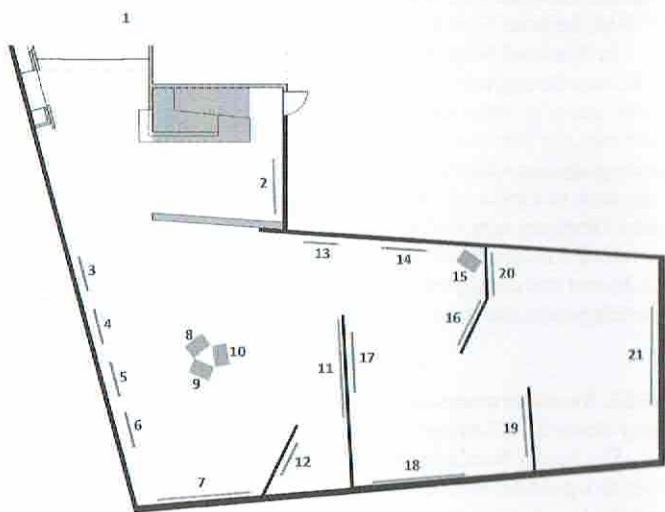# RED GREEN BLUE
A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN VIDEO ART
Chapter 1: Everything is Political

30 March –
29 April 2017
Curated by
Matthew Perkins

1. Soda_Jerk

Dan Angeloro b.1977, Dominique Angeloro b.1979 / collaboration formed 2002 / live and work in New York, United States / *Astro Black* 2007-ongoing / Multi-channel video installation: 25:24 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artists

Soda Jerk is a collaboration between sisters Dan and Dominique Angeloro. Since they began working together in 2002, their practice has spanned a variety of forms, including video installation, lecture performance, screensavers and cut-up text. Often situated at the point of intersection between speculative fiction and documentary, the duo consider the sampling of audio-visual material in their work as an alternate mode of history-making.

Here, Soda Jerk present the first four videos from an episodic, ever-expanding cycle, *Astro Black* (2010-ongoing), which has been informed by a field of theory known as Afrofuturism. This literary and cultural aesthetic combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy and magic realism with non-Western cosmologies to critique present-day dilemmas of people of colour, but also to revise, interrogate and re-examine past events.

Cosmic musician Sun Ra acts as a point of departure within the *Astro Black* universe. By navigating their way through an elaborate mix of film samples, the artists draw out the implications of Sun Ra's intergalactic musical politics, as well as the profound cultural impact of his legacy. Through their creation of sonic fiction, Soda Jerk activate a form of radical historiography which reimagines official accounts of the past, and, in the process, establishes alternative sightlines to the future.

2. Hannah Brontë

b.1991, lives and works in Brisbane / *Still I rise* 2016 / HD video: 3:53 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist

Hannah Brontë is an emerging artist and recent graduate of Queensland College of Art. Her wide-ranging practice incorporates body adornment, sound, photography, video and textiles, to examine female empowerment in contemporary society. Inspired by hip-hop and pop culture slang, she is also interested in forms of language used in protest culture.

In *Still I rise*, Brontë employs rap music tropes to propose an alternate political reality governed by an all-female, racially diverse ministry. As Prime Minister, Brontë introduces her cabinet of outspoken representatives, all of whom address the people in politically-charged dialogue regarding women's issues, education and Indigenous policy. Created at a time when Australia's Ministers for Indigenous Affairs and Women were both white men, *Still I rise* proposes the question: is Brontë's vision for the future any more surreal than Australia's reality?

3. Bonita Ely

b.1946, lives and works in Sydney / *Sunset Video* 1975 / Video transferred to digital file: 19 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Bonita Ely is an important figure in Australian art, known for her wide-ranging experimental practice and consistent commitment to addressing feminist, environmental and socio-political issues in her work.

Sunset Video was initially incorporated as one element of Ely's seminal installation *C20th Mythological Beasts: Home with the Locust People*, an amped up 1970s living room, complete with lurid floral wallpaper and lime green shag pile carpet. A group of half-human, half-locust figures sit arranged on a lounge, benignly watching *Sunset Video* on a nearby television screen. At the time the work was created in 1975, video as an integrated component of sculptural installation (then known as an 'environment'), was a radical innovation, as was video as an art form.

The footage depicts New York, where Ely lived from 1973-75. A series of slides slowly dissolve into one another – mesmerising views of the Hudson River, albeit shrouded in air-borne pollution at sunset. Overlaid with an evocative soundtrack composed on Moog Synthesiser by Mark Freedman, the work documents the impact of human activity on the environment and issues a prescient warning about the environmental issues that have now come into full focus, over 40 years later.

4. Derek Kreckler

b. 1952, lives and works in Sydney / *Blind Ned* 1997-98 / Video transferred to digital file: 2:24 minutes, black and white, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Gift of the artist, 2008. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Derek Kreckler is a leading Australian artist known for a conceptual and post-minimal practice spanning over four decades. Working across a variety of media including performance, sound and photography, he began using video in the 1970s to explore his interest in the legacy of British invasion. His work focusses on sensitivities regarding the relationship between Aboriginal Australians and early colonists, the formation of Australia's national identity, and representations of landscape and culture.

Presented as archival material, *Blind Ned* achieves its vintage appearance by removing video frames and adding scratches to the original footage. First shown as part of 'Australian Perspecta 1999: Live here now – art and politics', it was originally exhibited within an installation of taxidermied native animals surrounded by a white picket fence. The footage of Ned Kelly stumbling through the outback can be read in the context of a non-Indigenous bushman stumbling around in unfamiliar territory, a marked alternative to the notion of Kelly as a national hero and enduring icon of Australia's 'larrikin' nature.

5. Janet Merewether

lives and works in Sydney / *Tourette's Tics* 1993 / Video transferred to digital file: 6:06 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body Griffith University Art collection. Purchased 1996

Janet Merewether is known for screen-based art projects spanning short film and video. With her absurdist work *Tourette's Tics*, she plays with the documentary format in order to break down a foundational myth of Freudian psychoanalysis – that of the 'hysterical woman'. This film is produced like a documentary, combining still images, old photographs, extracts from historical and medical texts, as well as a fictional sufferer of Tourette's syndrome to create its story.

Tourette's Tics began as a research project and Merewether says she remembers 'becoming incredibly depressed and upset by the material – the cocaine treatments and pathologising of women's bodies as diseased - it's very intense and upsetting.' The resulting work however, is a mockumentary, and one that poses an unusual question: what do Gilles de la Tourette's disease, animal impersonators, Sigmund Freud's patients and the Ancient Greeks have in common? In the process of questioning authority – which here takes form as an expert wearing a white coat – Merewether mines the tropes of hysteria for comedic value.

6. David Cox

b.1963, lives and works in San Francisco, United States / *B.I.T.* 1992 / Video transferred to digital file: 6 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1999

David Cox met the Bureau of Inverse Technology (BIT) in 1992 when he was commissioned to produce an episode of SBS television's *Eat Carpet*, a series that brought together emerging directors with artists to create short films. An anonymous cyber-feminist trio, BIT aligned with Cox's interest in Melbourne's emerging techno subculture at that time.

Shot in a documentary-style, the work explores the scale of the human body in relation to the city. Drawing parallels between the urban landscape and the people inhabiting it, Cox interweaves footage of stylised pedestrian crossings with mechanically-efficient manoeuvres. Following the operatives as they undertake a form of social surveillance, their mission is partly explained by a voice-over with several overlapping voices that describing the Bureau of Inverse Technology's activities. Text is introduced through a sequence of titles superimposed over the image which simultaneously appears translated into Japanese subtitles. Parodying the language of operational espionage, it provides a manifesto for the organisation.

7. Michael Glasheen

b.1942, Sydney, NSW / *Teleologic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller* 1970 / Video transferred to digital file: 28 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Michael Glasheen was studying architecture when he began experimenting with film in the early 1960s. Inspired by the writing of philosophers Marshall McLuhan and György Kepes, he was also heavily influenced by the work of American architect R. Buckminster Fuller, who delivered a series of lectures in Sydney in 1968. Glasheen recorded these talks and the resulting artwork, *Telelogic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller*, became the first major non-commercial video work completed in Australia.

Fuller, a systems theorist, popularised the term 'Spaceship Earth' to encourage people to view the world as if it were a spaceship, capable of travelling indefinitely so long as its crew (the world's population) act harmoniously and conserve its limited resources. His thoughts on synergy, and the notion that the world is one unified dynamic system, provided the framework within which Glasheen experimented. Using a variety of techniques and special effects, he spliced together footage of Fuller's lectures with time lapse footage recorded around Sydney's Northern Beaches. The accompanying soundtrack, recorded in real time as the videotape played, was performed on a theramin by producer Jack Meyer.

8. Peter Kennedy

b.1945, lives and works in Melbourne / *Introductions* 1974-76 / 16mm colour film and video formats transferred to digital file: 45 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy:

The artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Over the past 50 years Peter Kennedy has consistently forged new territory in Australian art, with his conceptually aligned experimental practice encompassing installation, performance, photography, sound, video and drawing.

