

JUNE

Video Art - Checking the Frontier

3rd

4th

5th

1994

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL

VIDEO SYMPOSIUM

Interactive art/game exhibition, seminars, screenings

**Electronic Media Arts
(Australia) Ltd
ACN 003 134 661**

**Australian International Video
Symposium**

Guest Curators

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Machiko Kusahara
Julie Vulcan
Brian Langer

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1994/95

Julie Vulcan
Nick Vickers
Courtney Kidd
Julie Hickson
Brian Langer
Libby San Miguel
Mark Glazier
John Conomos
Geoff Weary

Folder Cover Design

Maria Stukoff

Folder Text Layout

Merrilee Kessler

Program Design

Mike Leggett

Membership Form Design

Anita Lever

Equipment Support

University of Western Sydney -
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Mother Superior Video

Electronic Media Arts (Australia) Ltd

incorporating
the Australian International Video Festival.

Since its inception Electronic Media Arts (EMA), in association with the Australian International Video Festival (founded 1986) has exhibited the works of some of Australia's leading video artists as well as bringing to Australia pioneering artists, historians and curators working in video and television art, computer animation and interactive media from all over the world.

EMA liaises and networks with contemporary art centres (nationally and internationally) and educational institutions for the purposes of presenting gallery exhibitions and special public projects for the electronic arts.

EMA fosters professional excellence in the electronic arts, activates and encourages the research, exhibition and distribution of moving image culture through the presentation of the Australian International Video Festival and associated events and promotes new media and independent video through publications, conferences, workshops, exhibitions, screenings and the Special EMA Grant.

Membership of Electronic Media Arts is open to anyone with an interest in electronic arts.



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VIDEO ART - CHECKING THE FRONTIER

Credits

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Thanks also to the Great Gabor for appearing at the opening and to Julie Vulcan for her many hours of work.

Program Overview

The program of the Australian International Video Symposium 1994 falls into four parts: a two-day seminar entitled "Nintendo Killed the Video Star?", a series of curated video screenings and two exhibitions, *Game/Art Interface* at the Art Gallery of NSW and *Liquid Light* at the Australian National Maritime Museum. The conceptual umbrella covering all this is Video Art - Checking the Frontier.

In a two-day seminar Australian and international critics and artists will discuss the role of video art in the changing media landscape of the 90's. How have the more traditional forms of electronic art, such as video art, been effected by the success of video games, music videos, CD-ROM-based interactive movies and new kind of simulator attractions? What kind of new electronic artforms are in the making? The speakers will include John Conomos (Australia), Machiko Kusahara (Japan), Pam Hansford (Australia), Peter Callas (Australia), Ross Harley (Australia), Christine Tamblyn (USA), Troy Innocent (Australia) and VNS Matrix (Australia).

In accordance with the main theme of the symposium, the screening program investigates the frontiers of video art in the 1990's, going sometimes "to the other side". It highlights "signs of life" on the field of independent video, and looks for cross-overs between different audiovisual media in an intertextual spirit of discovery. The retrospective of Jim Blashfield (USA) presents a remarkable creator whose production spans many genres from animated shorts to music videos and TV commercials. *Pixelvision* I-II shows how videomakers have been using the lowest of low tech - the Fisher-Price PXL 2000 toy video camera - to produce highly personal and ideologically intriguing works. The *Travelogue* -series by Stefaan Decostere (Belgium) demonstrates how media artists working within the institution of broadcast television may sometimes be able to use its resources to produce experimental works, in this case highly original "travelogues". *The Ride of Your Life* provides the first-ever panorama of the current simulator ride phenomenon. This program which has been specially curated for this symposium by Erkki Huhtamo with Machiko Kusahara, presents rarely seen ride films from USA, Japan and Europe plus other related material. Lynn Hershman's (USA) *Virtual Love* is an ambitious video feature about virtual reality, technology, eroticism and gender politics. The special programs of award winning works from the two leading European festivals of computer art, *Ars Electronica* (Linz) and *Imagina* (Monte Carlo), demonstrate the state of the art of computer animation, spanning all genres from advertisements and logos to art pieces. In addition a panorama of the most recent Australian video art will be presented.

