

U-TURN

CURATED BY LARISSA HJORTH AND KATE SHAW

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U-TURN: NO LAYBYS, FREQUENT FLYER POINTS, RETURNS OR EXCHANGES

NO LAYBYS/LAY AWAYS

In a period of globalization, the arts circuit is far from immune. However, as much as global technologies may promise the ability to traverse different geographies and temporalities, place and borders still matter. In other words, the more we try to overcome distance and difference, the more closeness is exasperated. In the face of globalization, the tenacious forces of regionalism, nationalism and localization remain.

International events such as the Venice Biennale only further highlight that contemporary Gross National Product has become about branding Gross National Cool (often to the dismay of artists). Factors of political economy influence the branding of creativity with nation whether artists overtly engage with these agendas or not. Australia's presence in 2007 Venice Biennale was dominated by not only a higher than normal budget but, also, as an indicator of this capital, a signature big yellow safety bag that functioned as a signifier of consuming Australia. While biennales are more than the sum of showbags, the bags do symbolize the global politics of consuming art and nation that extends the now defunct role of the Expo. "It's in the bag" is a loaded term in the sea of biennale phoneurs—the new flaneurs (Luke 2005)—propelled by nations-as-bags.

For many artists, nationality is one in many factors that informs, not forms, creative practices. In the case of Australia, the geographic distance inevitably affects the ways in which artists contextualize their practice. For many Australians, the Internet only further exasperates the difference between (technological) connectivity and (actual) contact. Geographic distance is interrelated with socio-cultural, socio-technological and political-economic factors – conditioning what it means to practice art in Australia. It's a lot of baggage beyond "just" geography.

In today's global climate, artists are, as Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2007) notes, the new IT migrant workers. Artists are expected to perpetually move, packing their IP and national identity to migrate to a next biennale in the resurgent circuit of regionalism both in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific (i.e. Sydney, Shanghai, Singapore, Gwangju, Yokohama).

Australia's geographic isolation has been discussed through many rubrics. One of the enduring concepts has been through the notion of South. For Audrey Yue and Gay Hawkins (2000), Australia is 'south' of Asia and 'south' of the West, for the BBC it is the 'west' in Asia. This geo-political imaginary has informed many projects including Kevin Murray's *Crafts Victoria South project*.

FREQUENT FLYER POINTS

U-turn, on the one hand, is mindful of the problematic of exhibiting a group of Melbournian artists where the only common theme is, from a distance, that of nationality. Nationality is, as Benedict Anderson noted, an ‘imagined community’ (1983) that is experienced and represented in different ways. In *u-turn*, the national is a contested notion, one that is negotiated through the lens of multiple urbanities in which Melbourne and LA provide two very divergent, but parallel, models. All of the artists have either visited LA for a residency or travel, and thus have—in some form or another—engaged or connected with LA urbanity and media culture. On another level, the title of the exhibition attempts to openly engage with the politics of ‘exchange’ in a global economy of artists-as-IT-workers; in particular, the uneven levels of exchange that operate between different nations and regions.

Like the motion of a *u-turn*, this exhibition toys with the idea and ambiguities of place as a fixed precept and, instead, explores the migrating notion of place—‘south’ or otherwise—that is manifest within contemporary life. In addition, *u-turn* engages with the nature of on-going cross-cultural exchange, prevalent in the fact that seven of the sixteen artists have had residencies in LA and that all of the participating artists have exhibited or traveled to LA. *U-turn* reflects upon the way in which the artists draw on the interrelated references of urbanity in both LA and Melbourne, highlighting that cultural flows are never linear or one way. But exchange is, inevitably, a process involving uneven power relations.

The concept of *u-turn* operates upon many levels. It is a rubric for rethinking geo-political imaginaries of place in a period of globalism; a way to define the cross-cultural and intertextual nature of practitioners; a template to critically reflect upon the way in which cross-cultural exchange is changing; and, lastly, to address that in a period of globalism, the local is becoming increasingly important to practitioners.

The artists in *u-turn* ponder, meditate and reflect upon the *u-turn* nature of urbanity in today’s so-called epoch of global media. Some of the sub-themes include the architectural ethnospaces of urbanity (Stephen Haley and Darren Wardle), the mediated landscape (Nadine Christensen and Kate Shaw), mobility and the disjuncture of co-presence (Larissa Hjorth, Chantal Faust, Shaun Wilson and Sanja Pahoki), reworking of spatial practices (Natasha Johns-Messenger and Laresa Kosloff), pop culture (Ian Haig, Amanda Morgan/Ella Fairbairn and Martine Corompt), contemporary anxiety (Paul Quinn and James Lynch) and the post-human (Peta Clancy).

NO RETURNS

Once upon a time, the art world was compared to that of anthropology. George E. Marcus and Fred Myers’ (1995) pivotal work in this area served to define the artist (and curators) as ethnographers, charting the ethnoscapings of contemporary culture. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu showed us how to read art in terms of sociology to uncover the cultural, social and economic ‘capital’ (knowledges) naturalizing modes of taste. As Arjun Appadurai (1987) noted, commodities, like people, have life biographies.

Now, in an age where consumers have been defined as ‘prosumers’ (producers and consumers), are they artists too? If they are, what is the role of artists? And what can be made of the shift from anthropology/sociology to business analogy? Laptop in hand, artists are the new business graduates (like all graduates with monstrous study debts). But why does it seem that it is the corporations, not the artists, that are profiting?

In the face of prevailing futurism and social networking of web 2.0, the art world has continued to question the role of creativity and place. Far from a homogenized global village, the “international” arts community only further illustrates the significance of locality and regionalism. In the age of dream societies, whereby products encapsulate lifestyle identity and everyday users can supposedly become producers, artists can still provide a window onto the way in which place and proximity informs the ubiquity of lifestyle consumer cultures.

In the social equation of global networks, the suburban satellite urbanities of Melbourne and LA provide parallel experiences in contemporary media cultures. But what does it mean to be a parallel city in an age of social capital and constructed communities of MySpace, Facebook and YouTube? What does city ‘families’ mean in an age of rampant social networking that privileges connectivity over contact? Is this a case of being put on hold? Or making a *u-turn*?

LARISSA HJORTH & KATE SHAW

NADINE CHRISTENSEN

There is a marvelous madness to Nadine Christensen's paintings. Nothing really makes sense here; a stack of desert rocks sit uncomfortably by an office chair and a lounge-room lamp, while hawks and other bird life hover above.

