005.) The artists in this exhibition are using the media of the 21st century marketplace to create work which reflects our contemporary lives.

We are presented with faces everyday, we look in the mirrors of shopping malls, we text our faces to each other, we upload ourselves onto the net, people seek romance by presenting their face on websites, we reinvent ourselves in a virtual world, we create our own avatar.

Artists have an understanding that given the available technology faces are malleable and not fixed and no longer need to be carried through life unchanged. They present morphing faces, simulated faces, composite faces and explore themes like popular culture and the media, identity, science and art, genetic engineering, time and motion.

The new media works in Face to Face encompass animation, performance, play, scientific data, artificial intelligence, studies of time and motion and simulation, and raise questions of identity, popular culture, our present and our future.

When we approach new media it is important to consider how it is being presented. It may be as simple as surfing the net but often it turns media and technology on its head and asks more of the viewer. In an attempt to understand it we should consider the context. How are you experiencing the work? Are you in a dark room watching a plasma screen? Is it screened across several channels with several images screening at once? Is it the size of a cinema screen and being projected onto the wall of the gallery? Is it immersive and mood altering? Is it being presented in a sculptural way projected onto an object? Is there a computer in the space? Is it being shown in an intimate way on a small television? Can you hear the sounds of other works while you experience the work?

New media work may be distorted, stylized, interactive, conventional documentary, performance based, narrative driven or repetitious, images might speed up or slow down, sound might be distorted, loud, soft, it may be controlled by your responses, and is likely to challenge your ideas about the future.

William Ewing writes in the catalogue for the exhibition About face: Photography and the Death of the Portrait that there is an argument that portraiture is dead and that a single image could never reveal the complexity of a human being. Through advertising, television, glossy magazines and cinema we are haunted by faces far beyond those we encounter everyday. More happy, more beautiful, more confident, eternally young and comfortably familiar due to saturation by the media.

Ewing writes “That these are idealized at every stage of production, from the selection of the model to the retouching of the face is something often passed unnoticed to the consumer but not missed by artists. Contemporary images are far more likely to be inspired by the lowly passport photo, photo booth snap or refreshingly direct police mug shot.” Something addressed by the work of Anna Munster and Michele Barker who present their photo booth snaps on a large scale highlighting the poor quality of the image through to Angelica Mesiti and Rachel Scott. Where Scott uses a single take from her low tech video camera without editing out the interruptions of a household and Mesiti presents an ordinary girl under the spotlight with the ominous sounds of David Bowie's *Heroes* playing in the background.

Not only is new media a portrait of our time and a projection of our future but this exhibition unites the genre with the media. Portraiture has a vast history and here is just one contemporary Australian manifestation, presented in numerous ways through new technologies. Traditionally a portrait is considered to be a representation of a person which reveals more than just their reflection but rather something of their character, social status, race, gender and individuality.

The portraits revealed in the new media work of the exhibition Face to Face reveal something of their subjects yet far more of their time and the advances in technology. Stelarc brings his cyborg self to the gallery, Tonkin makes you the medium and Beaubois plays god showing impossible incarnations of the face, through simulations from real subjects.

New technologies together with portraiture, afford us all an instant opportunity for self promotion. In 1976, in new media art's early years, the critic Rosalind Krauss postulated that video artists turning the video on themselves was a blatant form of narcissism, and she saw it as a condition of the genre. However this argument
was also countered by the idea that by looking in you can address and critique the world outside you.\(^3\) The artists in the exhibition use their subject matter, portraiture, and their method, new media, to convey numerous themes. To question our identity in the 21st Century, to critique our obsession with celebrity, to explore the links between technological advances and art, to draw influences from other disciplines such as medicine and science, to capture time, to play a political role, to highlight popular culture, to parody popular culture and consumerism, to reflect themselves, to reflect others and to engage, humour or inspire us.

1. From Slade, Lisa and O'Keefe, Sean. Contributors MOVE Video Art in Schools Published by Kaldor Art Projects www.kaldorartprojects.org.au/move

**Key concepts**

**New media and the world**

In 1965 video technology became available via Sony's portapak (and two lesser known brands). Hollywood Power Brokers and mainstream television producers were no longer the only users and video was available to all. In the art world Nam June Paik who died in 2006 is widely considered the father of Video Art and an advocate for the intersection between technology and art. In 1965 he bought a hand held video camera and recorded the Pope's motorcade down New York's Fifth Avenue later screening it as art.

In 1970 the internet was used for military and academic purposes; by the 1980s it was a tool for the general public with the World Wide Web and the first internet banking occurring in 1991. “Artists … are searching for meaning, truth, poetics and magic in a medium that until only recently has risen from its military-industrial roots and transformed itself almost overnight into a mass phenomenon. Perhaps that is why the Net is so pregnant with possibilities. With its global interactivity, collective tendencies, rapidly evolving technologies, and free exchange of ideas all demanding constant change and renewal, the medium is revolutionary by nature.”\(^1\)

In terms of developments in new media work in Australia the second ever Biennale of Sydney included video art in 1976. Video is now considered a hybrid medium encompassing new technologies. Video Art festivals were replaced by Cyber Art festivals such as Ars Electronica founded in 1979 in Linz, Austria, ISEA (the International Symposium on Electronic Art) from the late 1980s, and the hugely successful Boston Cyber Arts Festival developed by George Fifield in the 1990s. The first ever Second Life Artist in residency grant was awarded in Australia in 2007.

The World Wide Web appeared in 1991, the same year as the first internet bank. Surfing the internet was coined as a term around 1992. Advances in technology occur every year as well as access to technology with iPods, mobile phones, and YouTube being commonplace. Artists working in new media embrace these
changes, for example Nash and Yamanaka exhibit their work in exhibitions and simulated environments in Second Life or John Tonkin uses data from web users to create new work mapping links between human behaviour, art and science.

1. From the Walker Art Gallery website from an article ‘Net Art as Theater of the Senses A HyperTour of Jodi and Grammatron’ http://www.walkerart.org/archive/6/B1739D10E45178D3615F.htm

Audience

The influence of new technologies on human beings and popular culture is vast and widespread. The audience surfs the net, networks with their friends on Facebook, creates their own MySpace, publishes work on YouTube, lives virtual lives, and subscribe to reality television from Big Brother to So you think you can dance where viewers interact and players open themselves up to public humiliation or ridicule all for some moments of fame. Self promotion is easy and celebrity lives are broadcast and saturated more than ever by the multitude of media networks. We can watch celebrities rise and fall like Britney Spears under a constant media gaze. Hollywood brings us computer generated imaging in films from special effects to animation to movies like Simone about a simulated celebrity or Lara Croft Tomb Raider spawned from computer gaming. Contemporary artists use technology to engage with our times and reflect their audience.