Australian artists are represented primarily in two separately curated programs: *Out of the Machine* by Brian Langer, a screenings program of recent Australian computer animation and *Liquid Light* by Julie Vulcan. In association with her program, Julie Vulcan presents the exhibition *Liquid Light* at the Australian National Maritime Museum which features video/computer artworks by Peter Charuk, Greg Ferris and Maria Stukoff. These works not only compliment Julie's overall curatorial premis, but were also chosen for their suitability within the Australian National Maritime Museum environment.

The exhibition *Game/Art Interface*, curated by Erkki Huhtamo (Finland) and Machiko Kusahara (Japan) will take place at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Electronic games are becoming an increasingly important model for our conversational relationship with technology. Creatively applying interactive technology, the exhibition presents the ways in which contemporary media artists have adopted game playing as a way to investigate the man/machine relationship with its aesthetic and ideological implications. The participating artists will be Christine Tamblyn (USA), Toshio Iwai (Japan), Yoshinori Tsuda (Japan), Shigeyuki Handa (Japan), Troy Innocent (Australia) and VNS Matrix (Australia). In addition examples of Japanese interactive movies on CD-ROM will be presented.

What happened to the Good Olde King?

Erkki Huhtamo

The Australian International Video Symposium intends to make a surprise check at the frontiers of the Kingdom of Electronic Art. A rumour says the great king Video has been ousted from his Throne. If there is any truth in this, or who the conspirators may have been, is not yet known. The official media reports remain impenetrable. There are, however, further rumours which claim that also the border zone had been invaded by hordes of new electronic barbarians, who have - as barbarians usually do - no respect whatsoever for the existing laws and regulations of the kingdom. Judging from the little information that we have, it seems that the present state of crisis is both internal and external. There are enemies both within and without. "The kingdom seems to be falling; a state of anarchy is imminent."

Should we succumb to the official rhetorics? Should we appropriate the habit of talking about "enemies", instead of considering the intruders as agents of an "inevitable" historical process? Should we really rally to the olde king Video, at the risk of bloodshed, or simply come to accept that his reign has - and should - come to an end? Should we welcome the new rulers with pomp and circumstance, openly courting them, or rather remain a bit aloof, registering the changes before becoming part of them?

Whatever our reaction will be, as enlightened citizens of the kingdom of Electronic Art we shouldn't let the great deeds of king Video - we have witnessed many - fall into oblivion, or worse, become victims of a damnatio memoriae. The achievements of ancient rulers have been reconstructed from mutilated statues and other remains, which have been saved for us by some historical whimsy. We should make sure that the deeds of the great king Video will not be known for the future generations only from legends or from half-erased videotapes accidentally uncovered from an archive shelf. But...what if its only a rumour? What if our olde king Video will remain on the Throne for many years to come?

Where is the creative frenzy?

Fantasies like this come easily to mind when one starts thinking about the state of video art in the 1990's. For more than two decades video art was the main focus of artistic creativity on the field of electronic media culture. It began in the late 1960's as part of a broad "neo-avantgardistic" movement which questioned the traditional notion of the art object and re-thought the parameters of artistic creativity. Artists who set out to explore the newly introduced video technology wanted to turn it into an artistic tool, and also to criticize its aesthetic, social and political implications. By the mid-1970's the "single-channel" videotape, the "multimonitor installation" and the multimedia performance had established themselves as the main genres of video art.

Early video technology gave spark to a creative frenzy and a new sense of community among experimental artists. This has been lively recalled by video pioneer Steina Vasulka: "The magic was such that if you heard about anybody who was doing video, you would get in touch with them. It was like drugs, it was like entering into a some kind of secret society." This kind of spirit, which also led to the creation of the video art festival as an institution is now gone. Video art festivals still take place, of course, but without the initial magic, the creative frenzy. At most such events today - at least in Europe - one sees a handful of audience (mostly fellow artists, with some students) watching tapeworks which seldom electrify the atmosphere or really challenge the participants. Another sign of the waning interest was the fate of *Scope*, an ambitious European video art magazine, which did not survive beyond its initial issue (1992).

While the majority of the "video artists" remain in the margin, in the dried-up "video ghetto", a few Big Boys, such as Bill Viola, Gary Hill and Nam June Paik, have been elevated to the rank of recognized "museum artists". They are favoured by middle-aged curators and conservative critics. They receive almost exclusively the most prestigious (and economically profitable) commissions and invitations. With seemingly no regard to quality, whatever they produce is applauded (and readily consumed) by the established art world. Video art has now its own niche in the museum of contemporary art; buying a Paik is the least risky way to fill it and satisfy the mainstream bourgeois taste of the audience.