Christensen stacks objects that are constructed from the debris and detritus of her studio practice in a maverick recycling enterprise. What intrigues her is how we construct a feeling of local identity by crafting a relationship to place out of the rituals and debris of everyday life. She sources her subject materials with a kind of obsessive zeal, rummaging in hardware stores, opportunity shops and copies of *National Geographic*.

'My activity and selected objects are connected to other times and places,' she says. 'So it's the thinking that local identity is derivative of linkages and social processes that involve imagined and global communities... new proximities.'

There is something almost romantic about Christensen's paintings. For all their coolness, for all of the carefully thought out structure, there's a hint of nostalgia, a weird homeliness about her work, like emotions carefully subsumed beneath a veneer of laminex and a coating of fake wood grain.

Christensen has always had a tendency to create entire environments and her works are often presented as intricate installations or presented with extra props to include the viewer in her world.

When Christensen's art has embraced the great outdoors it has been with a cinematic scope that would make Sergio Leone jealous. But her desert-scapes have also been executed with a grandiose theatricality and an otherworldly sense of discovery. Christensen has always worked on the fantastically graphic depiction of a strange frontier, whether it be the odd canyons of alien badlands or the more recent almost stifling interiors, hers is a world both like and decidedly unlike our own.

Ashley Crawford

PETA CLANCY

In contemporary popular culture, beauty and youth are sold as the ultimate commodities. People talk about plastic surgery like they used to talk about make-up. Why perpetually apply lipstick when you can have hyperbolic botox lips? In the global trade of image packaging, LA, and its epicenter 'Hollywood', exemplifies this phenomenon. Perfect skin is paraded as the signifier of beauty and youth. Wrinkles, once symbolic of wisdom and a map for a person's experiences, are like used commodities, something to throw away. Smile wrinkles that show a person's many laughs over a lifetime are now considered ugly. To rephrase the Sprite ad, 'experience is nothing, image is everything'.

Peta Clancy mourns the topographies of what it used to mean to have a face. *She carries it all like a map on the skin* is an ode to this loss; an individual's experience being a sum of their gestures is a thing of the past for those that can afford the endless enhancements. In an age of botox bombardment, the idea of one's face being an open book is lost in a series of discrete frozen expressions where a smile can be confused with a glare.

As Clancy notes, 'like the beautician pointing out the wrinkles on one's skin, not as they are but rather as a sign of what is to come, I aim to trace out an intimate course for the inevitable demise of the skin'. Clancy continues,

The images denote an intense study of a woman's mouth and eyes. With the use of a fine needle, the creases and lines that form on the lips and around the eyes are painstakingly pinned to heighten the marks that are left by time, age and feeling in the skin. After they have been worked on, each of the photographs are then lit from the side to accentuate the ruptured surface and rephotographed to restore that surface in the sheen of the final Type C print. The fragility and malleability of the skin is underscored in this process. As an ever-changing topography, the skin ages and scars, and may be pierced, tattooed, tightened, lifted and peeled in response to an immeasurable array of cultural and physical conditions.

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

MARTINE COROMPT

Popular culture is a complex terrain that is both global and yet local. In each location, what is popular is defined and consumed in different ways. In the 20th century, one of the dominant forms of popular culture has been animation. Extending and remediating early forms of popular (and political) commentary such as caricature, animation has been part of most people's diet from an early age. Global popular culture is a smorgasbord of cross-cultural and transnational animations drawing from localised histories and ideologies. For example, the consumption of a Japanese animation (*anime*) partakes the viewer on a different journey of representation than that of American Disney animations. Far from the global making all representation homogeneous, through the portal of animation we can see the differences in social, cultural & political histories.

For Martine Corompt, animation is a core foundation of her work. Drawing on the temporal and conceptual dimensions of animation, Corompt's work pushes its language to make comments on the role of representation and identity in a global period. Over the past 10 years, Corompt's exploration of caricature, anthropomorphism, and iconography has taken many forms.

Corompt's practice also explores the personalized relationship individuals have with culture. She deploys the tactic of the hyperbolic, with characters taking on exaggerated gestures. In this way, Corompt's fascination with animation also involves the ways in which its language of representation can, as Corompt suggests, 'function as text/calligraphy'.

For *u-turn*, Corompt's work — entitled *Crowd Pleasers* — draws on the TV program *Funniest Home Videos*. *Crowd Pleasers* consists of a series of comic strip drawings and text of key 'disaster' moments. By breaking down the movements into narrative components, Corompt transforms the elements of slap-stick humour into moments of abstract contemplation. As Corompt states,

In the spirit of classic cartoon slapstick with its stylised and anesthetised use of hurt gags and violent pratfalls, this work explores not just the idea of how pervasive and irresistible slapstick comedy is, but also to what extent this type of humour is the modern inoculum and spiritual salve, for a world that hovers between sheltered banality and hazardous unpredictability.

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

CHANTAL FAUST

The strangeness of Chantal Faust's imagery is aided and abetted by a strangeness of technique that blends the high-tech with the macabre.

The monstrous *Thumbcrack*, a multi-thumbed grotesquerie, was first displayed in a shop window in Melbourne's Central Business District, no doubt to the bewilderment of passers by and helping to initiate any number of pre-adolescent nightmares. *Thumbcrack* is representative of at least one of Faust's strange obsessions, that of thumb sucking, which in her world is suggestive of both a bizarre sexuality and a sense of solace. The spirit of her thumb works she says is best captured in the phrase: *cogito ergo thum* – Latin for 'I think, therefore I suck.'

Faust's photo works are created sans camera, squashing objects and people under the hoods of various flatbed scanners. While most people using technology tend to have an obsessive cleanliness when it comes to their equipment, Faust will utilize found materials, piling rubber, hair, make-up foundation, plastic containers, baby products, dog toys and other detritus piled onto the flatbed. The objects may be perforated, require incision,

probed, prodded and pulled asunder in the process, finally giving birth to such vampiric monstrosities as *Monster*. 'It is the subversion of the photographic vernacular that occurs through scanning which makes the viewing experience so strange,' she says.

The scanner becomes for the artist a 'Pleasure Machine' but for the viewer the results have more in common with the darker currents of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*. As Faust states,

The scanner disobeys the rules of lens-based photography, associated with aperture, depth of field and the use of perspective. Scanning requires an immediate proximity to the subject. It distorts and stretches space and yet the focus maintains an acute sensitivity to surface detail; so much so that the images often can appear hyperreal.

Faust says that the formations and desires of the body feed her work but the resulting bodies are strange indeed.