Artists and art movements/exhibitions

The following are suggested historical and contemporary reference points for gaining greater understanding of new media and portraiture and the works in Face to Face:

- Abstraction, Conceptual Art, Pop art, Futurism, Dada, Fluxus, Post Modernism, photography, performance art and video and digital art – are all encompassed in or inform new media work.
- Nam June Paik, Laurie Anderson, Julie Rrap, Cindy Sherman, Tony Oursler, Nancy Burson, Ed Kienholz, Yasumasa Morimura, Balla, Boccioni, Patricia Piccinini, Daniel Lee, Lee Bul, Pipilotti Rist, Marina Abramovic, Bill Viola, Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey’s proto-cinematic time and motion studies in the late-nineteenth century, early photographic composites of Francis Galton and Arthur Batut, are just some of the artists who connect to the themes in the exhibition.
- The Archibald Prize – Australia’s longest running portraiture exhibition; the Venice Biennale and its history of new media work; the Body exhibition from 1976; and Self Portraits from 2006; Andy Warhol’s 15 minutes of fame quote; the inaugural Australia Council Second Life Artist in Residency grant established in 2007; the relatively short history of Australian new media artist grants; international shows such as the Sensation exhibition in the UK, The Walker Art Gallery’s first online exhibition, Whiteplane2, a collaboration in sound and light by UK artists Alex Bradley and Charles Poulet which premiered at the BALTIC.
- The history of portraiture; Its importance in art; its power as a collectable work and commodity; and how it has changed in a contemporary context and what has remained the same.

For a list of artists who focus on new media and portraiture in their contemporary practice see the ‘Additional Resources’ section of the Education Kit, which features links to their websites.
INTRODUCTION BY MADELEINE K. SNOW

Postscript

In thinking about audience perception and contemporary art and particularly the longer time required by new media work for viewing or interacting, the following quote by George Alexander (Contemporary Programs Coordinator at the AGNSW) albeit about performance art is worth consideration.

"Not long ago I went to a lecture given by Marina Abramovic, ex-Yugoslav performance artist, whose tough works of endurance (solo or with partner Ulay) are legend. Their work was about testing the limits of the body and the spectatorship, as well as the drama of relationships: by slapping each other, running into each other, tying their hair together etc. You know the deal. That evening at the MCA Abramovic actually made a joke about that kind of work from the 1970s and 1980s: How many performance artists does it take to change a light bulb? I dunno I only stayed 4 hours...

This came as a surprise since that kind of work requires intense belief. Humour clearly was a way of making things emotionally tolerable, and in contemporary art, quite often not getting the humour means not getting the art."


Face to Face curatorial themes
Research activities

New technologies and portraiture

Select three works and consider them in relation to the traditional genre of portraiture. How do they challenge the role of portraiture? What do they tell us about the sitter? What do they tell us about the artist? In your study refer to quotes from critical writings on portraiture. (See a selection of quotes on portraiture in the Education Kit to the Archibald Prize found on the Art Gallery of NSW website or use the quote from the exhibition Photography and the Death of the Portrait reprinted in the introductory essay to this kit.)

"Although self portraits can be particularly empathetic, all portraits have the potential to play with our awareness of looking at others and in particular to doubling and fragmenting the self." From the essay for Face to Face by Anthony Bond. Discuss this idea in relation to works in Face to Face.

Portraiture

Anthony Bond in his essay for Face to Face comments, "I fear this has not been an objective description after all but maybe that is one of the best things about looking at art we all bring our own experiences to our reading of the image. When we look into an image it is always in a sense a mirror in which we discover things about ourselves." Consider this comment regarding the idea of a portrait and art itself. Take a subjective look at the works in Face to Face and determine which artwork most connects with who you are. Alternatively, if none, give an oppositional answer explaining why it does not connect with your identity. Give reasons for each answer.
Popular culture

a) Consider the ways in which Emil Goh, Rachel Scott and Angelica Mesiti’s work use popular culture as a significant reference point.

b) Think about the ideas presented in Anthony Bond’s essay regarding portraiture and the mirror and Kathy Cleland’s idea of Narcissus falling in love with his reflection. Debate and discuss how the media and popular culture mirror the experience of these artists and consider how the medium of new media, mirror’s the artists representation of themselves and their audience.

c) Find a celebrity or media personality you most identify with. List what it is about them you most identify with. Create a mash-up portrait which incorporates you and the identity.

Identity

Compare how the works by Anna Munster and Michele Barker, and Adam Nash and Mami Yamanaka explore issues of identity.

Art and science

Consider how works by John Tonkin, Stelarc and Denis Beaubois explore the intersection between art and science. What scientific methods do they draw on in their art practice?

New media: interactive and time based work

a) Unlike static work, new media often requires more of a viewer’s time and depending on how it is presented, has the potential to impinge on the viewing of other works (for example the sounds from a work might be heard in the whole gallery space). Supposedly a static work demands about 17 seconds of a viewer’s time. Discuss the different demands placed on an audience of new media work. Use work by Beaubois, Crooks, Rosetzky and Scott in your response.

b) We are familiar with television watching, surfing the net and listening to music, however experiencing new media works draws on these skills and also takes us further. We are required to interact with a new media work, and confronted by the unfamiliar. Discuss this in relation to John Tonkin and Stelarc’s work.
Create

a) Create three different new media works with portraiture as your theme.
   1. Use your mobile phone or a digital camera to create the first.
   2. Use your computer and include humour or a political pun.
   3. Think about media and celebrity and this time use a combination of new media of your choice. You may wish to incorporate animation or video.

b) Refer to the ways artists have used mirrors to manipulate their image in the essay by Anthony Bond. Use a mirror or mirrors in the creation of a new media self portrait.

In her essay Kathy Cleland quotes "In the virtual world that exists on the other side of the mirror's surface we can just barely make out the form of a body that looks like us, like another self. Like Narcissus looking into the pond, we are captured by the experience of this reflection of our bodies. But that reflected body looks increasingly like a cyborg."


Use this quote as a beginning of a class discussion/debate on new media portraiture or as the idea for an artwork in your preferred medium.
The Love Machine II, 2003
Digital prints on aluminium
3 images: 62.72cm x 74.1cm
2 images: 60cm x 135cm
1 image: 249.58cm x 15.1cm

Anna Munster
Born 1963 Sydney Australia

Michele Barker
Born 1969 Australia
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
About the artists

Both Michele Barker and Anna Munster are artists and academics in the field of new media. Barker is presently researching the area of science and medicine and particularly neuroaesthetics in new media art practice. Anna Munster is a new media writer and major publications include the book _Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics_ (University Press of New England: Hanover, New Hampshire, 2006).

In email conversation March 2008, Munster says she draws inspiration from collaborating with artists and Barker says she is “often drawn to things outside of the contemporary art world: natural history museums (especially 19th century dioramas) for example. Most recently it’s been Baroque domes…”

About the work

Notes, artists’ comments & critical writing

_The Love Machine_ raises questions about popular culture, genetic engineering, reproduction technology and new technology through a visual pun. _The Love Machine_ is a series of digital photo booth images created from a composite of the two artists, a digital reproduction of future _reproduction_. The artists note the Japanese photo booth makers saw it as a means to select a suitable mate where couples could check their compatibility via what their offspring would look like. Of course being on the street meant that it was open to a range of uses with people creating monstrous couplings where they upload themselves with their pet.