In the 1970s Kennedy became interested in socially conscious forms of art. Made over two years, *Introductions* was originally presented as an installation of film and video, combining both production and documentation, of time spent with four recreational groups: a Hot Rod Club, the Embroiderers Guild of NSW, Kameruka Bushwalking Club and Northmead Marching Girls Association.

Introductions was conceived as an experiment in social engagement. As part of his process, Kennedy introduced his participants to each other, hoping they would share their common experiences. The intention was that each group would be involved in constructing the final work.

Each club made black and white video documentaries, which were presented alongside colour videos capturing their response to the question of why they had joined their particular organisations, along with watercolour paintings by Kennedy.

9. Jeune Pritchard and Leuce Pelissier

Queensland Dossier 1979 / Video transferred to digital file: 43:49 minutes, colour, sound / Produced by Jeune Pritchard and Luce Pelissier / Super 8 footage: Marian Redmond / Additional footage: Megan McMurchy / Videotape editor: Stephen Jones / Editing Facilities: N.S.W. Institute of Technology, Media Centre / Graphics: Shirley Martin / Made with assistance from the Australian Film Commission, 1978 / Distribution: Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative Completed February 1979, Sydney / Courtesy: The artists

Queensland Dossier was produced by Jeune Pritchard and Luce Pelissier at a time when video was proving increasingly valuable as an activist medium – both for circulating news, and analysing political ideas.

Pritchard and Pelissier spent time in Queensland investigating an increasingly repressive political landscape. In 1977, Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen instituted legislative amendments that effectively made street demonstrations illegal. In the following year, violent clashes between police and protesters resulted in the arrests of over 2000 people, many of whom were denied adequate legal representation.

Shot in various locations across the state, the video features footage of street marches as well as interviews with community representatives, including some of the conservative protagonists. *Queensland Dossier* showcases diverse, and often conflicting takes on a range of issues such as unionism, civil liberties, uranium mining, the rights of Indigenous Australians, women's health, and access to education.

10. Geoffrey Weary

b.1952, lives and works in Sydney / *Failure to materialise* 1988 / Super 8 transferred to digital file: 13:36 minutes, colour, stereo sound, 4:3 / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its art funding and advisory board / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1996

Geoffrey Weary's practice incorporates photography, video and installation. Originally a painter, he began working with film to explore the relationship between static and temporal media.

In *Failure to materialise*, Weary takes Super 8 shot by fellow artist Mark Jackson, and transfers it to video at drastically reduced speed. Using archival footage of the demolition of Sydney's Hordern Building, the work draws parallels between the destruction of a significant Victorian-era building and the erosion of the British Empire.

As we watch the façade of the Hordern, once the world's largest department store, slowly turn to dust, an ominous voice asserts that: 'this is what England must do or perish - she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able…seizing every piece of wasteful ground that she can set her foot on…teaching her colonists that their chief virtue is fidelity to their country and their first aim is to advance the power of England.'

Taken from Jan Morris' The Pax Britannica Trilogy,

a notable historical retelling of the British Empire, the voiceover both replicates and mocks the BBC pronunciation favoured by early Australian broadcasters.

Weary considers the work a social document and a philosophical investigation of Australia's colonial inheritance: 'The British Empire was both glorious and terrifying. We have an ambivalent relationship to it, but we come from the 'fatal shore'…the work is about relating that ambivalence.'

11. Peter Callas
b.1952, lives and works in Sydney / *Night's High Noon; An Anti-Terrain* 1988 / Video transferred to digital file: 7:26 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1992

Peter Callas is a pioneer of video art in Australia, known for politically challenging works featuring rapid-fire, jump-cut imagery. Overloaded with cultural signifiers, his practice addresses issues of national identity and 'reanimated' histories.

Created as a personal response to the 1988 Australian Bicentenary, *Night's High Noon: An Anti-Terrain* captures the social tensions of the time, reinterpreting the official 'Celebration of a Nation' as a psychedelic parody of Australia's national identity. With his distinctive aesthetic, Callas presents an array of nonsensical scenarios: Ned Kelly and Van Gogh in a hostile landscape; Communist invaders flaunting nuclear weapons; a poodle wearing Captain Cook's clothing; smoking kookaburras; and the intentional appropriation of Aboriginal symbols.

Offered as an alternative portrait of Australia in the 1980s, *Night's High Noon* highlights a confrontational landscape charged with clashing political, cultural and ideological values.

12. Denis Beaubois
b.1970, lives and works in Sydney / *In the event of Amnesia the city will recall…* 1997 / Video transferred to digital file: 9:15 minutes, black and white, sound, 4:3 / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1998

Denis Beaubois is a renowned performance artist whose practice explores the relationship between surveillance and surveillance mechanisms. One of his best known works, *In the event of Amnesia the city will recall*, features Beaubois performing direct to camera, in this case a wall-mounted security camera somewhere in the Sydney CBD.

In the event of Amnesia cuts together footage from a range of angles, observing the camera's movements as it appears to respond to the questions and instructions Beaubois holds up on flash cards. Statements such as 'Warning you may be photographed reading this sign' take on an ironic dimension when displayed for the gaze of the 'electronic eye'. These mechanisms are designed to monitor the movements and activities of people in public space, and in particular, to discourage illegal or 'abnormal' behaviour. Their effectiveness lies in their promotion of self-surveillance, or behavioural control.

Comical and unsettling, the footage makes for compelling viewing, as the work both subverts and humanises an object often considered sinister.

13. Linda Dement
b.1960, lives and works in Sydney / *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* 1995 / Interactive CD Rom / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its art funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1996

Linda Dement is a Sydney-based artist whose interdisciplinary practice has been at the forefront of electronic arts, interactive and robotic installations since the early 1980s. A pioneer of cyberfeminism, her work spans performative, textual and virtual art and deals with representations of identity.

To create *Cyberflesh Girlmonster*, Dement set up a stall at the Adelaide Festival and invited 30 prominent Australian cyberfeminist artists to digitally scan body parts of their choosing and record accompanying sounds. These 'flesh donations' were then digitally manipulated to create the mutant bodies featured. Animated and interactive, but without a menu or clear instructions, the work

allows viewers to click randomly through the monsters to see and hear the attached words or stories.

Darkly comedic, *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* is a representation of women's bodies that encompasses revenge, desire and the gendered politics of violence against women. These issues continue to inform Dement's practice.

14. Ian Andrews
b.1961, lives and works in Sydney / *Programme* 1995 / Super 8 and 16mm, finished on SP betacam, transferred to digital file: 2:15 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1996

Ian Andrews is a Sydney-based filmmaker whose practice investigates processes used to create 'obedient citizens'. In *Programme*, Andrews uses found footage of young cadets engaged in training, to explore the role of military schools in creating 'useful citizens of the Empire'.

Recorded at a Sydney mansion where troops were both housed and trained during World War I, the film reveals institutional processes of indoctrination and constructed masculinity. Segments of the film are divided with flashing text, highlighting ideologies of discipline, correct use of the body, and time management. Accompanied by marshal music, Andrews' rapid and often jagged editing creates a sense of repetition, a technique that underlines his intersecting interest in conditioning and the pressure to perform. The subtle use of a male voice-over announcing 'Order' refers to notions of patriarchal power, and fears about the state's authority to use force and discipline.

15. VNS Matrix
collaboration formed 1991 / *Beg and Gen in the Bonding Booth* 1993 / Video transferred to digital file: 5 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2000

Formed in Adelaide in 1991, VNS Matrix are a collective of four artists (Virginia Barratt, Francesca da Rimini, Julianne Pierce, Josephine Starrs) working across new media, photography, sound and video. The group describe how they 'crawled out of the cyberswamp … and via an aesthetics of slime initially generated as porn (by women for women) forged an unholy alliance with technology and its machines, and spewed forth a blasphemous text which was the birth of cyberfeminism.' In an attempt to redefine the image and role of women in this sphere, through their works the group sought to 'hijack the toys from technocowboys and remap cyberculture with a feminist bent.'

Beg and Gen in the Bonding Booth sets up a sexualised and socially provocative relationship between technology and women. VNS Matrix describes the work as offering a virtual setting within which to explore 'femme-domme mastery'. In this scenario identity and sexuality are simultaneously reconstructed and interrogated, with the character of Gen serving as a cypher for female domination, in this case 'through the materiality of the flesh, in a libidinal space.'

16. Kate Beynon
b.1970, lives and works in Melbourne / *Li Ji: Warrior Girl* 2000 / Computer animated video: 14 minutes, colour, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2003

Kate Beynon's practice is variously informed by calligraphy, graffiti, fashion, textiles, animation and comic book design. Much of her work is based on her experiences as an Australian of mixed European and Chinese-Malaysian heritage.

In *Li Ji: Warrior Girl*, Beynon animates a figure based on a folktale by Gan Bao of the Eastern Jin Dynasty in AD 317-420. *Li Ji, the girl who killed the python* told the story of a Chinese girl who went beyond the confines of her culture to protect her village from a giant python. Reimagined as a modern Chinese Australian girl, Beynon's Li Ji experiences a series of flashbacks while visiting Melbourne's Chinatown. Confronted throughout her journey by racist graffiti and slogans, Li Ji conjures the totems, traditions and mythologies of her past life in order to protect herself from the intolerance and xenophobia she encounters.

While the work explores notions of race and identity

Li Ji: Warrior Girl also positions a female protagonist at the centre of the story, unlike other animated tales featuring superheroes, which are typically male-dominated.