Ashley Crawford

IAN HAIG

Ian Haig fails dismally when it comes to subtlety. His works explode in his viewers' faces, requiring a thorough scrubbing to even remember the notion of hygiene. The bowel, genitalia, the permeability of skin, sex toys, bacteria all scuttle, crawl and ooze through his work. Like William S. Burroughs' Dr Benway, Haig is a maverick surgeon of the bizarre creating an amphetamine fueled of grotesquerie. Like filmmaker David Cronenberg, Haig finds ways to invert the expected – even the title of his new series disturbs and disrupts expectations – *Study for organs on the outside of the human body* – we simply know it's all going to hell.

Rendered in his crude drawing style, the drawings feature abstracted, mutant human forms. These works play with the notion of how the content of the body is considered as abject and repulsive when it is on the outside, rather than on the inside.

For Haig this has particular resonance in Los Angeles, which is renowned for its devotion to the worship of the exterior human body.

In Haig's oeuvre the body is pathologised beyond plenitude. In addition to the drawings there is the video work, *How to Make a Monster*, depicting the artist undergoing a *Terminator*-like process of transformation by tearing the skin from his face.

Focusing on the themes of the human body, devolution, mutation, transformation and psychopathology through the lens of low cultural forms. Haig's works explore the toxicity of celebrity culture, the science fiction of sexuality, the degenerative and malign aspects of pervasive new technologies through to cultural forms of fanaticism and cults.

Ashley Crawford

STEPHEN HALEY

There is something eerie about Stephen Haley's work. Haley uses 3D modeling software to create paintings, prints and projected, large scale animation/installations. Wrought within the virtual world by painstaking labour, these works recall the illusory space of photography and cinema but are deliberately unnaturalistic. The artist calls the prints 'virtual photographs' since the final images are actual photographs - photo paper is exposed by a laser and then developed as usual - but the subject is a non-existent, virtual space. As Haley says,

We seem to live in a world of echoes. Our products and consumer items, our very behaviors are multiples, replications or reproductions of pre-scripted actions. We are surrounded by representations, photographs, texts, and images of all sorts, echoes of other things that take on a presence of their own. Real space is increasingly modeled on virtual space and the mirror is the metesign for our age.

The engulfing virtual photograph *Vanishing Point* reproduces an office block exterior at 5.10pm. At this magic hour, the workers have vanished leaving the empty and identical offices as though a film cell sequence seen from varying angles. While a clock sits at the image's vanishing point, the reflection of the city in the glass does not match the geometry. Closer inspection reveals itself not to be New York, but a park in Tokyo with the marquette of the Statue of Liberty. We occupy a historical point where the real has vanished into simulation.

Likewise in the artist's endlessly looping projected animation, *GameOverGame*, with its sequentially mirrored forms, a sensation is evoked like a dizzying vortex akin to a work by William Gibson or Neal Stephenson. Through the fugue-like repetition, comes not reduction or simplification but an increasingly complexity and a vision both dismal and intoxicating.

Ashley Crawford

LARISSA HJORTH

What does it mean to be connected in an age of disjunctive co-presence? In an epoch of immediacy, the politics of delay is ever pervasive. As the ultimate 20th century conundrum that haunts 21st century *fin de siècle*, technology's desire to overcome distance has only further highlighted the loss of closeness. For Larissa Hjorth, contemporary technologies are vehicles for exploring the displaced politics of co-presence and intimacy.

Hjorth has continued to be fascinated with the symbolic elements of everyday commodities. From smell cinemas to interactive installations, Hjorth's work has utilized multiple elements to explore the ways in which individuals imbue inanimate objects with emotions and identity. For Hjorth, the ultimate commodity in 21st century modernity is the far from humble mobile phone.

Since 2000, Hjorth has focused her attention on the mobile phone. Drawing on interviews and documentation of people's relationship to their mobile phone in the Asia-Pacific region, Hjorth's work reflects on the stories of both people and their objects. Collating ethnographic methods along side the DIY tactics of micro-movies (mobile phone movies), her work oscillates around the voices of intimate strangers in a world inhabited by satellite co-presence.

From lightboxes 'advertising' personalized phones to micro-movies exploring the specific visual and aural economies of mobile media, Hjorth questions the symbolic dimensions of global technology. These micro-narratives sketch the specters of what it means to be co-present in an age of so-called instantaneity; a location somewhere between what constitutes connection and contact.

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

NATASHA JOHNS-MESSENGER

What you see is not necessarily what you experience in Johns-Messenger's poetic installations. Johns-Messenger toys with the viewer's perception, making awry the politics of spatial economies. As the artist notes, 'my installation works question our physical and psychological expectations of space by employing optical illusion devices for a paradoxical effect between real and representational space'.

Deploying mirrors and other apparatus for illusions, Johns-Messenger takes her viewers on a journey that reinvents a sense of space. Teasing out the relationship between visual perception and corporeality, Johns-Messenger subverts gallery spaces into architectural wonderlands. It is impossible not to feel the thought-provoking commentary of Johns-Messenger's installations that merge the actual and virtual. Viewers at once become specters of their own corporeality, serving to provide contemplation on the tyranny of the visual in an age of electronic co-presence. Johns-Messenger's works are the ultimate embodiment of co-presence – as viewers we migrate between the virtual and actual, being there and here.

In this transitory place of Johns-Messenger's installations, reflection meets reflexivity. Thirty years on from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and the deluge of poststructural inquiry that followed, Johns-Messenger extends and expands upon the discussion of the 'regime of the visual'. She makes us aware of the significance of the corporeal, highlighting the inadequacies of current technological connectivity such as the internet and web 2.0. She shows us that 'bodies do matter'. As Craig Easton's review of Johns-Messenger's work *Here* observes,

Real-time image capture occurs in body-scaled mirror and projected video-such that the use of digital technology appears to be in a symbiotic rather than oppositional relationship with the old. In fact, such is the sense of dislocation engendered in some of the folds of *Here* that there are brief moments when reflection, video, and the real, simply occupy the same field... Here the science of vision is pitted against an art of perceptual play that has the viewer continually re-addressing his/her established ways of seeing. (*Eyeline magazine* 47: 2001, p 51)

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

►
Peta Clancy
Lips
C-type print
52.5 x 80cm
2005-2006
from the series *'She carries it all like a map on her skin'*