The fates of video in the digital world

This is not to say that video art has lost all its guts. Interesting videoworks are still made, as I hope the screening program will show. The point is that the cultural position of video is very different today than just ten years ago. Electronic media has undergone major changes, which also effect the field of electronic art. Audiovisual technology is turning digital. Video is losing its distinctiveness by being subsumed into computer technology. In digital form the video image will be just another image on the computer screen. It can be manipulated and combined with other kind of data at will by any user. Digital video will travel almost instantaneously in the telematic networks. The videotape itself has been gradually reduced to a mere carrier, which is awkwardly linear, has poor resolution and deteriorates easily. It is in the process of being replaced by such computer-oriented storage forms as digital tape, optical videodisk, CD-ROM, hard disk and networked image-banks.

In terms of the media culture the supreme position of video art as the vanguard of electronic audiovisuality has been challenged since the early 1980's by the emergence of the music video, video and computer games, interactive computer systems and telematic networks. It can be claimed that the role of video art will never be the same again after Music Television started its broadcasting in 1981. MTV created a mass market and a new audience for aesthetics which derived largely from avantgarde experimentation by film and video artists. The ideas of video artists like Dara Birnbaum were quickly appropriated, but the artists themselves were given hardly any foothold in the new medium. Instead, MTV gave rise to a new generation of videomakers, who were ready to accept fashion surfing, speed without content, irreverent recycling and surface-oriented playfulness as the corner stones of their new audiovisual aesthetics. Many video artists, who had had high hopes about television suffered an identity crisis from which they never fully recovered. They either headed back to the gates of the art museum or ended up, as

John Sanborn, one of the stars of the video art scene of the 1980's, selling their talents to the special effects industry, with corporate demonstration videos as their most original "artworks".

Likewise, the bulging video and computer game industry is attracting growing numbers of young talents from the ranks of would-be video artists. Advanced visualization possibilities have already become a fairly affordable feature of desktop computing. The computer makes it possible to create virtual fantasy worlds which are no longer restricted to the views captured by the optical eye of the video camera. What's more, these worlds are interactive, conforming to the responsive operational logic currently in vogue. A video game cartridge or a CD-ROM disc is also a much more lucrative possibility to make money and to get one's work internationally known than an artwork released as a videotape. The brothers Rand and Robyn Miller, creators of the ingenious interactive mystery adventure *Myst* (on CD-ROM), are an example of a new generation of independent creators. It hardly matters, if we call them artists or not.

Time for Introspection

In a similar manner several former video artists have started to explore interactive technologies and telematic networks. The American artist Ken Feingold, internationally known as the maker of single channel tapeworks (*India Time*, *Un Chien Délicieux*, etc.), now produces interactive computer installations, for which he even writes his own software. He is currently working on a complex telerobotic artwork using ISDN2 lines and custom made robots, through whose points of view the participants will communicate. Feingold is just one example among many. For artists like him video art in its traditional forms simply seems less exciting now than in the not-so-distant past. The British artist Paul Sermon has renewed the idea of video art by merging video with state-of-the-art teleconferencing systems in his real-time telematic performances, such as *Telematic Dreaming* (1992).

Time has come for video artists to start a process of introspection. At least the following questions should be raised: does "video art" still have a distinct identity? Is there still such a thing as a "video art community", including a more or less constant audience, and meaningful ways of distribution and exhibition? Does "traditional" video art still have some aesthetic and ideological advantages to offer? How should video art respond to the lucrative new field of commercial-industrial creativity represented by MTV or Nintendo? What kind of an attitude should video artists adopt in relation to music video, computer games and interactive computer systems - continue as they didn't exist, try to appropriate their strategies for different ends, or admit defeat and join forces with them?

Rumours keep spreading. The media coverage is still impenetrable. There is no certainty about the fate of the King.

Nintendo Killed the Video Star?

Saturday 4th, Sunday 5th June 1994. 12 noon - 2pm.
ANZ Theatre, Australian National Maritime Museum.

The speakers will lead the audience in a discussion relating to the following questions: how has the coming of the new audio visual technologies (such as synthetic computer imaging, interactive real-time computer systems, hypermedia, virtual reality and computer networking) and their applications (music video, video games, simulator entertainment etc) effected video art? What new possibilities have these technologies opened for creativity? What kind of an attitude should an artist adopt in relation to the everspreading digital environment?