17. Hayden Fowler
b.1973, lives and works in Sydney / *Goat Odyssey* 2006 / Single channel digital video: 15:10 minutes, colour, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2008

Hayden Fowler initially trained as a biologist, with a particular focus on animal behaviour. While he soon shifted his focus to art, he continues to explore these interests in his practice, which spans video, installation, performance and photography.

Often positioning his subjects within elaborately constructed sets, Fowler's works consider the emotional relationships that exist between humans, animals and the natural world. His strange scenarios are populated by subjects engaging in everyday, or instinctual, behaviour. They are strongly related Fowler says, 'to the themes of freedom, loss and desire and the romantic hope for a return to nature.'

In *Goat Odyssey*, two elaborately draped goats wander without aim within a highly artificial setting, which like other works by Fowler, appears to reference the science fictional trope of post-apocalyptic survival. While the title invokes allusions to an epic of the classical world, Fowler's scenario is deliberately banal – his protagonists are not going anywhere. At once highly staged and anti-theatrical, the duo are stuck in an endless loop, standing, performing, and wandering on and off camera. Structured as a series of interconnected vignettes and accompanied by the repetitive sound of a whirring fan, in Fowler's vacuum-sealed vision, Arcadia has never looked bleaker.

18. Destiny Deacon
K'ua K'ua and Erub/Mer peoples b.1957, lives and works in Melbourne, Virginia Fraser lives and works in Melbourne *Forced into Images* 2001 / Super 8 film finished on video: 9:08 minutes, colour, silent / Courtesy: The artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Describing herself as 'just an old-fashioned political artist', Destiny Deacon's performative photographs, videos and installations often take form as constructed tableaux. Featuring friends and family posing for the camera alongside her collection of 'Aboriginalia' - assorted black dolls and other forms of not-so-innocent kitsch - she uses lo-tech means to consider the cruelty of everyday racism, all to deliberately ironic affect.

Forced into Images takes its title from an unpublished letter written by author Alice Walker to a friend researching racial stereotypes: 'I see our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, captured and forced into images, doing hard time for all of us'. Using silent Super 8 footage, the work depicts two children - the niece and nephew of the artist - as they don an assortment of adult masks, swapping selves and genders in a rolling charade of alter egos. Through this process, the children perform the act of assuming, or of being made to assume, an identity other than themselves. For Deacon, this act was central to the work, but some have interpreted the children's different skin colour as a prompt for a discussion about race and identity. To this, Deacon responded: '… the most important thing about them was that they were four-year-olds and uncontrollable, and fitted into the idea of being forced into images. It amazes me that people see them as black and white. That's just part of being Aborigine. We come in different shades.'

19. Barbara Cleveland
Frances Barrett b.1983, Kate Blackmore b.1982, Kelly Doley b.1984, Diana Baker Smith b.1981 / collaboration formed 2007 / live and work in Sydney / *Bodies in Time* 2016 / Single channel HD video: 13:46 minutes, edition of 5 / Courtesy: The artists

Barbara Cleveland is a collaboration between four artists: Frances Barrett, Kate Blackmore, Kelly Doley and Diana Smith. Together they make videos and performance works that deliberately blur the distinction between 'liveness' and its traces.

Bodies in Time is the fourth in a series of works exploring the life and legacy of the collective's namesake: mythic performance artist Barbara Cleveland, who is said to have worked prolifically

until her disappearance and presumed death in 1981. Part of an ongoing research project, the group are attempting to reconstruct a portrait of this forgotten figure, and recover her work from the margins of Australian art history.

Made in collaboration with choreographer and dancer Angela Goh, the work is based on a series of scores Cleveland made in 1973. Together the artists reanimate Cleveland's work, through an accumulation of gestures drawn from the history of performance across dance and visual arts, interspersed with other pedestrian and photographic movements. *Bodies in Time* considers how performance is transferred between bodies and across time periods, creating a dialogue between the body as an unstable form of 'living archive' and the mediated status of performance documentation.

Bodies in Time also insists on the important place performance holds in the history of Australian art, while at the same time, addressing the material (and gender) bias of art history.

20. Nasim Nasr
b.1984, lives and works in Sydney / *Beshkan (Breakdown)* 2013 / HD video: 2:11 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

Born in Iran now based in Australia, Nasim Nasr describes her practice - spanning performance, photography and the moving image - as a form of 'cross-cultural dialogue', and a means to explore 'the complexities of contemporary issues between East and West, because I am from one and now in the other.'

In this work Nasr depicts a 'dance' of double-handed clicking, known throughout Middle Eastern countries as beshkan. This 'Persian snap' is commonly understood as a celebratory response to good news, yet here we observe hands floating before us on screen, hovering against a black background. While combining moving image with motion and sound, Nasr also removes this well-known gesture from any sense of context. In the process of reconfiguring a non-verbal cue into its constituent parts, the artist suggests that what in one culture signifies 'happiness' could easily be recast: 'as something quite the contrary, seemingly aggressive and sinister.'

21. Susan Norrie
b. 1953, lives and works in Sydney / *Transit* 2011 / Single channel digital video: 14:35 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist

For Susan Norrie art is metaphoric, yet at the same time, serves as a political tool. Over the past twenty years she has made a number of works that combine elements of documentary and film, focussing in particular, on the environmental and humanitarian disasters that have impacted on the Asia-Pacific region.

Compiled from footage taken over two years, *Transit* focuses on activity at two locations in Japan: the Japanese Aerospace Agency's launch pad on the island of Tanegashima, which lies adjacent to an active volcano, and the US Airforce Base on nearby Okinawa. With her camera Norrie captures the anticipation, countdown and eventual take-off of a cargo-laden transporter bound for the International Space Station, followed by the quick precision of US Airforce drills. From these orderly and systematic scenes Norrie soon cuts to the chaos of catastrophe that took place just months later, showing the massive devastation caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami that wiped out the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in March 2011.

The film ends as it began, only this time the imagery is overlaid with the voice of an Okinawan shaman, Yoshimaru Higa. Speaking off-camera, his words act as both a reminder and a warning: while we may dream of interstellar discoveries and of escape to distant planets, there are urgent matters to attend to, here on earth.
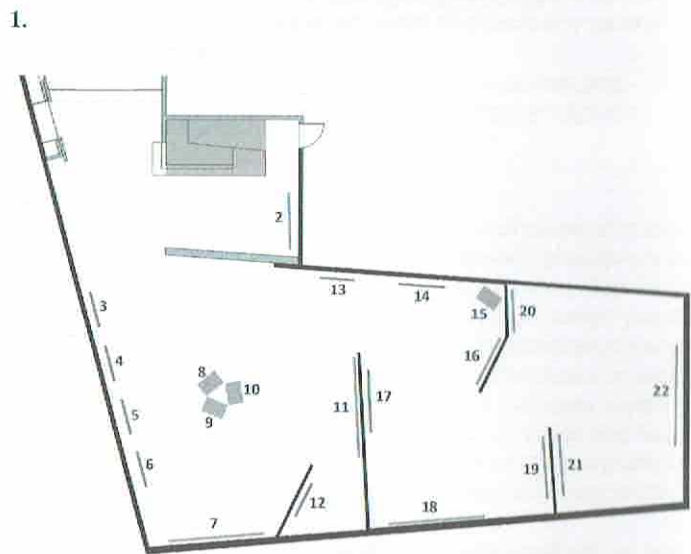
RED GREEN BLUE
A HISTORY
OF AUSTRALIAN
VIDEO ART

Chapter 2:
Body, Technology,
Action

03 May –
03 June 2017
Curated by
Matthew Perkins

1.

1. Gabrielle de Vietri
b.1983, lives and works in Melbourne / *Three Teams 2013-14* / Two-channel video: 40 minutes, colour, sound / Made in collaboration with Taylors Lakes Football Club, Noradjuha-Quantong Football Club, Horsham RSL Diggers Football Club and the Wimmera Umpires Association Camera and sound: Kiarash Zangeneh, Lydia Springhall, James Phillips, Filip Milovac / This project has been assisted by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments Courtesy: The artist

Spanning sculpture, photography, writing, performance and collaborative video, Gabrielle de Vietri's wide-ranging practice often investigates the rules governing human interaction, communication and community.

In *Three Teams*, de Vietri explores why both sport, and conflict, is generally limited to either individual endeavour or a struggle between two sides. Shot documentary-style, the work follows the artist's attempts to invent a three-sided game of Australian Rules with the input of three regional Victorian clubs (Taylors Lakes Football Club, Noradjuha-Quantong Football Club and Horsham RSL Diggers Football Club), the Wimmera Umpires Association and the wider community of Horsham. Culminating in a match played in October 2013, the project reflects both the impact of artistic and sporting communities on ritualistic, social, experiential and playful aspects of human life.

2. Mike Parr
b.1945, lives and work in Sydney / *Pushing a camera over a hill* 1971 / Digital videotape made from original: 30 minutes, black and white, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Mike Parr is one of Australia's most innovative and influential artists, with a diverse practice spanning performance, video, sculpture, drawing and printmaking. His earliest experimentations took form as conceptually driven word works and interrogatory poems, but this soon developed into the provocative performances and films for which he is now internationally recognised.