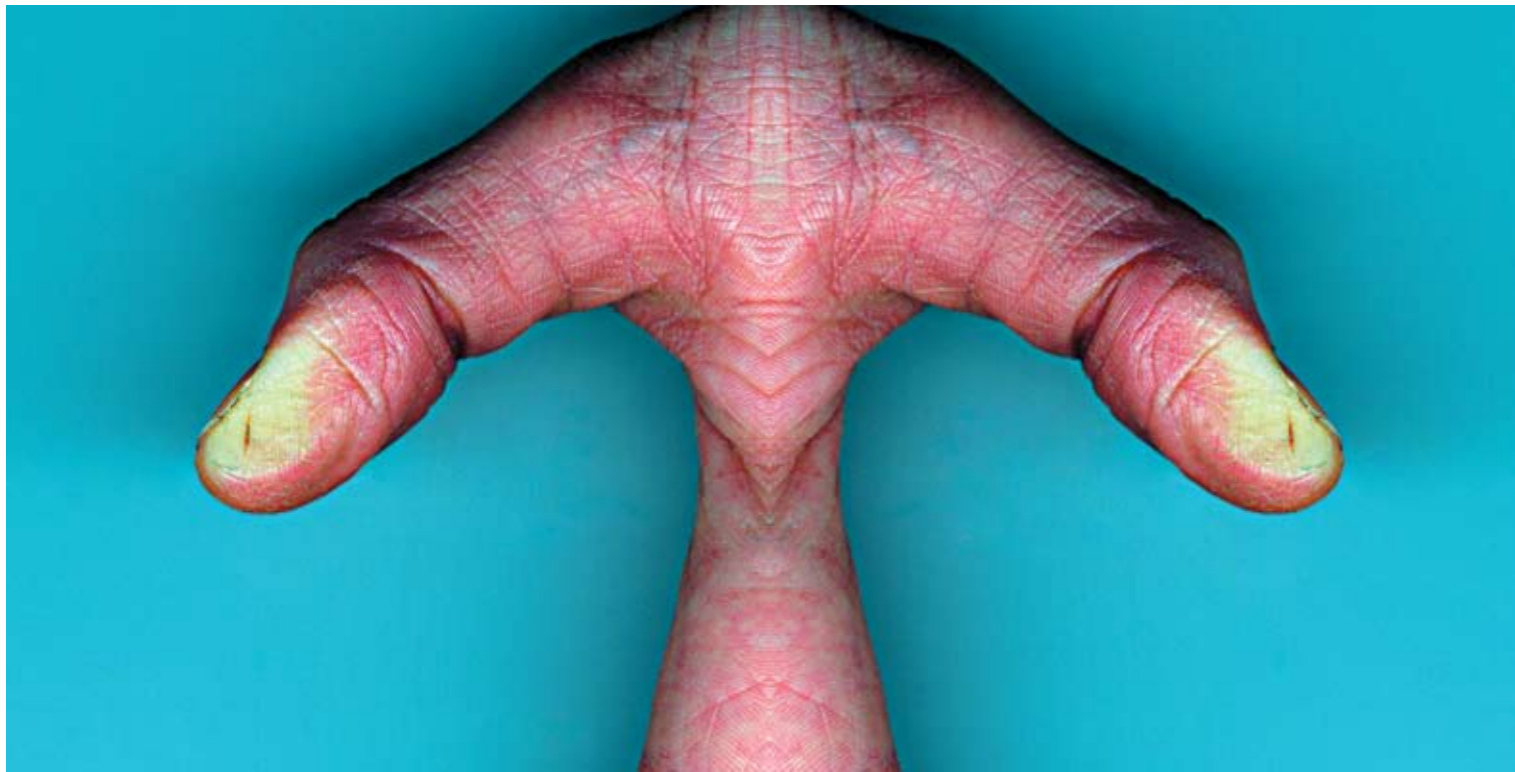




◀
Nadine Christensen
Totem #4
pencil on paper
100 x 60cm
2006



▲
Martine Corompt
Roo Disaster
Lambda print on metallic paper
120 x 38 cm
2005



▲ Chantal Faust
Thumbcrack
photograph
75 x 150cm
2003

▶ Ian Haig
How to make a monster
Video
2006

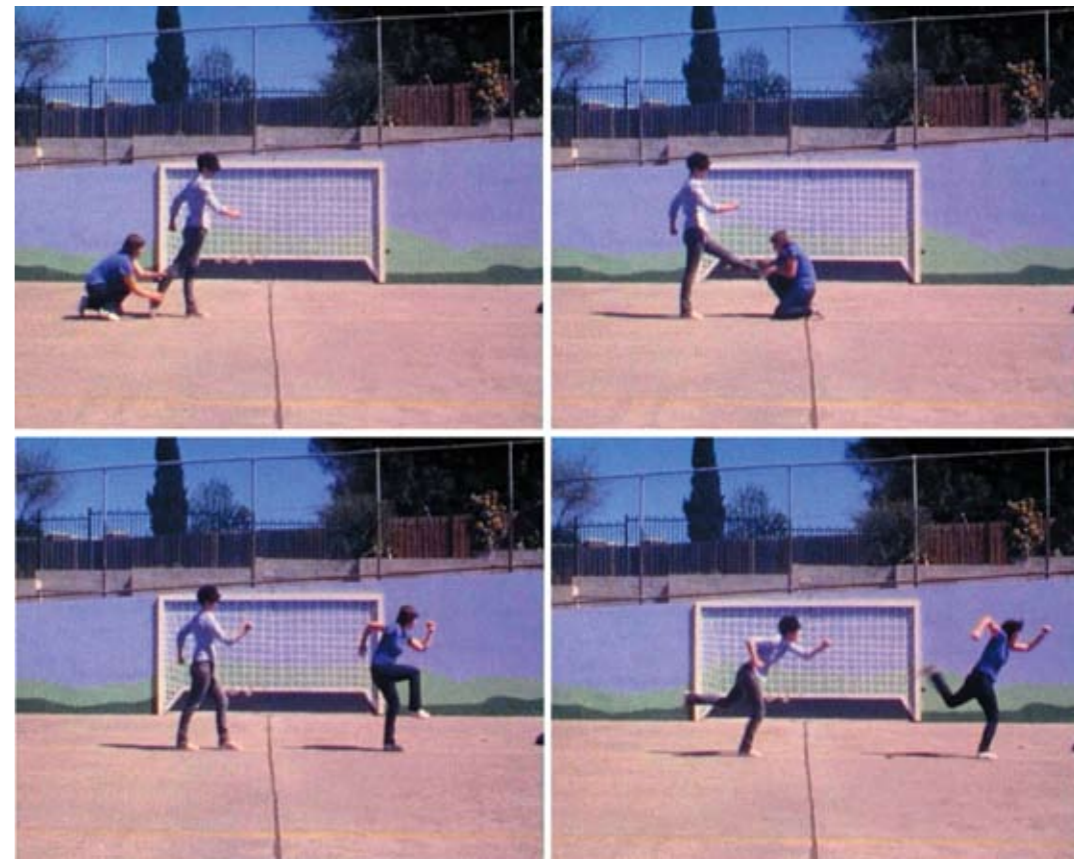




▲
Stephen Haley
Vanishing Point
lightjet photograph
120 x 300 cm
2007

▶
Larissa Hjorth
Losing You
micro-movie
2005-2007





◀
Natasha Johns-Messenger
Automated Logic
spatial installation with site materials
dimension variable
venue ACCA
2006