“A new device, sure to inspire technological bedazzlement, has been installed in Hong Kong shopping malls. Called simply _The Love Machine_, it functions like a photo booth, dispensing on-the-spot portraits. But rather than one subject, it requires a couple, in fact the couple, in order to do its work of digital reproduction. For the output of this imaging machine is none other than a picture of the combined features of the two sitters, ‘morphed’ together by computer software to produce a technological child.”


The work is part art and part pop culture. Rejecting the idea of the perfect child, the artists deliberately highlight the poor resolution quality of the image by enlarging the booth snaps to counter the promise of perfection suggested by the original booth.

That it is two women highlights the fiction of images produced from _The Love Machine_ and says more about the wonder of the technology and the old fashioned romance of images of couples from a photo booth, than about the idea that a computer could really identify what a couple's actual child might look like.

It’s interesting that the title of the work unknowingly recalls an earlier pop reference. “The Love Machine” is the same title as an Elvis hit song from 1966. [You can view Elvis Presley’s 1966 song _The Love Machine_ from the movie Easy Come Easy Go on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVm_KUagYqE ]

To see where the works for _The Love Machine_ derive from, here are unaltered images of the two artists

Left Michele Barker image sourced from COFA website staff profile http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/staff/profiles/michelebarker/

Right Anna Munster image sourced from COFA website staff profile http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/staff/profiles/annamunster
Questions for further study

1. The composite faces in *The Love Machine* are sourced from real humans but are essentially idealized. What is appealing about the faces from *The Love Machine*?

2. *The Human Genome Project* begun in 1990 completed the mapping of human DNA and the patenting of diseases. Consider if or how this work references advances in medical science.

3. The works link to a history of visual arts – particularly Post Modernism and appropriation dating back to Duchamp’s *Fountain*, his ready made of 1917, from which point the everyday mass produced object became a potential for art. Think about how, when viewed in a gallery setting, the images from *The Love Machine* have a potential for new meaning. Consider the difference had they remained images shown to friends on return from a holiday.

4. Create your own composite image using yourself and your friend. Create an idealized version and a monstrous one. Use new technologies to make it and another with more traditional art media such as collage.
DENIS BEAUBOIS

Constant, 2004
Single channel digital video
Duration: 08:40
Born 1970 MOKA Mauritius
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
About the artist

In terms of his experience and inspiration for his work, Beaubois says, “I was first interested in photography then moved to performance, having been a member of groups such as the Post Arrivalists, Gravity Feed and having my own performance practice. The new media aspect came from interests in the relationship of the body with recording technologies, seeing them initially as an alternative to a theatrical audience (with public surveillance cameras). I then became more involved and interested in how representative technologies (in public and private space) can shape our perceptions.”

On being a new media artist he says, “New Media Artist is a label that allows me the fluidity to play with whatever I want.” (In email conversation March 2008)

About the work

Notes, artist’s comments & critical writing

In *Constant*, Beaubois draws on the digital morph as a potentially deceiving medium and quite literally so, for here he is interested in the police line up and the problem of wrongful imprisonment, through inaccurate selection of suspects. Beaubois completed this work as part of a residency and worked closely with forensic scientists Dr Richard Kemp and Helen Patterson from the Forensic Psychology Department at the University of New South Wales.

We are witness to up to 13,000 different faces yet this might slip by unnoticed with the deliberate subtlety of changes. His intention was to highlight the problem of relying on a victim to accurately pick the perpetrator of a crime through a line-up. In his Synopsis of the work he says, “Studies have shown that we tend to be better at recognising members of our own racial group and will often confuse members of other racial groups. This makes suspect recognition problematic in crimes where the witness/victim is of a different race to the perpetrator. This pressure for resolution can lead to cases of wrongful imprisonment, particularly in situations where the perpetrator is of a different racial background to that of the victim.”

He has selected ordinary faces where the gaze is fixed and unblinking, they are not particularly ‘camera ready’ but rather as found. Their identities shift slowly where 13,000 composite faces are generated from a sample of real subjects. Beaubois puts the spotlight on human behaviour in his practice and cites laughter and frustration as inspiration.

His subjects are a mix of age, race and physical appearance yet they merge so slowly the changes are barely detectable. Whilst in the past using analogue media one could animate changes to faces; here the change is much more subtle and the technology more advanced where changes can occur one pixel at a time. The curator Kathy Cleland writes in the catalogue essay “The uncanniness of the morph and the composite image derives from the tension between our knowledge that the transformation we are witnessing is ‘impossible’ even as we are visually and imaginatively convinced by its compellingly real appearance.”

The work itself is called *Constant*, where the faces are both ever present and repeating as if on a ‘constant’ loop, however the artist suggests that the viewer is actually the “constant” captured by trying to place the continually changing image.
Questions for further study

1. Consider the composition and style of the work. How are the faces presented to the viewer? How does the composition relate to the issues he addresses in the work?
2. How does the work make you feel?
3. How is collaboration and research an important part of this work?
4. Have a group discussion about evidence and witnesses and particularly how accurate we are once some time has passed. For example consider what students remember of a collective memory – last week’s Art class? Do all students recall the same detail? Chart the results and create an abstract image of the results in Photoshop.
5. Consider how Beaubois’ work examines racial stereotypes and identity. Make a comparison with portraits by Barbara Kruger and Orlan.
6. Research online Gravity Feed and the Post Arrivalists, how does their work inform the work in the exhibition by Beaubois?
7. Video Art has been described as a liquid medium and Beaubois says that the term New Media Artist allows him the “fluidity to play”. Consider the term New Media Artist and list all the things it might encompass. What makes it a fluid medium?
8. Create a found object work which builds an image of your own identity including your gender, age, and cultural background. By contrast, use new technologies to manipulate an image of yourself so that your identity is no longer clear.
9. In the curator’s essay, Kathy Cleland states “The uncanniness of the morph and the composite image derives from the tension between our knowledge that the transformation we are witnessing is ‘impossible’ even as we are visually and imaginatively convinced by its compellingly real appearance.” Consider how this idea is reflected in Beaubois’ work.
Portrait #1 (Self),
Portrait #2 (Chris),
Portrait #3 (Chris), 2007
Digital prints 101 cm x 101 cm
Born 1973 Hastings, NZ
Lives & works Melbourne
Represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery

Print this artist

Left: Portrait #2 (Chris), 2007
About the artist

Crooks has studied design and animation and works as a motion graphics designer at ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne). He says his work provides access to equipment and expertise such as exposure to international screen based artists and curators. He says, "it's also really good from the point of view of skills development as some of the same tools I use at work I use in my practice."
(from an email conversation March 2008)

In 2008 Crooks won the inaugural $100,000 Basil Sellers Art Prize — an award established by the philanthropic businessman to unite sport and art — for his digital video Static No.11 (man running).