Recorded at Moore Park, *Pushing a Camera Over a Hill* was originally shot on video, but Parr later decided to remake the work with a 16mm camera. This offered a better depth of field, and means with which to capture what he described as 'that wonderful kind of noisy grass and all of that agitation.'

At this time, Parr was striving to escape symbolism in his works and return to a simple presentation of facts, with the title referencing the instruction that called it into being. The title references the instruction that called it into being: the view from the camera is also a literal documentation of the lived experience of 'pushing a camera up a hill'. As with other performance works by Parr, this represents a unit of experience, recording the monotony of the camera's path until the scene finally opens out into expanded space, a moment the artist describes as 'like a visionary eruption'.

3. Jill Orr
b.1952, lives and works in Melbourne / *She had long golden hair* 1980 / Video transferred to digital file: 3:40 minutes, b/w, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Jill Orr is known as a performance artist, though the video and photographic documentation of her site-specific and ephemeral actions are equally significant aspects of her practice. Orr positions herself as subject and object in her work, to explore the body and its positioning, within social, political and environmental contexts.

Now regarded as a feminist classic in the history of Australian performance art, *She Had Long Golden Hair* is a video document of a one-off event that took place at the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) in Adelaide in 1980. The camera was set up as a real-time dumb witness, and the resulting record provides a grainy, glitchy view of the event, shot from a single perspective.

Accompanied by a cacophony of male voices chanting, 'witch, bitch, moll, dyke', the work begins with Orr slowly tying segments of her hair to dangling chains, until she is firmly imprisoned by the scalp. Audience members are then invited to cut her hair, but it is the soundtrack of Orr's voice that identifies this ritual act of humiliation with misogyny: telling stories of abuse, and describing how women have historically been subjected to shearing and shaving to disable their sense of autonomy. Once the brutal haircut is complete Orr runs her hands over her head in a sensuous gesture, freed of her chains both literally and metaphorically, she shakes herself free amid the amputated pony-tails, which are left hanging as if from the gallows.

4. Dale Frank
b.1959, lives and works in Singleton / *Bloody minded (Five performances)* 1980 / Video transferred to digital file: 60 minutes, black and white, mono / Courtesy: The artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

While he is perhaps best known for his biomorphic abstract paintings, Dale Frank's consistently experimental practice also includes performance installations, drawings and found object sculpture. During the 1970s Frank was performing under the name MSPCCL (Masteroid Space Cama Control Council Propaganda Legion) and in 1979 he was artist in residence at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, which is also where he created some of the performances that are included in this compilation of documentation, *Bloody minded*.

This series of actions and gestures are varied in tone and content, but often feature the artist using his own body as subject and object, a tool with which to orchestrate uncomfortable bodily and psychological experiences for himself and the viewer. Frank attempts to break through the walls and into the gallery in *Wallforce*

(Experimental Arts Foundation, Adelaide); in Gaze, *bloody-minded* (Carclew Arts Centre, Adelaide) he slowly and deliberately cleans a rifle, the camera focussed on the repetitive motion of his hands; during *Planebreath* (Experimental Arts Foundation, Adelaide), the artist is slowly covered in bricks, which then rise and fall with his breath; in *Burn* (Christian Brothers School, Adelaide) Frank enacts a childish game; and in *Cast South* (A7RE, Belfast, Northern Ireland) he faces off with a wall, ignoring the audience altogether.

5. David Perry
1933-2015, lived and worked in Sydney / *Interior with views 1976* / Video transferred to digital file: 4:52 minutes, black and white, stereo, 4:3 / Griffith University Art Collection. Gift of the artist 1994

David Perry was the founding member of Australian experimental film group Ubu Films (1965-70), which in 1967 issued a manifesto outlining their radical approach: 'let no media be denied to hand-made films – they can be scratched, scraped, drawn, inked, coloured, dyed, painted, pissed on, black and white, or coloured, bitten, chewed, filed, rasped, punctured, ripped, burned, bloodied, with any technique imaginable.'

While Perry's earlier works reflect this desire for spontaneous expression, *Interior with views* is more reflective in tone. Made during a residency at what was then known as Griffith University's Queensland Film and Drama Centre on the Nathan Campus, the film flickers between vignettes, carefully composed and barely moving. Running for the length of time it takes for the kettle to boil, the camera captures that which is set before it - a cup of tea made in dappled afternoon sunshine. Towards the end of the video, we observe as a television set transmits these same images back to us on-screen, a feedback loop interweaving layers of memory and the present.

6. Jill Scott
/ b.1952, lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland / *Stick Around* 1975 / Video transferred to digital file: 15 minutes, black and white, sound, 4:3 ratio / Courtesy: the artist

Since the 1970s, Jill Scott has experimented with performance, video art and new media. While her works have varied in style and content, they have in common an interest in developing a more expansive concept of the human body, exploring how it is represented, experienced and perceived.

Scott began working with black and white portapack video in 1974, and in the following year travelled to San Francisco, where she started developing conceptual performances. Alongside video documentation of these events, she also made interactive installations combining surveillance video and performance.

Stick Around is a video document of Taped, an action which took place in San Francisco in 1975. Scott was secured to the wall of a warehouse with masking tape, where she remained, defying gravity, until sunset. The video offers a much shorter, edited version of this durational event, accompanied by a metronome beat marking time and a descriptive, multilayered voiceover by the artist.

7. Peter Kennedy
b.1945, lives and works in Melbourne / *Body Concert Part 2 (Extended)* 1971-2015 16mm transferred to single channel digital video: 6:28 minutes, black and white, sound, 16:9 Performers: Peter Kennedy and Barbara Hall; Post Production: William Head; Sound Augmentation: Christopher de Groot; Digital Restoration: Stephen Jones / Courtesy: The artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

In the original performances that were recorded to video in 1971, Peter Kennedy was interested in privileging the sonic above the visual. To make this work, the artist and his then partner, Barbara Hall, attempt to move a contact microphone over as much of their naked bodies as possible, without dropping it. The primary focus is on the amplified sound the microphone makes rubbing between them, while they are locked in a close embrace.

Kennedy is interested in engaging with older works and seeing how they can be retranslated through new technologies. What was originally presented as a single channel screening has since been rethought using digitally remastered footage. In this 'extended' version, sonic reverberation and staggered visual movements are created by multiplying the appearance of the two performers across the screen.

8. Lyndal Jones
b.1949, lives and works in Melbourne / *Prediction Pieces 1,2 and 4* 1981 / Video transferred to digital file: 60 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Over the past four decades, Lyndal Jones has developed a diverse practice spanning performance, theatre and dance as well as video and installation.

From 1981-2001 Jones made a series of ten *Prediction Pieces*. These multi-disciplinary, time-based works examine the ways in which we address the future by developing strategies for hope and engagement through play.

This exhibition features video documentation of three of these: *1, 2* and *4*, which each involved two performers and were made for the George Paton Gallery, Melbourne. Quiet and considered, these pieces emphasise structural elements - time, space, rhythm - which also provide a means with which to introduce various acts of prediction for both performers and audience. References drawn from the I Ching, tarot cards, astrology and weather forecasting suggest ways in which self-image and paths into the future are made. Several phrases recur across the series, such as 'watch this space', and 'as the sun sinks slowly on the West', creating an atmosphere of suspense as the future unfolds.

9. John Gillies
b.1960, lives and works in Sydney / *The Sydney Front / Collaboration 1986-1993 / Techno/Dumb/Show* 1991 / Video: 23:35 minutes, colour and black and white, stereo / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1992

A collaboration between video maker and musician John Gillies, and performance group The Sydney Front, *Techno/Dumb/Show* exemplifies the technology and aesthetic of 1990s video art. Filmed over three months, this work merges Gillies theatrical background and growing interest in video with The Sydney Front's emphasis on gesture and bodily expression over the spoken word. Both were attracted to the idea of creating something improvisational and exploratory that revealed the spectrum of human emotions and reversed the performer/viewer relationship.

Presented as a montage of frenetic movement, sound and facial close-ups, Techno/Dumb/Show also references the silent movie era when a mirror was often placed alongside the camera to reflect back the actors' movements to illicit melodramatic gestures and expressions. In a contemporary version of this strategy, Gillies positioned a playback monitor alongside the camera, so the players were able to immediately see their performance and modify their behaviour accordingly.

10. Mike Parr
/ b.1945, lives and works in Sydney, Peter Kennedy b.1945, lives and works in Melbourne / *Idea demonstrations* 1972 / Video transferred to digital file: 47 minutes, black and white and colour, remastered in stereo / Courtesy: The artists

The development of video as a medium has been closely connected to explorations of both the body and identity, in particular through performance art. In Australia, early exponents of this medium, such as Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy, have also contributed significantly to video art from the 1970s through to the present day.

The two artist's collaborative performances around this time were simple investigations into the meaning of actions, in both social and psychological terms. Documented on film, these spontaneous events - 'idea demonstrations' - explicitly addressed the mediating role of the camera in the relationship between performer and audience.