▲
Laresa Kosloff
Standard Run
Super 8 transferred to DVD
1 min 36 sec
2007



►
Sanja Pahoki
In a situation like this
video
2006

◀
James Lynch
Everybody was...
pencil and acrylic on paper transferred to dvd
video still 3.30 mins
2006





◀
Amanda Morgan & Ella Fairbairn
No More American Psychos
2min video
2007

▶
Paul Quinn
Spilling the Beans #2
C-type photograph
80 x 104cm
2007





▲
Kate Shaw
Salvation Mountain
acrylic and resin on board,
60 x 180cm
2007

▶
Darren Wardle
Golden Age
oil & acrylic on canvas
153 x 229cm
2007





▲
Shaun Wilson
Über Memoria 8
HDV as single channel projection DVD
colour, sound
2007
This work was generously funded by The Ergas Collection, Australia

LARESA KOSLOFF

Laresa Kosloff's video work explores the limits of performativity. Her work features the artist performing a series of gestures, stretches, poses and balancing exercises, whilst wearing painted abstract geometric costumes. The narrative blurs formalism and popular culture references; what the artist dubs as 'slapstick meets high-end abstraction'. This current series of works build on Kosloff's oeuvre that uses 'old' media such as Super 8 films to tease out conventions about modernism and suspensions of belief.

For *Jogathon*, Kosloff utilizes the aesthetics of the 1960's Super 8 camera to document the leisure activity of corporate jogging fundraisers. Kosloff substitutes the real with the 'reel' to comment on the various modes of performativity conducted in the diminishing notion of the public sphere. Collaging footage from elsewhere, Kosloff's work questions the aura of photographic 'truth' in an epoch of highly edited and manipulated mass media.

The interrogation of the construction of photographic truth is also apparent in *Standard Run*. In *Standard Run*, Kosloff draws from the construction of body and movement within various discourses such as photography, sport, slapstick comedy, instructional films, 70s video art, synchronized dance, classical poses, and the culture of the 'trained' body. As Kosloff states, 'the work extends my exploration of representations of 'the real', by manipulating qualities of stillness and action, mimicry, repetition, time, saturated colour, and painted backdrops.' Of her time spent in Los Angeles, Kosloff says,

My brief and touristy experience of L.A was full of uncanny moments. I'd been exposed to the place all my life through film, television and print media, and much of the time I felt like I'd walked into a set, or was an extra in a movie ... Substitutes for the real' are particularly noticeable in L.A, and much of my work explores this subject matter. It's also appropriate that people are jogging in both my Super 8 films, as celebrity culture is obsessed with the body and physical appearance.

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

JAMES LYNCH

The world of James Lynch is indeed awry. It is a bricolage of the sublime and the banal, the familiar and unfamiliar. He is the ultimate dreamcatcher, his stories tugging at what it means to be intimate with others. While his animations may remind viewers of the work of Richard Linklater, James Lynch's evocative narratives are more akin to the kaleidoscopic tenor of David Lynch. His work is, more aptly, reminiscent of the dream-like compositions of the surrealists. So much so that one writer described Lynch as the 'handyman's surrealism'. As the surrealist bricoleur, Lynch's materials and tools are taken from the everyday. Replacing the eighties adage of 'I shop therefore I am', Lynch's modus operandi is, 'I am linked therefore I am'.

Forty years after Millgram's postcard experiment where he noted 6 degrees of separation between people, Lynch's work delves into the personal dimensions of what it means to be connected today. Drawing on his dreams of other people, Lynch shows the often-underestimated role of the unconscious and significance of stories in making sense of the world. His animations, paintings and installations are re-enactments of these dreams; deeply personal enclaves that resonate with everyone. In an age of MySpace, 'look at me' social capital and intimate strangers, Lynch's poetics remind us of the importance of our ties and connections - both real and imaginary - beyond electronic connectivity.

Larissa Hjorth & Kate Shaw

AMANDA MORGAN & ELLA FAIRBAIRN

The screen burns and groans as the world melts. We live in a time of war, a time when many artists feel a horrendous impotence and irrelevance. Not so for visual artist Amanda Morgan and sound artist Ella Fairbairn who have collaborated to create a work that questions notions of customary violence in contemporary film and print. With the rapid-fire impact of a rock video *No More American Psychos* refuses to rely on the visual artilleries of war, but critically proposes that the distribution of this imagery is a form of contemporary barbarism. As the artists state,

Violent images of Horror, War, and Terror propagate and publicize fear ... We must be vigilant against Slogans and Acronyms for Destruction. Audit the economies that are in the Business of Death. Defuse images of massacres in schools and violence against women and men. Disarm Missiles with Weapons of Mass Creation.

The duo refute the notion of War Lord fantasies as entertainment. *No More American Psychos* responds through a collaboration of sound and typographical compositions to re-purpose notions of '60s idealism and re-present with gentle persuasion that these concepts seek to negate the distribution of violence as entertainment. They say,

It follows that as audiences cinematic/critical literacy grows, this can be challenged with a return to suggested/inferred meaning. Overt cinematic violence operates at a literal and destructive level which neglects to surface the 'between' and 'beyond the lines' examination of its effect.

The work is full of popular culture references, most notably Bret Easton Ellis's 1999 novel *American Psycho* (1999) fused with audio samples from by Bernard Herrmann's 1960 score from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and original footage shot by Jennifer Farrand.

Ashley Crawford

SANJA PAHOKI

To say that Sanja Pahoki's work is disturbing would be an understatement. While set in Melbourne, *Up in the Sky* is a direct response to the events of September 11, 2001. The work consists of three images of an elderly couple taken in various city locations looking up. The couple are Pahoki's parents and what in the past would be interpreted as a simple image of elderly tourists taking in the skyline has morphed into a far less friendly image.