About the work

Notes, artist’s comments & critical writing

For main sources of inspiration in an email conversation Crooks supplied the following. "tinkering either with cameras, software or the electro junk in my workshop... more generally – change over time, emergence and self organisation, geometry, EJ Marey, Nam June Paik, natural systems, science, how and why wonder books, Muybridge, my kids, Michel Gondry, David Anderson, Jan Svankmeyer, maps and cartography, Descartes, Len Lye, Mr Oizo, BBC natural history unit, Honda Robotics, Bill Viola, Tim Macmillan, Douglas Gordon, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Greg Egan... my friend Pete Circuit."

The artist draws on a range of influences in his work from art, electronics, science, history and design which all inform his work focusing on time and space. His portraits are like a still from his animated video works which splice time and space to create distorted images of reality, making visible the invisible element of time.

"The dramatically stretched, smeared and truncated people and objects that populate Crooks’ work undermine our perception of a fixed reality and reflect our contemporary experience of space and time expanding and contracting convulsively through global communications and digital technologies."

Emma McRae Experimenta Mesh 17 http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/crooks.htm

"With these portraits I'm attempting to make large detailed images of people in their own surroundings, images of people very much in and of their time that are both intriguing and beautiful. As with a lot of my work the portraits also seek to render the experience of time in a more tangible material form, blurring the line between still and moving images..." from the Artist Statement by Daniel Crooks.
Questions for further study

1. Consider this quote from Anthony Bond's essay: “Daniel Crooks' slippages in space/time look nothing like Johannes Gumpp's manipulation of our presumed place before the canvas and yet there is the same desire to move our attention and challenge our assumptions about truth and representation.” Have a class debate/discussion about this idea, referring to works by Crooks, Gumpp and others.

2. Create your own self portrait from photos captured at different times. Finish the work using new media or traditional art tools like drawing or painting.

3. What is similar in Daniel Crooks work to the studies made by Eadweard Muybridge? Are there any thematic connections with Futurism?

4. How does the subject of Crooks' portraits feel? How do they make you feel?

5. In what way is the artist's design expertise evident in the work?

6. Refer to his list of influences and research three subjects which you are unfamiliar with. In what way can you see a link to Crooks' work?

7. Imagine you were asked to supply your own list of things which inspire you. What would be on your list?

8. Crooks' video works have been collected and he is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery. Consider what is different about the collection of new media work and what new requirements need to be considered by collectors or institutions. And what does it mean to be "represented" as an artist?

Additional resources

http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/crooks.htm
Biohead Actualized, 2008
Single channel digital video loop
(Constructed from re-animated digital photos of ventriloquist dolls and 'found' vocal sounds)
Duration: 10:00

Anna Davis
Born Sydney 1974

Jason Gee
Born Darwin 1965
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
About the artists

Anna Davis is currently completing her PhD in new media arts and, as well as her arts practice, is a researcher, writer and arts project coordinator specialising in new media.

Jason Gee is a sound artist working with electronic music and sound collage. As well as his art practice he also works as a web developer in the museum industry.

About the work

Notes, artists’ comments & critical writing

When describing their main sources of inspiration Davis and Gee say, “Our collaborative practice takes its inspiration from film, television, computer games and the Internet. We scavenge the debris of popular culture to create absurdist mashups and video collages exploring disturbing patterns and humour underlying the everyday. We are interested in happy accidents and audio-visual collisions / taking things out of context / mining the public/private sphere.”

In email conversation with the artists about the importance of humour in their work they reply, “Very important – humour is very much at the forefront of our collaborative work. Much of our work strives to highlight ‘the absurd’. We are always searching for material that when juxtaposed or reconstructed reveals its own humour. Bringing disparate and unexpected things together in a new way often creates a comic moment...”

Bioheads are a composite of what really exist. Davis and Gee use computer technologies to create their animated heads and fill them with data also found online or in talking books. They remix and reanimate the data they find to create animated figure heads like George Bush and Osama Bin Laden or these ventriloquist dolls. The question is, “who is talking?” The dolls give out self help advice all lifted from actual self help sources found online. Ventriloquist dolls are somewhat disturbing in their normal context, here with their psychobabble they are even more absurd. The work is always fresh and evolving, changing with each year as the artists find new pieces of data to feed the heads.

“But as creepy as Bioheads may be, there is also a playfulness that stems from both the work’s humour as well as the empowerment afforded by sample-based digital culture. One can make George Bush bark like a dog if one wants to. The digital environment makes use a more powerful critical tool than production and turns consumption on its head. By agitating the media environment Gee and Davis exercise powerful artistic agency in the face of media hyper-saturation and proliferation. They’re pulling all the strings now.”

‘Self Reflection: Greedy Little Dolls and Sadaam’s Serenade’ by Margie Borschke in the catalogue for the exhibition Mirror States.
Questions for further study

1. Davis and Gee's work has been played at music concerts. Consider the different audience responses when it is shown in a gallery context to when it is shown at an outdoor rock concert. How would it be received differently?

2. Borschke writes that "Davis and Gee download the digital detritus of contemporary culture." What is meant by 'detritus'? Discuss the concept of 'digital detritus' – does it exist and where does it go? How does this term add to the meaning in the work by Gee and Davis?

3. Listen to what the work is saying, what might be the artists' intention? Brainstorm key words as a group in your interpretation.

4. How does the work make you feel? Record your emotions and ask someone else.

5. Anthony Bond in his essay states "I would contend that turning representation around and revealing its conceits and marvels is a fundamental and continuing aspect of art regardless of medium and historical period. Art is after all an exploration of what we are and how we know what we are and occasionally what we might like to pretend we are." Discuss this idea in relation to Davis and Gee's work and refer to other examples in your discussion.

6. Find other artists who use satire in their work and compare to the work by Davis and Gee. Consider work from the Bald Archies in your comparison.

7. Create a collage portrait which makes a political statement by using data sourced online.

8. Why do you think the animation is not static but rather has been changed over several years? What does it tell you about the artists' medium?
EMIL GOH

emilgoh / Emil Goh, 2006
MD03 / Min Ji Cho, 2005
i_triangle / Kwang Hoon Hyun, 2005

MyCy series
Digital prints 110 cm x 110 cm
Born Johor Bahru, Malaysia 1966
Lives & works Seoul & Sydney
Represented by VWFA Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

Print this artist

Left: MD03 / Min Ji Cho, 2005
About the artist

Emil Goh has studied psychology and drama as well as photography, sculpture and fine art. As well as being a practicing artist he has recently been commissioned to develop products for two Seoul design companies which contribute to US & Australian design magazines. He has also been visiting critic at the Interior Design Department at Konkuk University, Seoul.