11. Stelarc
b.1946, lives and works in Melbourne / *Psycho/cyber: event for scanning robot and laser eyes* 1993 / Video transferred to digital file: 4 minutes, colour, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1994

Stelarc has been at the forefront of Australian experimental and performance art practice for over forty years. Fascinated by cybernetic organisms, Stelarc uses emergent technologies, both

mechanical and biological, to overcome the accepted limitations of his body. He is noted for his decade-long project suspending his own body in a variety of locations, using cranes and suspended fish-hooks threaded through his own skin. Stelarc's recent practice has expanded to incorporate internet-controlled robotic prosthetics, Virtual Reality, biotechnology, online performances by his avatar self and extreme body modification including an internet enabled extra ear surgically grafted into his forearm.

Psycho/cyber: event for scanning robot and laser eyes documents a performance incorporating machines interacting with the artist's own bodily movements. The computer-generated images superimposed onto the footage were created by Stelarc himself during the performance. Using eight sensors attached to various points on his body, he was able to manipulate a virtual figure's gestures, editing and overlaying the imagery throughout the event.

12. Arthur Wicks
b.1937, lives and works in Wagga Wagga / *Sand Memories at Broome Street NYC and Durras Beach 1974-78* / Two-channel video: 41:41 minutes, colour and black and white, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Sand Memories at Broome Street NYC and Durras Beach is an early experiment in the spatial potential of video and performance, developed across three locations. Beginning in Durras on the NSW coast, Wicks photographed a set of sand dunes over several months, recording the effect of weathering on the landscape. These images were attached to boards and then buried in the sand during a performance, which he returned to at a later date. Uncovering and comparing them with a newly made set of prints depicting the same area, Wicks himself was then buried in the sand, bringing the performance to a close.

That same year, Wicks adhered panoramic images of Durras Beach to bitumen on the corner of Broome Street and West Broadway in New York, documenting their gradual erosion by traffic and pedestrians. When exhibited together, these two black and white videos illustrate the contrast between different forms of destruction, as well as the potential for recovery that occurs via natural atmospheric forces.

Wicks later undertook a new performance in his studio, laying out images of the Broome Street work on the floor, covering the prints in sand and objects from the original Durras project. Recorded in colour, the performance ends with Wicks again being buried, this time in a painter's drop sheet.

13. Baden Pailthorpe
b.1984, lives and works in Sydney / *Cadence I 2013* / HD video: 4 minutes, colour, stereo / Courtesy: The artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

Baden Pailthorpe is an artist, writer and curator. A former artist in residence of the Australian War Memorial, he combines design, simulated gaming and fine art principles to explore the relationship between warfare and performative rituals, and the disconnect between combatant video games and the physicality of military training.

Cadence I is from a suite of works featuring Australian, United States and Taliban soldiers set in landscapes taken from pro-military cinema and military simulators. Rather than enacting standard military formations, these virtual soldiers instead perform carefully choreographed dances.

Here, an American soldier dances on a desert landscape appropriated from the 2005 Sam Mendes film *Jarhead*. Concertining out from a central point, an image of a single soldier is repeatedly overlapped, forming a kaleidoscopic vision that also recalls troop formations and movements. Playing on the ultra-structured performative aspects of military service, Pailthorpe asks: 'what is war but a giant choreography?'

14. Troy Innocent
b.1971, lives and works in Melbourne / *Cyber Dada Manifesto 1990* (collaboration with Dale Nason under the name Dada Manifesto) / Video transferred to digital file: six minutes, colour, stereo, 4:3 / *Special Go-Man-BRAIN and Third Eye-NEW LIFE*, excerpts from Psyvision, 1996 / Video transferred to digital file: 50 minutes, videocolour, sound Courtesy: The artist

Since the late 1980s Troy Innocent has been making works incorporating elements of installation, sculpture, sound, design and animation, which investigate the connections between language and reality in the mediascape. Using methods of multiplatform storytelling, he explores the possibility of the cyborg - a superior hybrid human machine - within the context of a new and Utopian world.

During the early 1990s Innocent collaborated with Dale Nason as Cyber Data. One of their earliest works *Cyber Dada Manifesto* is recognised as a seminal work that defined the emerging cyber art scene of the 1990s. A response to information and virtual realities, the video was accompanied by a textual document printed in professional, cultural and student publications simultaneously. Travelling internationally via fax and other technology, it anticipated forms of viral networking and worldwide interconnectedness that we now take for granted.

Working as a solo artist six years later, Innocent created Special Go-Man-BRAIN, featuring a singing, dancing figure set within psychedelic animations, whose human characteristics move further from reality as it enters a digital realm. While in Psy-Vision, Innocent introduces a Gaia-like being who beckons the viewer to accompany her through a cyber landscape and owards digital transcendence.

15. Barbara Campbell
b.1961, lives and works in Sydney / *Watching the Apocalypse 1994* / Video transferred to digital file: 7 minutes, colour, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1997

Barbara Campbell is an internationally recognised performance, installation and video artist. A former artist-in-residence at Griffith University during the late 1990s, Campbell's oeuvre explores women's personal fictions, the visual and adaptive qualities of texts, and how the meaning of a work changes according to the physical context within which it is presented.

Watching the Apocalypse is a response to Eleanor Coppola's memoir, Notes, written during the making of her husband Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Apocalypse Now*. Published in 1979, the journals reveal the personal problems experienced by family, cast and crew during a difficult shoot on location in The Philippines. Inspired by an entry from 4 March 4 1976 relating young Sofia Coppola's observation that the rainforest 'looked like the Jungle Cruise at Disneyland', Campbell's work uses footage shot on this same theme park ride, highlighting how both the movie and Disney versions of the jungle are fictional constructs.

16. Justine Cooper
b.1968, lives and works in New York / *Rapt 1998* / Videotape transferred to digital file: 5:06 minutes, black and white, stereo / Griffith University Art Collection. Gift of the artist 2000

Justine Cooper works at the intersection of culture, science and medicine. Now residing in New York, her practice incorporates animation, video, installation, photography, as well as medical imaging technologies such as MRI, DNA sequencing, Ultrasound and SEM (scanning electron microscopy). Through her work, Cooper reminds us that science and art are equally concerned with revealing hidden realities.

Rapt takes a set of Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans of Cooper's own body in axial slices and reconstructs them as a virtual form. Animating these details with sophisticated medical software, she rotates, compresses, stretches, dissolves and eventually rebuilds her body. Set to a soundtrack of synthesised and woodwind music, the crunching, creaking and scratching noises suggest the excavation and crumbling of the body as the images dissolve. Despite having the distinctive appearance of a scan or diagram, the work also presents the human body as ethereal and mysterious: an ongoing site of discovery in the face of continually evolving medical technology.

17. David M. Thomas
b.1967, lives and works in Brisbane / *I'm quite sure I don't understand the question 2008* / DVD-pal digital video transferred to digital file: 5 minutes, colour, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2009

Multidisciplinary artist David M. Thomas is interested in constructs of self and self-portraiture, making works that explore the impact of alienation, anxiety and melancholy on our quality of life. Inspired by documentaries and the role of the viewing audience as anonymous spectator to public revelations, his videos often act as a metaphor for the dual physical and psychological spaces we all inhabit.

I'm quite sure I don't understand the question presents a dialogue in the form of an aptitude and personality questionnaire, such as those given to job applicants. As the interviewer asks increasingly personal questions, the figure of the clown becomes confused and contradictory, eventually responding against stereotype or not at all. The performance emphasises the flawed nature of institutionalised communication, and the unreliability of the human factor involved.

18. Shaun Gladwell
b.1972, lives and works in London / *Storm Sequence 2000* / Single channel digital video: 7:59 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Working across performance and video, Shaun Gladwell explores the relationship between people and the landscape, both urban and natural. He often portrays isolated figures undertaking carefully choreographed acts for the camera, and, through slowed motion, articulates the connection between the performer's body and the environment within which it is situated.

Gladwell describes his interest 'in activating landscapes and not regarding them aesthetically. The Australian environment is so vast and spectacular; it makes perfect sense to question, test, measure and meditate on one's surroundings through art'. With *Storm Sequence*, the camera observes the motion of a solitary skateboarder - the artist - freestyling on a concrete drop at Sydney's Bondi Beach. As with other works Gladwell has made, here too he slows the footage down; jerky movements are reimagined as graceful pirouettes and spins. Accompanied by a liquid soundtrack by Sydney composer Kazumichi Grime, we watch as a storm gathers on the horizon, until the sky turns black and the rain is too heavy for Gladwell to continue.

19. Heath Franco
b.1984, lives and works in Sydney / *YOUR DOOR 2011* / HD digital video: 18:17 minutes, colour, stereo sound, 16:9 / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2012

Based in Central-Western Sydney, Heath Franco creates absurdist videos driven by rhythm and flow over traditional narrative structures. Featuring a cast of grotesquely-drawn characters, all played by Franco himself, his work draws from popular culture, animated sitcoms of the 1990s, schlock horror movies and personal memory.

YOUR DOOR begins with Franco's own front door opening onto an alternate universe, populated by inhabitants possessed with gestural tics and broad Australian inflections. Derived from real situations and experiences, his characters both attract and repulse viewers as they revel in their strangeness, playful curiosity and disturbing intensity. Wacky and sinister, each offers a view of the outsider in society.