These works explore our relationship to built environments. *In a situation like this* – a distinctly melancholy work – features a lone female figure (a stand-in for the artist) caught in a perpetual loop as she traverses an overpass, with peak-hour traffic passing underneath her. A relaxation soundtrack is overlaid that features the artists' mother reciting breathing exercises.

Pahoki's work questions our man-made environments with a healthy degree of cynicism. Earlier this year she executed a work titled *Bang Head, Repeatedly* that was presented in an inner-city window-display. The work featured a life-size, neon sign stick figure seated at a table/desk, which was animated to repeatedly hit its head against the table.

Pahoki uses familiar media – photography, video and text – to explore observations from everyday life with self, identity and anxiety as recurring themes. While Pahoki's practice frequently employs humour as a subtly subversive strategy to focus our attention on the desire to fit in, these more recent works are resonant with a deep melancholia.

Ashley Crawford

PAUL QUINN

There is a strange duality in Paul Quinn's most recent works. On the one hand, they reference the Freudian fear of suddenly appearing in public exposed (a particularly male phobia). On the other hand, they are very clearly, and savagely, a socio-political commentary on the current war in the Middle East – if not of war full stop.

In the first of the *Spilling the Beans* images we witness the aftermath of a particularly brutal rape. Two soldiers, bloodied phalluses still distended, gesture as though totally innocent of wrongdoing. Indeed the soldier on the right seems to be shrugging, as if to say 'nothing to do with me, sir.'

Quinn's works in this exhibition were constructed as part of recent research relating to common cognitive distortions; disorders that produce 'irrational and unnecessary' fear, and worry. 'The project includes a detailed study of catastrophisation where some individuals imagine gigantic and terrifying outcomes as a result of their own relatively insignificant mistakes', Quinn says.

That is not to describe these *mise en scenes* as 'insignificant.' Quinn uses rape as a broader metaphor for a catastrophic militaristic campaign. Simultaneously, with their bloodied phalluses, Quinn's soldiers raise the fear of castration.

But what makes these images truly unnerving is Quinn's inference of children's toys to illustrate his point. These are the toy soldiers from hell, suggesting that any hope of innocence has gone up in flames. The figures are, in fact, 1/35 scale, hand-crafted, models, they are not toys. This is of considerable significance to Quinn's practice in its reference to the genre of 'master craft,' which remains central to his investigations.

There is humour here, but it is dark indeed, making us complicit in the consumption of media-saturation and the inevitable indifference it concocts.

Ashley Crawford

KATE SHAW

In Kate Shaw's work what we see, and what in fact are facing, are two distinctly different things. A viewer may immediately recognize a glacier, an alpine ridge, a snow-capped mountain, but we are equally witnessing a montage of abstract chemical reactions. Through her deft manipulation of paint we are led into a world we immediately recognize - even if that world is pure fantasy. In Shaw's work the notion of 'landscape as product' disrupts its place as an inevitably read sign amidst abstraction.

Shaw's glaciers and mountain ranges are tumultuous, erupting, transforming – suggestive of the beginning of time. The physical properties of poured paint mimic the materiality of eruption and transformation. Within the history of painting the notion of cycles of creation and destruction in the act of creating something new is also alluded to these 'landscapes.'

It would be all too easy to take a biographical reading of the Australian-born artist and refer to her travels through that country's landscape, but that would be to succumb to a decidedly

literal reading. Even to most urban Australians, let alone those from around the world, Australia remains a surreal place, filtered through tourism advertising and television documentary. Shaw, despite initial appearances, is never literal. She is more an alchemist of imagery, mixing materials in a purge of academic rigor and with a brazenly anarchic and willful mission of discovery.

These works are an intriguing shift for Shaw who has been known for her cool, somewhat intellectualized approach to art making. She lived in Los Angeles for three years, dabbling with new technologies and creating works with Photoshop, photography and video. In Shaw's earlier work she tackled the ultimate city of artifice, Las Vegas. Rendered in bright, air-brushed day-glo colours, Shaw's Las Vegas was a town of mischievous ironies, fantasy and forgery. But Shaw's landscapes are also those of *our* memory. The inevitable attempt to 'identify' in a world of abstraction.

Ashley Crawford

DARREN WARDLE

Darren Wardle's work renders the urban landscape caught in the midst of a nuclear blast; colours intensified to a terrifying degree. Wardle has ratcheted up his street art spray appearance with carefully applied brush-strokes. His vision of suburbia burns with a radioactive intensity.

Wardle merges imagery from multiple locations in Photoshop, producing hyperreal versions of Pacific Rim settings indelibly mediated by technology. But the sub/urban environment as an expression of collective identity has undergone a terrifying inversion. As Manon Slome has observed, his environments have become social constructs, controlling rather than controlled by their human inhabitants. The hard-edged architectural forms are suggestive less of inhabited spaces but rather abandoned utopian sites in the aftermath of a calamity. While signs of habitation and activity are suggested human presence is deliberately absent.

His paintings relentlessly focus on public spaces, portraying them in what could be described as a condition of imploded modernism. The dream of infinite progress has subsumed humanity and the structures themselves have become omnipotent, coolly oblivious in their surface perfection to the surrounding conflagration.

The sci-fi dystopia of Wardle's works is key to their appeal. Not surprisingly Wardle is a fan of Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner*, in which the future Los Angeles is a garish mix of fluorescent lights, flashing advertising and grey, sodden brick.

'Aside from responding to the type of art being made in LA, the look of the place itself had just as great an effect,' Wardle says of his time in residence at Santa Monica's 18th Street Art Complex. Wardle continues,

There is so much material there that I think makes for challenging subject matter, the incongruous visuality of the low slung suburbs and it's proximity to the desert, the weird gardens and monster freeways. It's a very unique place in that it's so different to a European model of the city. I've considered it as a type of model for a late Capitalist city, for better or worse. It's resource hungry, suburban, multi-cultural, high tech and based on rampant consumerism. The trends that develop there seem to be exported to places like Australia and are then reconfigured throughout our sprawling suburban metropolises.

Ashley Crawford

SHAUN WILSON

Shaun Wilson's recent collective series, *Uber memoria* re-appropriates various character-based portraits located in medieval religious paintings at St. Michael's church in the Southern German town of Schwaebisch Hall. These images are recreated through performative video and filmed in locations of significance in Germany, England, New Zealand and Australia as a way of repositioning memories of the original images into locations that themselves hold memories of historical impact.