Saturday 4th June

Speakers:

Peter Callas (Australia) *Turbulence Dissolve - Video Art to Computer Graphics.*

John Conomos (Australia) *Video art and the challenge of interactivity*".

Machiko Kusahara (Japan) *It's Good to Have Fun - Game Culture and Japanese Media.*

Pam Hansford (Australia) *'As if' - Play and Virtual Reality.*

Sunday 5th June

Speakers:

Ross Harley (Australia) *The Orchestrated Landscape - Participatory Media in the 20th Century.*

Christine Tamblyn (USA) *Space Invaders: from Guerrilla Television to Cypher-Netic Viruses.*

Troy Innocent (Australia) *Cyber dada and the language of "New Reality".*

VNS Matrix (Australia) *Pathogenic Vectors*

Jim Blashfield - Unknown Master of Animation

It is the fate of many music video makers to remain unknown behind their creations. This situation resembles the one which prevailed in film culture before the 1950's. In the '50's the emergence of the "auteur criticism" finally brought forth the filmmakers from behind their creations.

Most of us have arguably never heard of the name of Jim Blashfield, even though we are familiar with his creations. The Australian International Video Symposium presents a retrospective of Blashfield's whole music video output. In addition we are showing a selection of his TV commercials and animated films to put things in perspective.

Blashfield started making music videos in 1985; David Byrne had paid attention to his film *Suspicious Circumstances* (1984), realized with the very peculiar technique of animated colour photocopies. Blashfield received a commission and the result was the music video *And She Was*. It made Blashfield at once a noted and sought after figure in the music video industry.

However, Blashfield was no beginner. Born in Portland, Oregon, he had already been on the field of filmmaking for almost 20 years. He had tried practically everything from experimental films to documentaries, including fiction. The most remarkable early work seems to be *The Mid-Torso of Inez* (1979), an experimental "detective story and existential comedy".

The music video for the Talking Heads was followed by others: *Good Friends* for Joni Mitchell, *I Can't Wait* for NuShooz, *Don't Give*

Up for Peter Gabriel and the *Boy in the Bubble* for Paul Simon. A great success followed with Michael Jackson's *Leave Me Alone*, also included in the feature film *Moonwalker*. Blashfield was awarded the main prize at the Monte Carlo Advertising Film Festival and a Grammy for the best video. After *Leave Me Alone* Blashfield has realised just one more music video, *Sowing the Seeds of Love* for Tears for Fears.

In terms of volume Blashfield's music video output is relatively small. One reason for this is his determination to avoid assembly-line working methods. Blashfield also chooses his projects carefully. The people at Blashfield's studio work hard and for long periods of time on his projects. More than 35 people - designers, animators and other staff - participated in the making of *Leave Me Alone*.

Jim Blashfield and Associates has gradually expanded its simple, but visually stunning early photocopy animation with new techniques, such as computer animation. But while the style and tools have proliferated, the basic features of the style have remained recognizable.

This is also true of TV commercials Blashfield has realized for Memorex, Pepsi and Mita, as well as for *My Dinner with the Devil Snake* (1989), a work realized for the experimental television series *Alive From Off Centre*, produced for the Public Broadcasting System. *My Dinner with the Devil Snake* combines animated elements with live action, showing with gentle irony how little Westerners actually know about native ways of thinking. One of Blashfield's anonymous masterful creations is the logo for *Alive From Off Centre*, also included in our program.

Program

Alive From Off Centre, 1979, 30 sec - logo for a television program producing and presenting experimental work by artists, PBS, USA

NuShooz: I Can't Wait, 1985, 3 mins, 30 sec - music video

Crunchy Wotsits, 1991, 30 sec - television commercial

Talking Heads: And She Was, 1985, 3 min 35 sec - classic music video

Nike Air, 1991, 30 sec - television commercial

Paul Simon: Boy in the Bubble, 1986, 4 min - music video

Memorex CP-8, 1991, 30 sec - television commercial

Michael Jackson: Leave Me Alone, 1989, 4 min 45 sec - Grammy awarded music video

Suspicious Circumstances. An Investigation into the Mysterious Disappearance of Herbert Emilio Junior, 1984, 12 min 30 sec - experimental animated narrative

Joni Mitchell: Good Friends, 1986, 5 min 30 sec - music video

Tears for Fears: Sowing the Seeds of Love, 1989, 5 min 30 sec - music video

Class: Memorex, 1990, 30 sec - television commercial

Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush: Don't Give Up, 1986, 6 min 30 sec - music video

My Dinner with the Devil Snake, 1989, 16 min 30 sec - experimental short film combining live action sequences with animation.