20. Tarryn Gill
b.1981, lives and works in Perth, Pilar Mata Dupont b.1981, lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands / *Gymnasium 2010* / Single channel HD video: 4:07 minutes, black and white, sound / Courtesy: The artists

Tarryn Gill and Pilar Mata Dupont are multidisciplinary artists, performers and producers with backgrounds in dance and music theatre. Collaborating since 2001, their combined practice encompasses photography, performance, choreography, film, installation and design.

Populated by a cast of impossibly attractive athletes, with *Gymnasium* the duo combine the aesthetics of propaganda and carnival pageantry with references to theatre, cinema, musicals and sport. The work offers a distillation of their idiosyncratic visual language, bringing together an interest in the beauty of the body and mass contests of strength.

Set to the military sounds of Charles William's *Girls in Grey*, the marching theme reminds us of the link between sport, army

drills, and the cultivation of conformist youth hygiene in fascist cultures. The work also makes specific references to the camera work of Leni Riefenstahl, the controversial German filmmaker commissioned by Hitler to produce 'The Triumph of the Will', a propaganda film tracking the 1934 Nazi Congress in Nuremberg.

21. David Rosetzky
b.1970, lives and works in Melbourne / *Gaps 2014* / High definition video: 35:07 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

Working predominantly with video and photographic formats, David Rosetzky's works often takes form as highly stylised, intimate scenarios, which he uses to observe human behaviour, identity, and subjectivity.

Slipping back and forth between spoken word and dance, discussion and performance, *Gaps* embodies Rosetzky's ongoing exploration of personal identity and the relationship - or 'gaps in experience' - between self and other. The artist says his interest is 'in drawing from a range of different moving image genres, including documentary and fiction to destabilise the idea of character and the conventions used to establish a performer's identity on screen... We all have gaps in our understanding when it comes to reading others, and often ourselves. In *Gaps* I was also keen to explore issues of racial difference and the low-level everyday racism that is inherent in Australian culture today.'

While the dialogue varies in substance and tone, from passages read aloud, to personal reflection from the four dancers' own experiences, the visual content also addresses movement as a means for communication and misunderstanding. Over the course of *Gaps* the choreographed gestures morph into a kind of sign language, meaningful and yet at the same time, meaningless. This layering of abstraction with confusing scenarios is deliberate, creating tension between the spontaneous and the artificial, and blurring the idea of how we speak and how we 'perform' ourselves.

22. Eugenia Raskopoulos
b.1959, lives and works in Sydney / *rootreroot 2016* / Single channel HD digital video: 8:45 minutes, colour, stereo, 16:9 / On line editor: Ben Denham / *Routreroute 2016* Murano glass, neon / Two parts: Greek neon: 89cm (diam.); English neon: 53cm (diam.) / Courtesy: the artist and KRONEBERG WRIGHT ARTISTS PROJECTS, Sydney

Since the early 1980s Eugenia Raskopoulos has been making photographic and video works that investigate language, text and translation. No matter the medium, her works engage with politics, often using modest means - typically her body and the camera - to underscore the effects of globalisation on the body, language and difference.

Raskopoulos has manipulated forms and their meanings to make these two works, while at the same time offering a feminist perspective on the idea of 'marking territory'. In *rootreroot* we observe a woman at work, a familiar theme in art history, only here the artist is dragging trees around by the roots, expressing their weight through the bend of her own body. Above, she uses an olive branch to mark a perfect clockwise circle in the soil; below the same arm sweeps an Australian wattle branch counterclockwise in the same gesture. Using drones to capture this view, there is a point when the two circles briefly come together, and the hermetically sealed loops are reimagined as an infinity symbol.

With *Routeroute*, Raskopoulos uses neon to spell out the title, in English and also in Greek, a reference to her heritage and first language. When 'read' together, these works emphasise the path that is travelled, both the route and the road; translation is not a destination, but a journey.
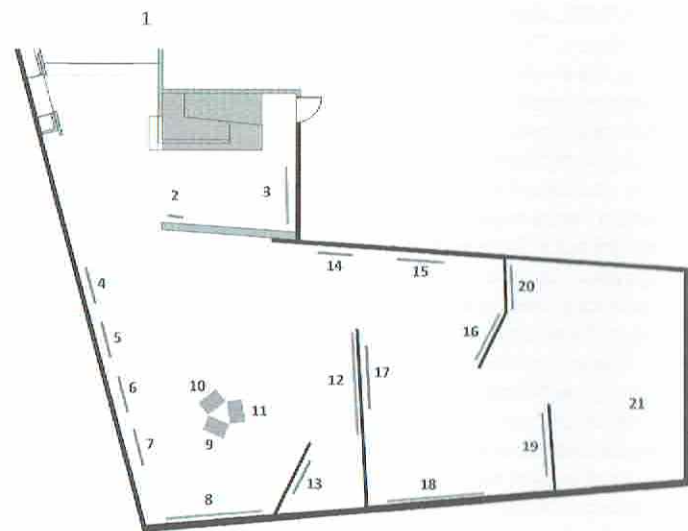
RED GREEN BLUE
A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN VIDEO ART
Chapter 3:
Perception and Encounter

06 June –
08 July 2017
Curated by
Matthew Perkins

1. Daniel von Sturmer

b.1972, lives and works in Melbourne / *Painted Video, Sequence 1* 2009 / High Definition video: 2:46 minutes, colour, silent, 16:9 / *Painted Video, Sequence 2* 2009 / High Definition video: 2:55 minutes, colour, silent, 16:9 / *Painted Video, Sequence 3* 2009 / High Definition video: 2:38 minutes, colour, silent, 16:9 / *Painted Video, Sequence 4* 2009 / High Definition video: 2:39 minutes, colour, silent, 16:9 / Courtesy: The artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Daniel von Sturmer's practice explores the relationship between human perception and space, whether real or imagined. Exploiting video's capacity to manipulate time and image, his works act like propositions – testing grounds for exploring how objects behave when subjected to particular conditions. Frequently combining everyday objects with filmic techniques, von Sturmer creates visual experiences that turn on a point of tension: between gravity and weightlessness, movement and stillness.

In *Painted Video, Sequence 1-4* 2009 von Sturmer's hypnotically expanding targets of liquid paint are less video works than they are animated paintings. Evoking the geometric formalism of modernist painting through an image on a screen, he investigates the boundaries between real and represented spaces.

2. Michaela Gleave

b.1980, lives and works in Sydney / *A Galaxy of Suns* 2016 (with Amanda Cole and Warren Armstrong) / Smart Phone App for Android and iPhone / Courtesy: The artists and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne

Michaela Gleave's conceptually driven practice spans digital and online works, installation, performance, photography, sculpture and video. Her projects focus in particular on the changing intersections between art, science and society. Returning frequently to the sky as a site of enquiry, Gleave's work references natural phenomena and tricks of perception, allowing us to experience the processes by which we comprehend reality and rethink our presence within it.

A Galaxy of Suns 2016 is a mobile phone app that transcribes constellations into musical scores, with matching light displays. Created by geo-tracking location, the app creates a unique musical score that corresponds to the user's precise position in relation to the stars, sonifying stellar data to create a sound and visual composition unique to their location in space and time. *A Galaxy of Suns* debuted with a performance featuring a 36-part chorus, singing the stars as they rose and set over the horizon. Sampled tuned percussion accompanied large-scale lighting, tracking the progress of the choristers as the chorus sang its way across the sky; the composition building until all 360 degrees of the horizon was represented in sound and light.

3. Kit Wise

b.1975, lives and works in Hobart / *Xanadu* 2010 / Digital animation, incorporating digital videos and photography collected by the artist in Japan and Italy, found digital images and digital video from Getty Images, single channel HD video: 5:50 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist

Kit Wise is a photographer and writer who creates infinitely layered conceptual work that examines our increasing acceptance of digital synthetica and incessant need for cyber-based experiences.

Xanadu 2010 is an animated collage of archetypal idyllic landscapes found in open source archives, global stock agencies, and still and video footage recorded in Australia and abroad. Reappropriating these photographs and videos, he has created a hallucinogenic arcadia of uncertain origin, where the metropolis pulsates harmoniously within a natural paradise. A frequent user of internet-sourced imagery, Wise attempts to depict the sensory overload of infinite resources, and possible transitional spaces glimpsed while flicking between images. The diverse sources in *Xanadu* include Western Medieval narrative painting, traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e (floating word) landscapes and science fiction cinema, and the literature of Italo Calvino (Invisible Cities) and Guy Debord (The Society of the Spectacle).

4. Eva Schramm and Gary Willis

Is this what you call Love? 1979 / Video transferred to digital file: six parts (30 seconds, each), colour, sound, 4:3 / *Strategies for Goodbye*, 1981, video transferred to digital file: 7:30 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: Th e artists

A collaboration between artists Eva Schramm and Gary Willis, *Is this what you call Love?* 1979 is a series of six thirty-second television spots designed to be screened unannounced during the ad breaks throughout a late-night romance movie on commercial television. The objective was to counter-point the cinematic romance with a real-life romance, in this case the romantic cycle of the relationship between the artists.

The six spots delineated the cyclic nature of their relationship, beginning with the romantic fascination with 'the other' and ending in breaking out of a trap, releasing the lovers to begin the cycle again. Challenging the classic love story scenario, it offered a broader picture of the romantic cycle, albeit in an abbreviated neo-pop cartoon form.