In doing so, Wilson says the dilemma for the image becomes three-fold: firstly, strained under the weight of separate locations coming together to form a new image he questions how his process impacts on the notion of originality. Secondly, the works raise the impact on memory through juxtaposing two moments of the past together into the present. Thirdly, the works raise the issue of how the nature of video reproduces these kinds of images into another version of the original, a third generational copy – a 'memory' of a witnessed event.

Wilson began using video from 1998 onwards as a temporal response and extension to painting. Since 2004 he has produced over 350 video artworks under the titles of *Mnemonia series*, *The Memory Palace series*, *Filmic Memorials series I-IV* and *Uber Memoria I-VII/Proto*.

Wilson himself describes these works as 'video paintings' in which he intends to explore the nature of memory and place through the moving image and its subsequent affect on autobiographical memory. In turn, Wilson has deconstructed family home movies, vintage 8mm film, and found 9mm film. From late 2006 onwards he has incorporated these filmic images with High Definition Video (HDV) to convey tensions of fractured memory.

In 2007 he produced two feature length video artworks *Gothic memoria* and *Epic memoria* that reconfigure Gothic Romanticism through the moving image and how this impacts on theories of false memory and its affect on places.

Ashley Crawford

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

NADINE CHRISTENSEN

Nadine Christensen has held solo exhibitions at galleries in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra as well as participating in group and collaborative exhibitions across Australia and internationally including Tokyo, Los Angeles, Tijuana, Paris and Venice. Her work was most recently included in *Parallel Lives*, *Australian Painting Today*, the inaugural biennale exhibition at the Tarra Warra Museum of Art and in *Silenzi*, a one time only residency and exhibition at the Prigioni de Palazzo Ducale in Venice.

In 2005 her work was featured in *This and other worlds*, a survey exhibition of drawing practices (National Gallery of Victoria). In 2004 she was featured in *NEW04* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art) and *This was the future...* a survey of three decades of sculpture (Heide Museum of Modern Art).

Christensen is represented by Kaliman Gallery, Sydney and Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

PETA CLANCY

Peta Clancy has held solo exhibitions at Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; Brighton Museum & Art Gallery, United Kingdom; RMIT Project Space; Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces and Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne. She was shortlisted for the 2007 *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award* (Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Australia) and commissioned by the Mozart 2006 Festival in Salzburg, Austria for the collaborative exhibition *Genetic Genie*.

In 2004 Clancy was awarded the Australia Council VACB London studio and her work has been featured in *Eyeline Contemporary Visual Arts Magazine*. She has a Master of Arts (Media Arts) from RMIT and has lectured in Photomedia at Monash University, Melbourne since 2002.

Clancy is represented by thirtyseven° Contemporary Fine Art Gallery in Sydney.

www.petaclancy.com

MARTINE COROMPT

Collaboration and interdisciplinary practice have informed much of Corompt's work over the last 10 years. Works such as *Dodg'em*, 2000 - 2006 (an interactive sound installation) with Philip Samartzis, or more recently *No Answer* 2006, a collaborative public artwork with artist Philip Brophy (commissioned by the City of Melbourne) emphasize the modulating effects of one medium upon the other, as well as highlighting a more direct relationship between spectator and artwork.

In 2004 Corompt was awarded the Australia Council VACB studio residency at the Cité des Arts Paris. Corompt is co-ordinator and lecturer in Media Arts in the School of Art at the RMIT University, Melbourne.

CHANTAL FAUST

Chantal Faust is currently completing a PhD at the School of Art, Victorian College of the Arts where she lectures in the Art History Department. Her work uses everyday technologies in their most basic forms, pushing their possibilities to breaking point. Chantal has been using flatbed scanners in the production of her photo works since 2001.

Recent exhibitions in Australia have included *Monster* (Centre for Contemporary Photography, 2006), *Pear Shaped* (West Space, 2006) and *Perfect for Every Occasion: Photography Today* (Heide Museum of Modern Art, 2007).

IAN HAIG

Ian Haig's work has been exhibited in galleries and video/media festivals around the world. Venues include the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; The Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Artec Biennale, Nagoya, Japan; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Art Museum of China, Beijing and The European Media Arts Festival Osnabruck, Germany. In addition his animation and video work have screened in over 120 Festivals internationally.

In 2003 Haig received a fellowship from the Australia Council New Media Arts board.

STEPHEN HALEY

Stephen Haley is an artist and writer. He lectures at the Victorian College of the Arts and is currently a research fellow. He completed his PhD in 2005 on the mirror and contemporary culture. Recent work uses 3D modeling software to create virtual spaces that become printed 'virtual photographs' or large scale video 'projected spaces'.

Haley has produced twelve solo exhibitions and participated in over eighty curated group exhibitions. He is represented in a number of collections and won several awards including the ANZ *Visual Arts Fellowship Award* in 2004 and the *Deacon, Graham and James/Arts 21 Residency Award* in 1998 that funded a four-month studio in Tokyo.

In 2006 Haley received the Australian Council VACB and spent three months in Los Angeles researching the city's many thematic spaces. In 2006 he also won the prestigious *R M McGivern Acquisitive Prize* for painting.

Haley is represented by Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

LARISSA HJORTH

Larissa Hjorth is researcher and artist lecturing in the Games and Digital Art programs at RMIT University, Melbourne. In 2007, she was research fellow at Yonsei Communication Research Institute, Yonsei University, Seoul.

Hjorth has lived in Seoul and Tokyo and has conducted many cross-cultural projects including the Australian/Japanese project *gloss* (2002). She has been the recipient of the Australia Council VACB Tokyo studio residency, the Akiyoshidai International Art Village residency and the Asialink Seoul Ssamzie studio residency. Hjorth has exhibited widely including solo exhibitions at CCP (Contemporary Centre for Photography) and EAF (Experimental Art Foundation).

Hjorth has a forthcoming book on gendered mobile media in the Asia-Pacific region entitled, *The art of being mobile* (London, Routledge).

NATASHA JOHNS-MESSENGER

Natasha Johns-Messenger is a site-specific spatial installation artist, who moved from Melbourne to New York City in 2006.

Johns-Messenger recently won the *Den Haag Sculptuur 2007 Rabobank* award in the Netherlands and she participated in *Satellite Shanghai* (adjunct to *Shanghai Biennale 2006*). Johns-Messenger will undertake an Australia Council VACB residency at the ISCP studio program in New York 2007.

Johns-Messenger has exhibited widely in Australian exhibitions including *NEW06* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne), *Primavera 2004* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney), *Drift* (Perth Institute of Contemporary), as well as numerous other exhibitions at venues such as the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia and the Canberra Contemporary Art Space.

www.natashajohnsmessenger.com

LARESA KOSLOFF

Laresa Kosloff makes Super 8 films, hand drawn animations, choreographed video works, sculptures, drawings, site specific performances, and installations. She has held individual exhibitions at various artist-run galleries in Melbourne.