Steven Bode: Pixelvision

In 1987, US toy manufacturer Fisher-Price introduced the latest addition to their range of children's products: a lightweight plastic video camera, called the PXL 2000, which retailed at a cost of just under \$100 and recorded its endearingly rudimentary black and white images, at ultra high speeds, on to a standard audio cassette. Loudly trumpeted as a kind of My First Movie Camera for the younger members of the video generation, it was confidently assumed that the PXL 2000 would go down a storm with legions of junior Spielberg wannabes, but instead, like many an apparently surefire success, it sank like the proverbial stone. Used to the production values of MTV and Hollywood, America's vid-kids were less than captivated by what they could muster from the unmistakably low-tech (and none too durable) PXL. After only one year in production, Fisher-Price withdrew the camera from the shops and consigned it to the company bin.

Since then though, the PXL 2000 has enjoyed a remarkable, and quite unexpected, afterlife on the fringes of the US independent scene; adopted by an increasing number of film-makers and video-artists for its unique visual properties. As the last few years have shown, in the right hands and with surprisingly minimal fuss, this crude and clunky children's toy is capable of yielding some truly astonishing results. No matter how poor the light, the camera lends a distinctively hazy, dream-like quality to almost everything it shoots, accentuated by a ghostly optical shimmer when anything passes too quickly across the screen. Contrastingly, the simple fixed focus lens lets one get uncannily close to people or objects, miraculously registering both detail and depth. Even more strikingly, the images produced reveal an extraordinary sense of intimacy and spontaneity,

along with a desire to experiment that is no doubt encouraged by the ridiculously small-scale costs.

This program highlights a number of recent works by most of the leading figures in the still-expanding pixelvision field (among them Michael Almereyda, Michael O'Reilly, Sadie Benning and Erik Saks) and gives a glimpse of the unabashedly low-definition but increasingly high-profile Pixelvision craze.

Program 1.

Michael Almereyda: *Another Girl, Another Planet*, USA, 1992, 56 min

Michael Almereyda: *Aliens (for Sam Raimi)*, USA, 1993, 10 min

Michael Almereyda's *Another Girl, Another Planet* is the first (near) feature-length film to be produced entirely on the Fisher-Price PXL 2000 'toy' camera and, in many ways, not only the most stylish but also the most elegantly-crafted chamber piece that effortlessly belies its no-budget origins. Almereyda's coolly romantic New York story of two East Village neighbours and their tangled relationships is beautifully captured (through glass darkly) in the murky Pixelvision lens: the bleary black and white imagery perfectly matching the woozy, late night feel; the rearing surrealistic close ups (at which the Pixel camera excels) adding to a sense of heightened intimacy. Too good to mark down as a simple technological novelty, strong performances (from the semi-professional cast), nicely judged dialogue (from Almereyda himself) and a reverberant soundtrack make this an impressive piece of work on anyone's terms. Plus Almereyda's recently completed Pixel short *Aliens (for Sam Raimi)*, a disarmingly deadpan point-n-shoot interview featuring two young video game obsessives and their pithy assessments of the latest products of the Hollywood image-factory.

Program 2.

