

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
December 1994

AN ECCENTRIC ORBIT: VIDEO ART IN AUSTRALIA

Through January 29, 1995

An exhibition of electronic works produced by more than thirty Australian media artists since the early 1980s is on view at The Museum of Modern Art through January 29, 1995. Premiering at The Museum, **AN ECCENTRIC ORBIT: VIDEO ART IN AUSTRALIA** reveals the psychological, philosophical, and aesthetic concerns that permeate contemporary Australian culture.

Consigned throughout its history to what can be seen as an "eccentric orbit" of geographically distant cultures -- those of Great Britain and the United States -- and reluctant to embrace the cultures of the closer Pacific Rim countries, Australia is haunted by a sense of marginality. Over the last fifteen years, however, Australian artists have developed an extraordinarily sophisticated grasp of electronic technology that allows distances to be bridged in unpredictable and fascinating ways. Integrating new digital technologies -- including computer animation, laser disc, and CD-ROM -- in ways that are both provocative and playful, Australian videomakers have produced works that not only respond to the ideas of displacement, but also create new electronic landscapes and computer-generated visions that are as compelling and distinctive as Australia itself.

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The exhibition is divided thematically into three ninety-minute programs. The first segment, "The Body Electric," addresses responses to physical and psychological entrapment, and the release provided by dreams, technology, and imagination. For example, *Techno/Dumb/Show* (1991), a collaboration between video artist-musician John Gillies and the performance group The Sydney Front, uses highly repetitive formalized gestures to create a performance-based work that explores melodrama and its links with the silent screen. Elena Popa's *Robot Cycle* (1992), a mixture of two- and three-dimensional animation, is based on the cycle of birth and death. Using the figure of a "dying" female robot, the work examines issues of atrophied bodily function, reproduction, and the fragile overlay of human emotion. Jill Scott's *Continental Drift* (1993) focuses on the body's interior landscape in an autobiographical meditation on the process of fear, confrontation, and healing experienced by a woman who learns she has breast cancer.

In the second segment, "Any Resemblance to Reality is Purely Deliberate," magical new worlds are constructed and deconstructed through computer technology. Troy Innocent's animated *Jawpan* (1992) features a protagonist named Otaku ("computer nerd" in Japanese), who, as the result of an error, proceeds to morph the world into a new type uninhabitable by humans. In Ian Haig's *K-Rad Man* (1992), the hero becomes the electronic guinea pig for the ultimate computer virus in a work parodying society's illogical fear of technology. Faye Maxwell's *Networld* (1993) takes viewers on a surreal and poetic voyage through "deep dataspace."

Many of the works in the third segment, "The Diminished Paradise," focus on the opposing views of Australian history held by the Aboriginal inhabitants

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and the larger, predominately white Australian culture. The two views meet in such works as *The Bicentennial Will Not Be Televised* (1988), produced as a media critique of the official 1988 Australian Bicentennial. *Delores -- Welcome to My Koori World* (1992) by Destiny Deacon, an Aboriginal feminist, comically debunks some of the stereotypes surrounding her culture; and Ellen Jose's *In the Balance* (1994) presents her tribal myths in a new medium that marries cultural imagery from her background with computer-generated animation.

Organized by The American Federation of Arts under the curatorial direction of video artist Peter Callas, **AN ECCENTRIC ORBIT: VIDEO ART IN AUSTRALIA** was coordinated for the Museum by Barbara London, Associate Curator, and Sally Berger, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Film and Video.

The AFA media arts exhibitions are partially supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Financial assistance for this exhibition is provided by the Australian Film Commission.

The Museum of Modern Art Video Program is supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Sony Corporation of America.

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- Strategies for Goodbye*, Eva Eden (née Schrama) and Gary Willis. 8 min. 1982.
- The Bicentennial Will Not Be Televised* (excerpts), Television as Performance Space (TAPS). 12 min. 1988.
- Delores--Welcome To My Koori World*, Destiny Deacon. 8 min. 1993.
- Soul Road Poem*, Stephen Duke. 8 min. 1993.
- In The Balance*, Ellen Jose and Marshall White. 2:40 min. 1994.
- Immortelle*, Ross Harley. 9 min. 1992.
- Cyber Dada Manifesto*, Cyber Dada (Troy Innocent & Dale Mason). 6 min. 1990.
- Public Place Private Practice*, Jane Parkes. 10 min. 1989.
- The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers* (excerpts), Bill Seamus. 8 min. 1992.
- Museum of Fire* (excerpts), Chris Calnes, John Conomos, and David Haines. 1992.

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For further information or stills, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.

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December 16 - January 29, 1995

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Exhibition Schedule

PROGRAM 1: The Body Electric (92 minutes)

Sundays at 12:00 p.m.; Mondays at 4:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.; Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; Fridays at 4:00 p.m.
Garden Hall Gallery, third floor

- Uranus*, Michael Hill. 11 min. 1990.
- Stelarc: Scanning at the Speed of Sighs*, Mic Gruchy. 10:20 min. 1992.
- Techno/Dumb/Show*, John Gillies. 20:30 min. 1991.
- Fan Tales*, Randelli. 4:19 min. 1980.
- Need*, Lynne Sanderson. 4:12 min. 1994.
- In My Gash*, Linda Dement. 3 min. 1994.
- Robot Cycle*, Elena Popa. 3:15 min. 1992.
- Continental Drift*, Jill Scott. 12 min. 1993.
- Methuselah*, Cathy Vogan. 20 min. 1992.

PROGRAM 2: Any Resemblance To Reality Is Purely Deliberate (70 minutes)

Sundays and Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.; Mondays at 12:00 p.m.; Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m.; Fridays at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 4:00 p.m.
Garden Hall Gallery, third floor

- K-Rad Man*, Ian Haig. 5 min. 1992.
- Leash Control*, Randelli. 3 min. 1980.
- The Island of Magicians*, Michael Strum. 6 min. 1994.
- Pilot in Hell*, Severed Heads. 3 min. 1992.
- Dream Machine V2: Cell*, The Brothers Gruchy. 12 min. 1991.
- Computers Are Fun*, Sally Pryor. 3 min. 1988.
- ENS*, Jon McCormack. 6 min. 1990.
- Networld*, Faye Maxwell. 3 min. 1993.
- Depictions*, Philip Brophy. 21 min. 1986.
- Jawpan*, Troy Innocent. 7:20 min. 1992.

PROGRAM 3: The Diminished Paradise (86 minutes)

Sundays and Thursdays at 4:00 p.m.; Mondays and Fridays at 2:00 p.m.; Tuesdays and Saturdays at 12:00 p.m.
Garden Hall Gallery, third floor

- Strategies for Goodbye*, Eva Eden (née Schramm) and Gary Willis. 8 min. 1982.
- The Bicentennial Will Not Be Televised* (excerpts), Television as Performance Space (TAPS). 12 min. 1988.
- Delores-Welcome To My Koori World*, Destiny Deacon. 8 min. 1993.
- Soul Road Poem*, Stephen Duke. 8 min. 1993.
- In The Balance*, Ellen Jose and Marshall White. 2:40 min. 1994.
- Immortelle*, Ross Harley. 9 min. 1992.
- Cyber Dada Manifesto*, Cyber Dada (Troy Innocent & Dale Nason). 6 min. 1990.
- Public Place Private Practice*, Jane Parkes. 10 min. 1989.
- The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers* (excerpts), Bill Seaman. 8 min. 1992.
- Museum of Fire* (excerpts), Chris Caines, John Conomos, and David Haines. 6 min. 1992.
- Night's High Noon; An Anti-Terrain*, Peter Callas. 7:26 min. 1988.

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