He is an international artist having traveled widely and lived in a range of places. He says he is most inspired by cities like Seoul, Hong Kong & Tokyo, music video director Michel Gondry, graphic & product design, data visualization, food author Harold McGee, Biology (favorite subject at school), and finding out how things work.

Goh's work has been drawn from his experience of living in a new and vast city. Almost anthropological in nature his images capture the widespread popular interest in virtual worlds and more particularly the Korean social networking site Cyworld. He states that on arriving in Seoul he was surprised by the variety of housing situations. In capturing this he draws our gaze on the exotic and creates images that could almost be part of a glossy publication. The images are colourful, varied curiosities. We look into the private spaces of individuals whilst at the same time we see their public space—the world they have created for themselves on the internet. Goh himself shifts this dynamic by replicating his cyberworld space in the real world, presenting both images with his cyber identity and real identity being one and the same.

In an email conversation Goh was asked, “Have you altered the environment much of subjects in their rooms or rather tried to capture them as close to their reality as possible?”

The artist replies, “I am very much a fan of the documentary genre so I try to shoot the environment in its natural condition as much as possible. Lighting might be slightly different as the room may be too dark to get a decent shot.”

Do all of the virtual images exist in Cyworld as well as in stills in the exhibition?

*These images you see were on their mini homepages at the time the photos were taken, however people change around their miniroom environments often, like wallpaper on a PC, so they might not be there today.* He says for this work he was motivated by two key things: that people spend a lot of time socialising online and that there are many types of housing situations in Seoul.

*His currently most ambitious project is on the particular Internet culture in Korea relating to the “Cyworlds” that are created on a number of web-pages. Here young (and not-so-young) Koreans create their own Internet blogs, where they establish alternative personas and homes, complete with wallpapers and interior decorations. Much of the energy in Emil Goh’s work comes from his ability to become part of the phenomena he describes, not as a spy or observer, but as a participant and social chameleon.*


Goh says, “Often, after people are introduced, Cyworld addresses are exchanged more than phone numbers were before. The Minihompy is a mini homepage with a third space, which is called a miniroom. When signing up, you get an empty room that includes your avatar in cute white underwear. Both can be changed (free with a few options; a large catalogue of options for cash) with the addition of furniture, backgrounds, clothes, browser skins and more. So everyone has a *room* to begin with, which they then customize. The MyCy project documents users and their online and offline environments. In the second part of this project, I went about matching the two environments exactly, something never done before, using my own account and apartment!”

http://www.xymara.com/inmyx/index/inmyx207/fav-200702-emilgoh_e.htm
Questions for further study

1. What mood is created by Goh's works?
2. Take a photo portrait with your mobile phone of an image you would share with a friend and then a portrait you might send your parent. What would be different about each image if anything?
3. If you have a Facebook or MySpace page, what image/s do you use to represent yourself?
4. Design your own avatar identity and environment. How close (or far) is this from your real world identity and/or your Facebook/MySpace identity?
5. Compare Goh's work with images by Nan Golding? Which reality do you prefer?
6. Goh has worked in design. How does this appear as an influence in his work?
7. Consider the cultural context of Goh's work and compare it to other artists who use documentary as a basis for their work. You might consider Shirin Neshat and artists from the Asia Pacific Triennial exhibitions. (QLD)

Additional resources

http://www.xymara.com/inmyx/index/inmyx207/fav-200702-index/fav-200702-emilgoh_e.htm
ANGELICA MESITI

Heroes, 2002
Single channel digital video
Duration: 05:00
Born Sydney 1976
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
About the artist

Mesiti has studied Visual Arts and works in the areas of performance, video/film/sound and installation. She is one fourth of the artist troupe The Kingpins who work in video art, performance and installation.

About the work

Notes, artist’s comments & critical writing

When asked about her main sources of inspiration Angelica Mesiti says, “I find myself drawn to subjects that contain residues of past histories or lives which are somehow evidenced in unexpected ways in their present form.”

Mesiti uses humour and pathos in her work to reference popular culture. Is Heroes an image of the next Australian Idol? There is a tragic edge to this starlet caught in the spotlight without make-up yet having to watch herself reflected in the mirror. David Bowie’s lyric “We can be heroes” plays in the background, a sign of possibility or hopelessness?

The artist’s working title for the work was “double-blind” a concept that describes an experiment in which neither the experimenters nor the subjects know which of two similar treatments is genuine and which is a control procedure, so too the subject of Heroes is caught by the promise of fame and celebrity yet looks pensive and uncertain. In Mesiti’s work she uses performance and video in the format of a music video to critique contemporary culture and our obsession with celebrity.
Questions for further study

1. How are you viewing the work?
2. What atmosphere does the work create?
3. Examine how the artist uses irony with the title *Heroes*.
4. What is the effect on the viewer of this work?
5. How is it different from a music video?
6. The curator Kathy Cleland states in her essay, “Digital media technologies can create images that are indistinguishable from conventional analogue photographs, film and video, thus calling into question the reality-status of the image. We can no longer be sure that 'seeing is believing.'” Consider this idea in relation to Mesiti’s work as well as other examples from *Face to Face* and beyond.
7. Compare Mesiti’s work with that of Rachel Scott. How do both of these artists explore ideas of narcissism, media culture and celebrity?
8. Research The Kingpins. How does their work relate to this independent work by Angelica Mesiti?
9. Select a popular song and design and film a music video. Think about making it portray the opposite of the song’s intentions.
10. Consider the artist as celebrity. Research and compare portraits by artists such as Jeff Koons, Andy Warhol, Vanessa Beecroft and Cindy Sherman.
11. Performance is an important part of Mesiti’s work as well as that by The Kingpins. Compare this work to other works by performance artists.

Additional resources

ADAM NASH AND
MAMI YAMANAKA

In3Face, 2002
Interactive installation

Adam Nash
Born Bristol England 1964

Mami Yamanaka
Born Japan
Lives & works Melbourne

Print this artist
About the artists

Adam Nash is a new media artist, composer, programmer, performer and writer. He works in the medium of realtime multi-user 3D, a meta-format which can contain all other media including sound and vision. He is a Lecturer in Computer Games and Digital Art at RMIT University and runs the net label http://concentrated-sound.net to distribute his solo sound work under a Creative Commons license. Mami Yamanaka has worked as a writer/editor and interior space designer, as well as exhibiting art. She is currently a Master’s student at RMIT.