Michael O'Reilly: *Glass Jaw*, USA, 1991, 17 min

Pat Tierney/Erik Saks: *Don from Lakewood*, USA, 1991, 21 min

Joe Gibbons: *Elegy*, USA, 1991, 12 min

Sadie Benning: *It Wasn't Love*, USA, 1991, 20 min

Stuart Sherman: *Black and White/Grain*, USA, 1993, 2 min

This second selection brings together a number of stand out pieces from America's new wave of "pixelvisionaries" and shows up the inventive possibilities of their engagingly low-tech approach. Among the six names featured here, the rapidly growing reputation of underground wunderkind Sadie Benning has arguably done the most to bring the Pixel phenomenon to wider public attention. Benning's upfront, confessional style (the artist and her impressions centre off-screen, in often unflinchingly intimate detail) is shown to striking effect in the remarkable *It Wasn't Love*, perhaps the most accomplished of a flurry of recent short tapes which record Benning's coming out as a lesbian. The story of a highly charged fantasy affair ("Yesterday night, I drove to Hollywood with this chick..."), it is accurately described by American critic J Hoberman as a "road movie that manages to be sexy and romantic without ever escaping the director's bedroom". The Benning formula has clearly provided something of a blueprint for a vogue of highly personal, semi-diaristic Pixelvision works. Michael O'Reilly's *Glass Jaw*, made during the months he was holed up in his apartment after a horrific injury, unable to talk and eat anything other than liquids, is a case in point: a dark toned view from a room that explores its claustrophobia surroundings with a haunting intensity. Elsewhere, Joe Gibbons' performance/monologue *Elegy* is distinguished by its droll humour and its off the cuff observations, while the black comic *Don from Lakewood* uses eerie shadow figure animation to illustrate a crazy series of real life prankster phone calls. To close, two short pieces by Stuart Sherman spoof the visual cliches of the now established Pixelvision look.

OUT OF THE MACHINE

curated by Brian Langer

In the two worlds of the contemporary arts and the moving image, computers are making a profound and challenging mark. The boundaries of these two worlds have for some time been blurred and questioned by artists who straddle electronic image making and the moving image. The term 'technological art' commonly used as a pejorative description of 'computer art', is done so without accounting for a convergence and relationship that exists between the technical and aesthetic factors of the electronic arts (eg holography, videography, lasers, digital photography, multi media and communication art) in a broader sense. Aesthetic factors can vary widely among artists and we need to establish this, as well as the unifying presence of the specific technology. The field of the generic term 'computer art' now stretches away to a not so far-off horizon of virtual worlds, hyperreality and cybaspace.

OUT OF THE MACHINE is a whistlestop tour of contemporary Australian computer animation. The works in this program highlight a diversity of imaginative and innovative technological experiments, and algorithmic three dimensional effects together with conscious and intuitive creative processes. In this program it should be possible to gauge the range and the scope of computer animation in Australia today - work that arises out of, as well as extending, existing video art and animation traditions.

Computer animation can be defined as, dizzingly wild, formal, intellectually demanding, subversive, simple looking, amusing or elegantly entertaining. Above all, the various aesthetic options exercised by artists working with computers, albeit PC's or the most sophisticated equipment around, together with the emerging 'terra nova' of computer art suggests an abundance of radical new ground to be researched and explored.

Program 1.

In The Balance Ellen José and Marshall White, 1994 2 min. In the Balance is a collaborative work by Ellen José and Marshall White. The video marries cultural imagery from Ellen José's indigenous background with the flexibility and dynamics of computer generated animation.

SHELL = LONG LIFE

NATH (platform) = SURVIVAL

Life hangs in the balance.

(information provided by the artists)

River Styx Stephen Duke, 1994 11 min. Animated video section of a book, made for a Raft Press Book Project, The River Styx (National Library Canberra, February 1993). The story is about a crocodile and the digital Net dreaming.....

(information provided by ACAT)

The History of Luminous Motion Chris Caines, 1993 15 min.

"Transmission.

Our hearts are submersibles.

The air is wet with radio and television waves.

We fly above them in floating hotels, afraid we may fall.

And who knows then. What contraband we may feel moved to declare.

Before the wide eyes of our fellow passengers.

It is an old story.

Each communication technology carries with it the baggage of utopia.

Each new landscape has its horizon carpeted with utopia.

Each explorer, upon arrival in that cul-de-sac of self regard, tells the same story, passes the same baton." (Chris Caines)

The History of Luminous Motion contains recreations of landscapes in the western Australian desert, the Blue Mountains, and passages from the original journals of the colonial explorers in Warbuton, Sturt and Lawson.

(information provided by ACAT)

Lacrimosa (A mournful day) Csaba Szamasy, 1993, 5 min.

This collection of short and somewhat fragmented animations or ideas deal with the myths of religions at large. It is not possible, nor intended to dwell into any great depths of analytical stages of such myths, the work as a whole, exemplifies

some of the major problems still apparent in today's society on religious grounds.

Although, personally removed from such self justifications, the project offers to the viewer a sense of query into facets of reality of remaining and associated social structures.

In its, perhaps serious approach, the underlining and absurd humour stirs up uncomfortable truths of self inflicted and sheltered attitudes.

(information provided by the artist)

Noodle Film Troy Innocent, 1992, 1 min.
Yum Yum noodle is quick to make and good to eat in the mouth. An experimental advert for noodles.