Kosloff has participated in a number of group exhibitions both in Australia and internationally, including *NEW06* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2006); *Truth Universally Acknowledged* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2005); *The Moon Will Save Our Ass* (Castlefield Gallery, Manchester UK, 2004); and *the sneeze 80 X 80* (Gazon Rouge Gallery, Athens, 2004).

JAMES LYNCH

The work of Melbourne-based artist James Lynch was most recently seen in the *Anne Landa Award*, for video and new media arts (Art Gallery of New South Wales). In 2006 he completed various new commissions for the offices of UBS Melbourne and for the site-specific public art project, *Terminus Projects* at The Worlds Square, Sydney.

His work was also featured in the large scale survey exhibitions *A Short ride in a fast machine*, (the 20-year anniversary exhibition of Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne), *I Thought I Knew But I Was Wrong - New Video Art from Australia* (which toured extensively throughout Asia) and '2004 - *Visual Culture Now*' (the National Gallery of Victoria and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne). In 2005 Lynch was included in the showcase exhibition *NEW05* (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art).

James Lynch is represented by Uplands Gallery, Melbourne and Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris.

AMANDA MORGAN

Amanda Morgan completed a Masters of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2002. Her practice involves sculpture, video and collaborations with music producers, exhibition designers and architects. Morgan has exhibited in Australia and internationally and is a founding member of Conical in Fitzroy. Morgan produced *I See* for independent television station Channel 31, and curated a series that critically reviewed contemporary video and film for TV audiences. Morgan also completed a residency at Art Space, Sydney. Her works are part of international collections and publications including the Video Data Bank of Chicago and New York.

ELLA FAIRBAIRN

Ella Fairbairn completed a degree in Media Studies, majoring in Film and Television production at RMIT University in 1995. For the last six years she has been freelancing as a sound editor and has worked on productions including Scott Hick's *Snow Falling on Cedars*, Baz Lurhman's *Romeo and Juliet*, Alex Proyas' *Dark City*, Benny Chan (Jackie Chan) *Who am I* (music producer) and most recently the multi award winning science fiction series *Farscape*. She was awarded the Australian Screen Sound Guild award for Best Sound for a drama series in 2002.

SANJA PAHOKI

Sanja Pahoki was born in Osijek, Croatia. She migrated to Melbourne in 1970. In 2006, Pahoki completed a MFA from the Victorian College of the Arts where she also works as a lecturer in the Photography Department.

Pahoki has exhibited her work nationally and internationally including *Global Fusion*, (Porcia, Vienna, 2006). She is a committee member of Kings Artist Run Initiative and a studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne where she was recently included in the exhibition *Ill Communication* curated by Jacqueline Doughty.

PAUL QUINN

Paul Quinn's work featured in several public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of South Australia and the City of Melbourne. His work has appeared in more than 40 publications and exhibitions. He has received public commissions, awards and grants including an Australia Council travel grant to undertake research in Japan and also a VACB residency in the Australia Council's Tokyo studio.

Quinn has a Bachelor of Fine Art (teaching) at the Tasmanian School of Art, a Graduate Diploma (sculpture) at Victorian College of the Arts, a Master of Arts at Victoria University of Technology and is currently a PhD candidate at Monash University.

KATE SHAW

Kate Shaw has held solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Sydney and New York in 2006 and 2007. Recent group exhibitions include *Places* (Luxe Gallery New York 2007) FIAC (Grand Palais, Louvre, Paris, 2006) and *Selekta* (Westspace, Melbourne, 2006). In addition, Shaw has curated a number of projects including *Home Loan* (2004) and was Projects Officer for the inaugural Melbourne Biennial *Signs of Life* (1999). She has received grants from Arts Victoria, International Fund, Australia Council for the Arts, Besen Family Foundation and the Australian Film Commission. She has also been short listed for *ABN AMRO Art Award 2007* (and 2006), *Robert Jacks Drawing prize 2005*, *Latrobe Art Prize 2005* and *Metro 5 Art Prize 2004*.

Kate Shaw has a BA Fine Art Honours (Painting), from RMIT University and a Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies from Deakin University, Melbourne.

Kate Shaw is represented by Sullivan and Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney.

www.kateshaw.org

DARREN WARDLE

Darren Wardle has exhibited widely in solo and curated exhibitions in Australia and internationally. Wardle's exhibitions in the US have included *Painting as Paradox* (Artists Space New York, 2002) *Three Painters* (Stefan Stux Gallery, 2003) the *2004 New York Armory Show*, *Surface Tension* (Chelsea Museum, 2004) and *Places* (Luxe Gallery, 2007).

In Los Angeles he was included in *Stay Inside* (Shoshana Wayne Gallery, 2004) and *Empire Style* (Art 2102, 2005). Last year he held his first solo show in New York at Stux Gallery, *Silent Majority*. Wardle was featured in *Flash Art's 2002* painting issue as one of the top 50 painters working internationally.

Darren Wardle is represented by Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.

www.darrenwardle.com.au

SHAUN WILSON

Dr Shaun Wilson is a Melbourne-based artist, curator and academic working with themes of false memory, place and scale. He is currently a lecturer in the School of Creative Media at RMIT University and a contributing writer for the e-journal *NeMe*.

Wilson holds undergraduate degrees in Fine Arts from Monash University and RMIT University, a PhD from the University of Tasmania and is currently a Master of Fine Arts candidate at the College of Fine Art, University of New South Wales.

Exhibitions and screenings have included the *1st Athens Biennial 2007*; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; Australian Centre for the Moving Image; Museum of Contemporary Art Fenosa Union; Centre of Contemporary Culture, Barcelona; Kunstmuseum, Norway; National Museum Centre of Art Reina, Sofia; Small Black Box at the Institute of Modern Art Brisbane; RMIT Project Space and the Academy Gallery.

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phone: 818.240.1000 x5663 email: gallery@glendale.edu

Curators: Larissa Hjorth and Kate Shaw

Artists: Nadine Christensen, Peta Clancy, Martine Corompt, Chantal Faust, Ian Haig, Stephen Haley, Larissa Hjorth, Natasha Johns-Messenger, Laresa Kosloff, James Lynch, Amanda Morgan/Ella Fairbairn, Sanja Pahoki, Paul Quinn, Kate Shaw, Darren Wardle and Shaun Wilson

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