According to Nash, “Inspiration comes from the iterative and plastic nature of the online digital media themselves. Craft is important to my process, and I find inspiration within the formal parameters of many projects. This can be seen as similar to an approach to composing or playing music, in that the abstract formal system itself provides much of the impetus for creation. I am also very interested in the international consequences of the information, connectivity and travel age, and its effect on such traditional concepts as race, culture and nation. Philosophers like Manuel DeLanda, Jacques Attali and Gilles Deleuze provide inspiration from an intellectual point of view, especially in terms of aligning the human social experience with digital networks, virtual experience and other observable natural phenomena from the nano scale to the cosmic scale. Formally, the work of Yves Klein, Mark Rothko, Constantin Brancusi, Wassily Kandinsky, Yoko Ono, Brian Eno, Klaus Schulze, Pete Namlook, Stars of the Lid, Igloo (Bruno Martelli and Ruth Gibson), John Power and John McCormick provide great inspiration in terms of example and path forging. Finally, a huge amount of inspiration comes from everyday life, every little thing that is experienced, felt or observed, from the tiniest insect, through to television shows and ads, the colour of the sky and the motions of crowds in the city.”

About the work

Notes, artists’ comments & critical writing

Nash and Yamanaka have created a family portrait which turns the camera on themselves and their son. They make a personal story very public, by actually inviting the public both online and here in the gallery context to interact with the manipulation of their three faces. In doing so questions of identity and origin arise. The headless faces float in a cloudy sky, like their spirits floating to the heavens or Rene Magritte’s surrealist imagery, the work is one pixel away from being completely different. The transformation is a graceful one and when the mouse shifts across the image it changes as quickly or as slowly as the user chooses, however the resulting image is unsettling and the identities are indeterminate and fluctuating. Being a portrait of a father, mother and son it raises questions about our identity within a family and as individuals.

On their website the artists note the work is, “An exploration of The Human Face. A metaphor for identity. Three faces: mother father son. Identity is blurred, pixelated, inherited and swapped around, informed by both the subject and the viewer. It makes a chimeric sense, but is unpredictable: what one viewer sees another will never. The permutations are as numerous as the identities we present to others, always based on our physical reality, but constantly changing according to situation.”

Adam Nash and Mami Yamanaka’s interactive digital installation In3Face also reveals a series of transitions between different faces, in this case between those of a mother, father and son. Audience members can interact with and manipulate this mutable digital portrait by moving the cursor over the face so that chunky blocks of pixels randomly change and are replaced by those from one of the three faces. As the pixel blocks change, the face becomes more and more of a composite, the features mixing and merging as fragments of the three faces form new identity hybrids.

1. From the website http://yamanakanash.net/in3face/index.html
2. From the Exhibition Essay for Face to Face by the curator Kathy Cleland
Questions for further study

1. Consider the idea that when a single artist creates an artwork the work is imbued with the artist's signature and tells the viewer something of them, their style, attitude, and influences. In the *Face to Face* exhibition there are three pairs of artists who have developed work collaboratively. Why might new media work lend itself to collaboration, more so than traditional media? As a group discuss the differences when reading a work by more than one artist. Research some famous pairings of artists such as Gilbert and George, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Jane and Louise Wilson.

2. Adam Nash has had work presented in galleries, festivals and online nationally and internationally, including peak festivals SIGGRAPH, ISEA, and the Venice Biennale. Research the history of New Media content from Australia at the Venice Biennale.

3. Nash was also the recipient of the inaugural Australia Council Second Life Artist in Residency grant in 2007. As this was the first of its kind, research what the Second Life Artist in Residency grant refers to and consider how its introduction might shape the future of new media practice in Australia.

4. Create your own digital family portrait. If you have the expertise make it interactive, alternatively use traditional art media. Consider the element of surprise in the development of your work.

Additional resources

http://yamanakanash.net/in3face/index.html
Single channel digital video
Duration: 10:40
Born Melbourne 1970
Lives & works Melbourne
Represented by Sutton Gallery Melbourne and Kaliman Gallery Sydney

Print this artist
David Rosetzky works in new media, installation, photomedia, and drawing and is currently working with Lucy Guerin, Margaret Cameron and David Franzke on a new video project. He draws inspiration from how other people work and think. In 2005 Rosetzky won the inaugural Anne Landa Award for moving image and new media work.

In this work three faces morph where collage and cutouts are used to change between faces. The individual is reduced to a layer of flesh, hair, eyes, lips—all peeled off and put on again like a fashion accessory. The curator discusses the idea that “the plasticity of the digital image with its ability to be endlessly manipulated and transformed is particularly suited to the exploration of contemporary postmodern notions of identity as fluid, fragmented and multiple.” This idea is explored in this digital animation by Rosetzky. The video shows the image being cut away, layers removed and added which add to the narrative of loss and change in the work. The faces are like a pattern of shapes rather than a thinking feeling subject. No recognizable context adds to this sense of dislocation, alienation, loneliness, absence of thought and empty gestures.

“Over the last decade,…[Rosetzky] has quickly and quietly amassed one of the most coherent, nuanced and interpretatively resonant bodies of work in the country. Single-minded and singular in approach, the hallmark of his practice is an intensely self-aware contemporary emotional mannerism.”

Robert Cook, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2007.

The title Without You is like a reference to a nostalgic narrative of lost love. Rosetzky's portraits often show highly glamorous, idealized imagery. Here the faces are very stylized with looks of longing on their faces. “Technically and aesthetically precise, his slick portraits resemble the idealized images found in high end advertising screen culture. Rosetzky is primarily interested in the ways in which relationships with others shape a sense of self and group belonging. Artifice, illusion, deceit and anxiety are subtle themes that extend across his practice.”

(From the Sutton Gallery website)
Questions for further study

1. Think about David Rosetzky as the Director of this work. What mood has he captured of his subjects?
2. Think about how Rosetzky's work combines traditional art media and new media. What does this combination say about the message in the work?
3. What can you hear whilst you view Rosetzky's work? How does the sound add to the narrative in the work?
4. Consider the idea referred to in the curator's essay, "The plasticity of the digital image with its ability to be endlessly manipulated and transformed is particularly suited to the exploration of contemporary postmodern notions of identity as fluid, fragmented and multiple." How does Rosetzky's work reflect postmodern concepts? Refer to postmodern theorists in your response such as Derrida, Foucault, Krauss, etc.
5. Think about popular culture influences in the work of David Rosetzky. Where can you see connections between cinema, advertising and fashion in this work? Compare his work to Matthew Barney and Bill Viola.
6. One gallery representative describes his practice as an intensely self-aware contemporary emotional mannerism. Research Mannerism in Visual Arts and consider how this relates to Rosetzky's work.
7. How are you viewing Rosetzky's work? What does it remind you of? How might it be different if you were viewing it as a video on your mobile phone, how would the meaning of the work shift?

Additional resources

- http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/rosetzky.htm
RACHEL SCOTT

Hot Not, 2006
Single channel digital video
Duration: 03:17
Born 1970, Singapore
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
Rachel Scott works with video, performance, painting and installation. When asked about her sources of inspiration Scott states "I am inspired by small, unacknowledged or overlooked materials, moments and gestures in everyday life and the process of making art, which reveal a sense of humanness and critique notions of success and failure."