The work was presented on ABN Channel 9 in Adelaide during the 1980 *Adelaide Festival for the Arts*, and also on CTC Channel 7 in Canberra during the ACT #2 *Performance Festival*.

5. Bush Video

Formed 1973 / *Meta Video Programming* 1975 / Video transferred to digital file: 30 minutes, colour, sound / Courtesy: The artists

Bush Video was a video cooperative founded by artists Joseph El Khouri and Mick Glasheen in the lead up to the 1973 Aquarius Universities Arts Festival. Initially formed to facilitate a cable network for community video at the festival, Bush Video ultimately became the seminal organisation through which video was established in Australia. A major part of Bush Video's experimental process was their collective interest in the medium as communicator, the transformational potential of video, and the possibilities it offered for bringing social change and liberation to the community.

Meta Video Programming One 1974 is perhaps the most representative of the works created by Bush Video during their two years of operation. In keeping with their mostly abstract videos, *Meta Video Programming One* features a colourised combination of primitive synthesised forms, intersecting Lissajous patterns (two intersecting curves similar to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation logo), computer images and video feedback set to a soundtrack of computer-generated music. Part electronic meditation, part psychedelic vision, *Meta Video Programming One* was released a year prior to the introduction of colour television in Australia.

6. Sam Schoenbaum

b.1947 / *Still Life: Breakfast Piece* 1976 / Video transferred to digital file: 30 minutes, black and white, sound / Courtesy: The artist

Sam Schoenbaum is an abstract and conceptual artist whose 40 year career has spanned four continents. Born in an Austrian post-war refugee camp to parents displaced from Poland during World War Two, Schoenbaum and his parents were resettled in Melbourne's northern suburbs when he was four years old. His interdisciplinary practice explores the human condition through the use of painting, video and literary art.

Still Life: Breakfast Piece 1976 is a minimal motion video shot in black and white that records the sounds of human life in a suburban kitchen. The camera is positioned to fill the screen with a tight close up of a large fruit bowl, with an aesthetic that recreates the appearance of a mid-1970s television broadcast. Through this work, Schoenbaum was keen to explore the phenomenology of the video medium, including its reflexiveness.

7. Warren Burt

b.1949, lives and works in Wollongong / *Dying Song* 1974 / Video transferred to digital file: 20:54 minutes, colour, sound, 2:3 / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1997

Warren Burt is a composer, performer, video artist and sound poet. Heavily influenced by experimental composer John Cage, whose compositions incorporated random sounds in much the same way as some visual artists incorporate found objects, Burt became interested early in his career with visual aspects of musical arrangements. Today, Burt's practice employs elements of improvisation, microtonality, humour, live interaction, and lo-fi electronic techniques.

The title of this work, *Dying song* references a descending scale of music. The abrupt trills of electronic sound, white noise and irregular areas of light and colour in this video suggest aural and visual effects intrinsic to the operation of a computer.

While there is no direct reference to specific subject matter, the music in *Dying song* recalls the bird call of the species of Australian currawong found on the east coast. The glimmering light and colour also permit the viewer to imagine objects or landscapes filmed in extremely blurred focus.

8. Jess MacNeil

b.1977, lives and works in Sydney and London / *Disruption Continuum*, 2013 / 16mm film transferred to digital file: six minutes (looped), colour, sound / Courtesy: The artist and Artereal Gallery, Sydney

Jess MacNeil's practice spans painting, drawing, video and installation, often integrating several media at a time. Her works explore our perceptions and experiences of the everyday environment through simple elements of lines, traces and shadows, point of view, repetition and playback speed. The space of the artwork itself is also a focus, with MacNeil questioning or exploiting the ways the artist, viewer, and subject are situated in relation to the work, either through trace, residue or reflection, or indirectly by depiction, inference, absence or erasure.

Disruption, Continuum 2013 is a departure from MacNeil's usual digital format to 16mm film, exploring human movement through London's Trafalgar Square. Shot over one day, the people crossing the square generate what happens in the work. Using analogue and painterly methods, MacNeil removes the detail of the human figures with swirls, textures and patterns created with glass paint and bleach. This process gives the film a material, tactile quality.

9. Lin Li

b.1960, lives and works in Sydney / *Soul Flight* 1997 / Video transferred to digital file: 10 minutes, colour, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1997

Lin Li is a multidisciplinary artist based in Sydney. Born in China, she was primarily considered a sculptor before turning her attention to video.

Soul Flight 1997 details the journey of an Australian-Chinese woman travelling from Sydney to Tibet. Li lies atop a mountain, her naked body covered in bloody meat which is being consumed by vultures. Analogic to traditional funerary practices of Tibet known as Sky Burials, Li's work synchronises life, death and rebirth. In so doing, she warps and intervenes in the rhythms which usually dictate both nature and tradition.

10. David Perry

1933-2015, lived and worked in Sydney / *Interior with views* 1976 / Video transferred to digital file: 4:52 minutes, black and white, stereo / Griffith University Art Collection. Gift of the artist 1994

David Perry was a founding member of Australian experimental film group Ubu Films (1965-70), which in 1967 issued a manifesto outlining their radical approach: 'let no media be denied to hand-made films – they can be scratched, scraped, drawn, inked, coloured, dyed, painted, pissed on, black and white, or coloured, bitten, chewed, filed, rasped, punctured, ripped, burned, bloodied, with any technique imaginable.'

While Perry's earlier works reflect this desire for spontaneous expression, *Interior with views* is much more reflective in tone. Made during a residency at Griffith University's Queensland Film and Drama Centre on the Nathan Campus, the film flickers between vignettes, carefully composed and barely moving. Running for the length of time it takes for the jug to boil, the camera captures that which is set before it – a cup of tea made in dappled afternoon sunshine. Towards the end we observe a television set transmits these same images back to us on-screen, a feedback loop interweaving layers of memory and the present.

11. Michael Glasheen

b.1942, Sydney / *Teleologic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On board with Buckminster Fuller* 1970 / Video transferred to digital file: 28 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Michael Glasheen was studying architecture when he began experimenting with film in the early 1960s. Inspired by the writing of philosophers Marshall McLuhan and György Kepes, he was also heavily influenced by the work of American architect R. Buckminster Fuller, who delivered a series of lectures in Sydney in 1968. Glasheen recorded these talks and the resulting artwork, *Teleologic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller*, became the first major non-commercial video work completed in Australia.

Fuller, a systems theorist, popularised the term 'Spaceship Earth' to encourage people to view the world as if it were a spaceship, capable of travelling indefinitely so long as its crew (the world's population) act harmoniously and conserve its limited resources. His thoughts on synergy, and the notion that the world is one unified dynamic system, provided the framework within which

Glasheen experimented. Using a variety of techniques and special effects, he spliced together footage of Fuller's lectures with time lapse footage recorded around Sydney's Northern Beaches. The accompanying soundtrack, recorded in real time as the videotape played, was performed on a theramin by producer Jack Meyer.

12. Jon McCormack
b.1964, lives and works in Melbourne / *Turbulence: an interactive museum of unnatural history* 1992 / Interactive laserdisc installation transferred to digital file: 2:30 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Jon McCormack is an electronic media artist and researcher in Artificial Intelligence. His research interests include generative art, design and music, evolutionary systems, computer creativity, visualisation, virtual reality, interaction design, physical computing, machine learning, L-systems and developmental models. Since the late 1980s, he has worked with computer code as a medium for creative expression. Inspired by the complexity and wonder of a diminishing natural world, his work is concerned with electronic "after natures" – alternate forms of artificial life that may one day replace the biological nature lost through human progress and development.

Turbulence: an interactive museum of unnatural history 1990-94 is an assemblage of synthesised forms, evolved within the computer using a process of artificial selection. Animated sequences on the disc are accessed via a touch-screen interface. The interactive is a collection of poems, ideas, information and imagery relating to the philosophical impact of evolution on contemporary thought. The work took over three years to produce; including the authoring of a large body of software to evolve the artificial life forms contained on the disc.

13. Joan Brassil
1919–2005, lived and worked in Sydney / *Kimberley Stranger Gazing* 1988 / Video installation: 11:42 minutes, colour, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1997

Joan Brassil was a multimedia artist who merged sound and reflected light, gravel, paving stones, water, printed poems and electronics to make visual and aural connections between art and the environment. Originally an art teacher who retired to pursue her art practice, Brassil was hugely prolific in a relatively short space of time, and noted for her support of emerging and women artists. A pioneer of in the use of electronics in time-based environmental art and process art, her work featured the recurring themes of nature, science and technology, aiming to generate sensorial and emotional responses from the audience. Of her work, she once said, 'I would like sculpture to sing, sigh, reflect and inspire according to the continually changing elements of any light and sound movement...to be a place of reflection and stimulation of what is in existence here and now'.

Kimberley Stranger Gazing 1988 contemplates human existence and its imposition on the landscape. Designed for intimate viewing, the video is played through a television positioned to reflect the footage on to sheets of irregularly shaped Perspex. This process ensures that the resulting effects of fragmentation, distortion and overlay capture the physical and sensual properties of the landscape.