Kathy Cleland the curator describes, “the uncomfortable ‘gap’ between fantasy and reality” that is evident in Rachel Scott’s digital video Hot Not where the artist videos her reflection in a glass door as she dances and mimes to the soundtrack of the Pussycat Doll’s hit song “Don’t Cha.” “As Scott dances we see the uncomfortable ‘gap’ between fantasy and reality growing as her performance, initially confident, slowly becomes less and less convincing as she starts to measure her own reflected image against the MTV perfection of the Pussycat Dolls’ singer-dancers. As she mouths the chorus refrain “Don’t cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me”, we see her dissatisfaction mounting as she peers at her face and critically examines the flesh of her belly, hips and thighs before giving up the ‘fantasy’ of the performance altogether. Scott deliberately embraces the ‘low end’ of technology, shooting her videos in a single unedited frame. She uses self parody to convey her message and her technique is one which is employed by the masses who upload their videos on YouTube everyday. Her method and theme is accessible to her contemporary audience who can both recognize her pop culture references and empathise with her, amidst the pressure of conforming to ideals of beauty and the saturation and adulation of celebrity by the media.
Questions for further study

1. Scott describes being influenced by human failure. Compare this work to Tracey Moffatt's series of portraits entitled *Fourth* (2001), depicting the faces of athletes who came fourth at the Sydney Olympics. What similarities and differences do the two works contain?

2. Create your own video using your mobile phone. Sing along to your favourite song or select a song with a dark theme. You could add to your performance with costumes/make up or create a raw piece of footage like Scott's work.

3. Think about the audience's response to Scott's work. Do they relate? Empathise? Pity? Feel embarrassed? Laugh? What expectations does an audience have viewing a performance work in a gallery?

4. What is the cultural context for Scott's work? Consider what cultural signifiers you can see in the video? (Look at the way she is dressed/location etc)

5. Listen to the lyrics of the song, how does Scott bring a feminist perspective to this song in her performance?

6. Compare this work to the Candice Breitz video work entitled *A Portrait of Michael Jackson* from 2005 and work by UK artist Gillian Wearing. What are the similarities in theme?

7. Research the relationship between the media and celebrity. Select one celebrity and do an internet search to find how many listings exist on them. How many do you believe are true? How can we distinguish between what is fact and fiction over the internet? Create an artwork highlighting your findings.
Prosthetic Head, 2003
Interactive installation
Born 1946, Limassol, Cyprus.
Lives & works Melbourne,
Sydney, and London.

Print this artist
About the artist

Stelarc works in new media and performance and he is particularly inspired by Evolutionary Theory, Robotics, Dance, Architecture, Cognitive Sciences, Philosophy and Media Theory.

Stelarc collaborates on most of his works and says, “It’s often a complex process and you do what is necessary to realize the project. … It would not be possible to complete most works without the technical expertise of programmers, engineers and surgeons.” In terms of working with new media and developing his ideas he says, “The projects and performances are conceptually driven and not necessarily determined by a particular medium. … Certainly new media technologies generate unexpected information and images and suggest alternate aesthetic strategies.”

1. From an email conversation between Stelarc and Madeleine K. Snow March 2008

About the work

Stelarc’s work takes the concept of a self-portrait to new heights. Many of his works use himself as the source, where he pushes the boundaries of his body exploring its capacity for connection to technology. His work incorporates medical imaging, prosthetics, robotics, virtual reality and more. His work for Face to Face is the Prosthetic Head which is a version of his own head, an artificial head programmed with his voice and ideas and able to converse when an audience types in a question. It has been exhibited internationally in Scotland, England and Canada. The 3D avatar head has virtual facial expressions and the artwork contains sensors to detect a user's presence. It relies on Embodied Conversational Agents (ECAs). On his website it explains that “notions of awareness, identity, agency and embodiment become problematic. Just as a physical body has been exposed as inadequate, empty and involuntary, so simultaneously the ECA becomes seductive with its uncanny simulation of real-time recognition and response. Initially decisions would have to be made about its database and whether The PROSTHETIC HEAD is a pathological, philosophical or simply a flirting head.”

In terms of making his work Stelarc generally relies on artist scholarships and grants such as residencies. Some of his funding sources have been The Myer Foundation, Kampnagel, Hamburg, the Arts and Humanities Research Board, UK, the Wellcome Trust, UK, and Ars Electronica, Austria. According to the Australia Council website, “He has also been sponsored with pneumatics and electronics equipment from SMC Australia, SMC Germany and Festo, UK. In the past medical companies like Siemens, HP and Nihon Kohden have supported Stelarc’s projects by loaning medical monitoring and imaging equipment.”

1. From the artist’s website www.stelarc.va.com.au
Questions for further study

1. Research Stelarc's work from the 1970s and compare it to work he has produced over the past few years. How is it similar and how is it different?

2. Consider the following quote from the essay for *Face to Face* by Anthony Bond: “Art is after all an exploration of what we are and how we know what we are and occasionally what we might like to pretend we are. In *Face to Face* the empathetic connection between viewer and the self portrait I started describing in front of a Rembrandt returns in an exacerbated way with Stelarc’s *Prosthetic Head*. Compare Stelarc’s portrait with a portrait by Rembrandt. What is similar and what has changed?

3. Think about the audience for *Prosthetic Head*. The work comes to life when the user interacts with it. How might the audience change the mood of *Prosthetic Head* and how it is being perceived?

4. Stelarc has been described as a ‘postmodern Leonardo da Vinci’. Research the practice of da Vinci. What connections can you draw between these two artists?

5. Consider how Stelarc’s works are constructed. What processes would be involved in the creation of his works?

6. How does Stelarc’s work reflect the time in which we live?

7. Look at Stelarc’s website and find other examples of his work. In what way is his work about the spectacle and surprise? Consider this in relation to work by Orlan and Marina Abramovic. What similarities are evident?

Additional resources

- Website for Alicebot, the AI chatbot program designed by Richard Wallace that is used in Stelarc’s *Prosthetic Head*.
- http://alicebot.blogspot.com/
JOHN TONKIN

time and motion study, 2006
Interactive installation
Born 1963 Adelaide
Lives & works Sydney

Print this artist
John Tonkin has studied both art and science, experimenting in film, video and animation. He is an artist, lecturer and interactive programmer and designer. Some of his work has involved creating software using mathematical models and recently he has been working with real time 3D animation, visualization and data mapping technologies. In 2008 Tonkin was shortlisted for the Premier of Queensland's National New Media Art Award.

The interactive work in this exhibition is dependent on the audience. Tonkin's portrait is not limited to one time and one place but could display the whole gamut of human emotions depending on the mood/s of the visitor/s. The work asks the viewer to play physically with time and time's passing. He creates the programs and works with the software to visualize his ideas, in a time and motion study. An earlier version of the work was subtitled “holding on letting go” evoking a more poetic response than the scientific time and motion study. It is an invitation to the viewers to immerse themselves, to suspend belief and completely engage with the work, that control versus chaos is all a mouse click away. Melinda Rackham in her manifesto to immersive works writes, "Virtual Reality is a sensual space, a spectacular arena that can corporeally transport the immersant beyond everyday space and time."

Tonkin has been making interactive works since 1995 exhibiting them as installations and online focusing on the body, scientific belief systems and subjectivity.

Of his work the artist states, “Much of my work has investigated the idea of science as a belief system. While historically western science has prided itself on its objective pursuit of "truth", scientific research is obviously influenced by the world-view of its practitioners and the cultural values of their period.”


2. From the artists website http://www.johnt.org/strangeweather/about.html sessionid=0AE862EDF8DF1AD8426FD69AD87AB7EF
1. Some keywords to consider when analyzing Tonkin’s work would be: Repetition, Surprise, Interaction, Science, Emotion, Control, Chaos, Mood/atmosphere. What other words could you add to this list? Create a painted, drawn, or Photoshoped visual (pictorial) glossary of the list.

2. According to the Kathy Cleland the curator, “Tonkin’s work has resonances not only with the proto-cinematic work of Muybridge and Marey but also with Marcel Duchamp’s “Nude Descending a Staircase,” 1912, the dynamic painted images of the Futurists such as Balla’s “Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash,” 1912, and early music videos such as Amii Stewart’s “Knock on Wood” and the Jackson 5’s “Don’t Stop ‘til you get Enough.” Compare and contrast these connections to Tonkin’s work.

3. In what way does his work cross both Science and Art?

4. Research John Tonkin by visiting his website and compare this work to others by the artist.

5. When you interact with this work what can you see and how do you feel?

6. The work is a portrait of our time. Examine this statement in relation to John Tonkin’s work. Think about the media and the subject matter.

Additional Resources

http://www.johnt.org/
Artists’ websites and online resources

- **Daniel Crooks**
  - http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/crooks.htm

- **Emil Goh**
  - http://www.uymara.com/inmyx/index/inmyx207/fav-200702-index/fav-200702-emigoh_e.htm

- **Angelica Mesiti**

- **Adam Nash and Mami Yamanaka**
  - http://yamanakanash.net/in3face/index.html

- **David Rosetzky**
  - http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/rosetzky.htm

- **Stelarc**

- **John Tonkin**
  - http://www.johnt.org/

Other artists and artworks of interest

- **Aziz + Cucher** – *Dystopia* Series

- **Nancy Burson** – *The human race machine*
  - http://www.nancyburson.com

- **Keith Cottingham** – *Fictitious Portraits*

- **Luc Courchesne** – *Portrait One*

- **The Facing Australia Project** – composite portraits from Australian towns / cities
  - http://www.facingaustralia.com

- **Ken Feingold** – *Head* and other works
  - http://www.kenfeingold.com

- **Zhang Ga** – *People’s Portrait*
  - http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/peoples-portrait

- **Tehching Hsieh** – *One Year Performance*

- **Lynn Hershman**
  - http://lynnhershman.com

- **Eva and Franco Mattes** – *Portraits* and *15 most beautiful avatars*

- **Mongrel**
  - http://www.mongrel.org.uk
Video art resources


Slade, Lisa and O'Keefe, Sean. Contributors MOVE Video Art in Schools Published by Kaldor Art Projects www.kaldorartprojects.org.au/move

Portraiture resources

The Archibald Prize http://www.thearchibaldprize.com.au
National Portrait Gallery (Australia) http://www.portrait.gov.au
National Portrait Gallery (UK) http://www.npg.org.uk


Key Australian new media arts organizations

ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image) http://www.acmi.net.au
ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology) http://www.anat.org.au
d/Lux/MediaArts http://www.dlux.org.au
Experimenta http://www.experimenta.org
Note: see exhibition study guide resources – http://www.experimenta.org/studyguides.htm
MAAP (Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific) http://www.maap.org.au

Tony Oursler
http://www.tonyoursler.com
Tomoko Sawada
http://www.e-sawa.com
Alexa Wright and Alf Finney – Alter Ego
http://www.alteregoinstallation.co.uk
Other resources for new media art

- Turbulence (a great archive of net art and networked performance)
  http://www.turbulence.org
- RealTime – Online Journal
  http://www.realtimearts.net
- Listing of (some) Australian New Media Artists
  http://www.synapsenetau
- Media Art Net
  http://www.medienkunstnetz.de
- Media Art Histories Archive (a good source of articles on new media)
  http://193.171.60.44/dspace/
- CRUMB (Curatorial Resources)
  http://www.newmedia.sunderland.ac.uk/crumb
- Daniel Langlois Foundation (an excellent archive of new media art)
  http://www.fondation-langlois.org/
- Whitney Artport: Whitney Museum of American Art (portal to net art)
  http://artport.whitney.org/
- Centre Pompidous' New Media Resources
  http://www.newmedia-art.org/
- Taste-E
  http://www.taste-e.org/taste-e
  http://www.taste-e.org/taste-e/australia
- Digital Art Source
  http://www.digitalartsourcesource.com

Austin Museum of Digital Art (AMODA)
http://www.amoda.org/

Database of Virtual Art
http://virtualart.hu-berlin.de/common/searchWork.do

Rhizome
http://rhizome.org

The Digital Performance Archive (compiled by Barry Smith and Steve Dixon)
http://ahds.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/dpa/authorssearch.jsp

Variable Media Network (John Ippolito)
http://www.variablemedia.net
http://three.org/ippolito/home.html

Walker Art Center
http://www.walkerart.org/archive/7/B1739D260AB12D076164.htm
http://blogs.walkerart.org/newmedia/
artificial intelligence (AI) – is the intelligence of machines and the branch of computer science to create it. Among the traits that researchers hope machines will exhibit are reasoning, knowledge, planning, learning, perception and the ability to move and manipulate objects.

avatar – is a computer user’s online representation of themselves. The term originally came from computer game players where the player used an avatar to interact.

cyborg – an organism that is a self-regulating integration of artificial and natural systems.

Embodied Conversational Agent (ECA) – an artificial intelligence program (also called a chatbot) with a computer graphic human face.

hominid – A hominid is any member of the biological family hominidae (the “great apes”), including the extinct and extant humans

mutation – a change in the sequence of an organism’s genetic material

morph – from the Greek word ‘morphē’ meaning form or shape. As a verb it is to transform or cause to change shape and image by computer.

morpheme – is the smallest linguistic unit that has semantic meaning.

pneumatically – filled with or operated by compressed air.

neuroaesthetics – the attempt to use neuroscience to understand art and aesthetic behaviour. It investigates responses in the brain to experiencing aesthetic phenomena.

subjectivity – existing in a person’s mind and not produced by things outside it; personal tastes and views; awareness and sense of self.

‘Uncanny valley’ – The uncanny valley is an idea that suggests when robots or animations look almost human there is a point at which we find them repulsive.

zombie – A zombie is a reanimated corpse.