14. Paul Winkler
b.1939, lives and works in Sydney / *Neurosis* 1970 / Super 8 to video transfer: 9 minutes, colour, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University / Art Collection. Purchased 1997

Paul Winkler is a German-born Australian filmmaker now living and working in Sydney. He has been a central figure of Australian experimental filmmaking since the early 1960s. His lifelong fascination has been with colour, texture, the malleability of a single film frame into multiple images, and the synesthetic effects of music matched with abstract or fragmented imagery.

Neurosis 1970 is a powerful protest film which deals with the horrors of the Vietnam War. Referencing different debates that emerged from the peace movement including nationalism,

state legitimated violence and humanity, it utilises a film style informed by documentary and television news coverage of the war, such as rapid zoom shots, fast panning movements and tilt actions, with montaged black and white photographic images of civilians and soldiers at war. These techniques create a compelling and confrontational film.

15. John Tonkins
b. 1963, lives and works in Sydney / *these are the days* 1994 / Computer animation, video: 1:30 minutes, black and white, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1994

John Tonkin has been working at the cross section of art and science since the early 1980s, variously employing photography, experimental film, animation and computer animation in his art practice to explore physical phenomena such as gravity, elasticity and aerodynamics.

these are the days 1994 is an animation that engages with and contemplates the passing of time, growing out of a series of motion studies by Tonkin investigating the elements of air and water. Deliberately simplistic looking, Tonkin's aesthetic was a response to what he saw as the domination of techno-fetishism on the art & technology field. Choosing to work on domestic computers, *these are the days* was created on an Amiga computer using software written by the artist. Using gravity as a metaphor for the passing of time, *these are the days* considers how our lives are documented by an incessant stream of paperwork, from birth and death certificates to supermarket receipts. As the paper cascades, a monotonous soundtrack of counting voices suggests that our attempts to control time are futile.

16. James Lynch
b. 1974, lives and works in Melbourne / *Everybody was... (from the series other people's dreams)* 2006 / Pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper, transferred to digital video: 3:30 minutes, colour, sound, 4:3 / Sound: Sean Bailey / Courtesy: The artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne

James Lynch (b.1974, Melbourne) grew up in Reservoir, a 1950s northern suburb of Melbourne. Graduating from the Victoria College of Art with a degree in fine art painting, he is known for his contemporary animations that use painted and hand-drawn trompe l'œil effects to emphasize the constructed nature of our everyday lives and fantasies.

Everybody was... 2006 is from Lynch's series 'Other People's Dreams' based on a real collection of people's dreams in which he has appeared. Using a combination of live action video and animation, Lynch restages as accurately as possible the dreams as told to him by his friends, family, colleagues and girlfriend. Beginning with digital footage shot at the story's location, Lynch selects stills upon which to draw the dreams' protagonists. Using a modified version of early animation techniques, Lynch draws figures in coloured pencil on tracing paper, and superimposes them on to the original scenes. The contrast of the simplistic drawings on the cinematic background gives the animation a naïve, slightly hesitant feel.

Originally shown as part of an installation in which the audience sat amongst furniture and personal items similar to those depicted in the dreams, the 'Other People's Dreams' series encouraged viewers to consider the subconscious as the source of dream content, the complexities of our relationships and interpersonal connections, and demonstrated how we unwittingly use each other to fulfil particular roles in our lives.

17. Anne Scott Wilson
b. 1954, lives and works in Melbourne / *Conversation* 2008 / Single channel SD digital video: 3:28 minutes, colour, silent / Courtesy: The artist, Arc One Gallery, Melbourne and Conny Dietzschold Gallery, Sydney, Hong Kong and Cologne

Anne Scott Wilson studied painting as a mature-age student following a career in dance. Her practice is informed by theatre, cinema and live performance and is realised across multiple creative disciplines including photography, video, painting, sound

installation and performance.

Conversation 2008 is the result of Wilson's desire to make an artwork that explored the concept of 'embodiment'. Wilson had initially conceived of a scene involving a figure running up a hill and through a wall into water. This idea was dropped in favour of a series of people speaking underwater. Her decision to favour a language of movement over a literal narrative distils the idea of 'embodiment' into a single set of physical conditions applied to bodies in motion.

18. Geoffrey Weary
b. 1952, lives and works in Sydney / *Light/Strike (An Open Window)* 2011 / Video transferred to digital file: 5 minutes, black and white, stereo, 4:3 / Courtesy: The artist

Geoffrey Weary's practice incorporates photography, video and installation. Originally a painter, he began working with film to explore the relationship between static and temporal media.

Light/Strike (An Open Window) 2011 is a performance work that was recorded with an obsolete Sony Porta-Pak video camera manufactured in the 1970s. The unique properties of the camera infuse the work with a fragile, ghostly appearance that suggests a metaphoric process of disappearance and erasure, both of the performer as human presence and of the technology that renders her presence visible to us. A signified absence of digital effect or "composited media" also situates the work outside the limits of contemporary techno – aesthetic practices.

19. Peter Alwast
b. 1975, lives and works in Canberra / *Relics* 2007 / Digital animation: 2.29 minutes, colour, sound / Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2008.

Peter Alwast's practice employs video, computer graphics, installation, painting and drawing to explore the connection between real and virtual worlds. Evoking the uncertain texture of dreams and faded memories, Alwast deals with the recognisable environments of urban living and mixes them with fantasy towers, geodesic domes and the impressions left by a ghost-like population. The constructed spaces he creates are inflected with politics, using appropriated images that are imbued with various kinds of utopian and romantic aspirations.

Relics 2007 mechanises Alwast's personal and collective musings. There are references to ideas and spectacle in the constructed backdrop of screens showing fireworks, and the large geosphere that contains the potential suburban development. Chrome forms have images combining internal imagery of the body with external imagery of the wooden structures. One form has embedded video footage of swinging girls gliding over a cross section of an MRI chest. The image starts from a ghost-like abstraction that moves out into a formal image. The swing references a chest that expands and contracts like a breath. The breath takes in, reflects and envelopes the fabricated environment.

20. Randelli (Robert Randall and Frank Bendinelli)
Colour space, Flat space and Expressive space from Spaces 1981 / Video: 13:35 minutes, colour, sound / Acquired with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1995

Randelli, the name adopted by collaborative duo Robert Randall and Frank Bendinelli, were part of an innovative wave of critical and reflexive video making that emerged in Australia in the 1980s. Unlike early video art's critique of mass media, this era sought to embrace popular culture by appropriating common narratives and motifs into witty parodies of the time.

Colour space, Flat space and Expressive space 1981 represent three parts of Rendelli's six part Spaces series. *Colour space* 1981 considers how associations and meaning are changed by the inclusion of colour in a scene. While a woman laboriously knits a toy pelican, spontaneous bursts of colour float in the background. With hypnotic repetition we are informed: "adaptation keeps the design and adds touches", "an extra twist alters movement and texture", "Colour gives a new look.....knit, knit, knit!"

Flat space 1981 explores fixed and unfixed dimensions using

a screen divided into three sections, each depicting the same 'seascape' from a different proximity. The emphasis on the waves counteracts the flatness of the horizon line.

Expressive space 1981 layers photographic images over a hand drawn interior. Featuring an urban couple rapidly consuming media imagery, the action contrasts with the static view seen through an open window. Insisting on an unstable and erratic fusion of animated and real world, the scene is a celebration of the spontaneity of subcultural identity and expression.

21. Masato Takasaka
b.1977, lives and works in Melbourne / *ANOTHER PROPOSITIONAL MODEL FOR THE EVERYTHING ALWAYS ALREADY MADE WANNABE STUDIO MASATOTECTURES MUSEUM OF FOUND REFRACTIONS 1994-2017 (r)eternal return to productopia-almost everything all at once, twice three times (in four parts) Red Green Blue remix)* 2017 / Mixed media, masking tape, foam-core, structural pine, museum model, museum wax, perspex, found objects, self-adhesive vinyl on mdf composition board, light box, data projectors / *Another (Re) Authorised bootleg durational video #1 (Regimes of Value)* 2013/2016-17 / Data projection, looped film by Lisa Radford: 7:56 minutes / *Another (Re) Authorised bootleg durational video #3 (Roppongi Crossing)* 2016-17 / Data projection, looped film by COBRA: 4:55 minutes / *Another (Re) Authorised bootleg durational video #5 (Garaged Days Revisited)* 2016-17 / Data projections, looped film by Kati Rule: 0:13 minutes / Courtesy: The artist and STUDIO MASATOTECTURES, Melbourne

Masato Takasaka is both a guitarist and visual artist, describing his studio practice as an iPod Shuffle on endless repeat: playing the greatest hits of 20th century avant-garde art, with references to constructivism, dada, pop and minimalism alongside a catalogue of his own greatest hits. Primarily working with found objects and materials to construct his gallery-based installations, Takasaka's work explores three linked ideas: the self-formation of artistic identity, the use of display to elicit conceptual engagement and physical experience, and the relationship between pioneering and everyday mass culture. Bent, crumpled and endlessly interacting surfaces explore limitless formal possibilities and combinations. These installations are iterations of a single work, repeated differently each time, using materials that he has been re-using since art school, constantly reconfigured displays that experiment with time and memory.

In this most recent iteration for Red Green Blue he has experimented with incorporating '(re) authorised bootleg' films of his installations, made by other artists, into new pieces, projecting these films on to the installation's surfaces.