Dollarex (Remix) Severed Heads, Tom Ellard, Jason Gee, Fincher Trist, 1994, 3min 5 sec.

Dollarex (Remix) is a satirical appropriation from the 'sex'-'glamour' industries. A pisstake of beefcake.

(information provided by the artists)

Symbios Samba Stuart Ramsden, 1987, 4 min 50 sec.

A portrayal of the Dance of Life, and the endless play between this dance and the elemental forces of nature. Humankind are manifest in two forms; as participators in the dance, a state of harmonic coexistence with Nature, and as dictators of the dance, moving to a beat of their own with dire consequences.

Abstract spatial forms are combined with representational motions and concrete sounds (temporal forms) to integrate the Artificial and the Natural - a distinction we can no longer afford to make.

(information provided by ACAT)

SOONGIRL Sarah King, 1993, 10 min
SOONGIRL travels a journey between two worlds - between the traditional and the surreal, the past and the future.

Stylistically, the video moves between the two realities of black and white early movie style live action and highly coloured 3D computer animation.

(information provided by the artist)

Program 2.

air, water (parts 2 & 3) John Tonkin 1993/4, 3 min.

air, water is a series of computer animated studies of the elements air and water, created using physically based modelling techniques. These animations are deliberately simple in their pacing and rendering. They are lyrical and evocative, suggesting a range of

emotional spaces.

(information provided by the artist)

"*these are the days*" John Tonkin 1994, 1 min 30 sec.

"*these are the days*" is about the passing of time. It is an animation of falling paper that marked on a piece of paper, from birth and death certificates to supermarket receipts. The action of gravity has often been used as a metaphor for the passing of time; the falling of leaves, the sands through the hour glass, pages blown in the calendar. The endless stream of falling paper suggests the meditative space of a waterfall, yet also speaks of consumption and waste.

(information provided by the artist)

Bilderbuch Fur Ernst Will

(Ernst Will's Picture Book) A Euro Rebus Peter Callas, 1993, 11 min

This videotape is an electronic rendering of a form of proto-televsual iconomania: the creation of haphazardly sourced private pictorial scrap books or bilderbucher. Often intended for the surprise, delight and edification of grandchildren by grandparents, these books had the anagogical potential to become flamboyant transmogrifications of the detritus and sequestered oddments of the great age of print in the latter half of the 19th century.....(excerpt from an essay by the artist)

Ernst Will's Picture Book is the third of a trilogy of major video art tapes Callas began 1988. These works are astute, iconographic and occasionally mischievous, utilising and combining multi-layering computer effects with an array of motifs (found artefacts) and linguistic clues from Australia, Japan, USA and now Europe to create a form of electronic writing about what he calls in general "Technology as Territory".

Bifurcate Mike Nicholls and Tim Kreger, 1993, 11 min 30 sec.

Bifurcate is an audio visual work which uses bifurcating processes in both domains. The sound is generated using two simple bifurcating algorithms. The algorithm used to produce the foreground percussive lines is a timing dependent MIDI feedback algorithm. The upward or downward tendencies of the melodic lines are a result of the interaction between periodic processes occurring asynchronously.

The video uses various video feedback techniques which are essentially bifurcating processes. Different images are used to trigger the process however

are used to trigger the process however the original triggers are revealed. The patterns and motion are a result of the angle of camera and the filtering processes used.

(information provided by ACAT)

Need Lynn Sanderson, 1994, 4 min 12 sec.

This short blast of energy explores forbidden zones. Lynn Sanderson believes that technology is a powerful aid to fantasy. "With a touch of the button, I can surgically remove the staples from the belly of the centrefold."

Need uses a non-traditional fusion of computer generated visuals and techno-grunge music, to lead the viewer into a voyeuristic technoscope. Influenced by advances in cybernetics, virtual reality, reproductive technologies and genetic engineering, Lynne Sanderson's work is a confronting, hardcore commentary on the techno-punk attitude of the nineties.

(information provided by the artist)

Rave - Safe Adam Jaffer and Jeff Jaffer, 1994, 3 min.

An experimental video which utilises computer animation to explore issues relating to safe sex and safe drug use. The video was produced in association with the AIDS Trust of Australia's Tribes Project 1993.

"We wanted to create a representational journey that the HIV virus takes as it multiplies itself through the blood system, but we didn't want to make it scary or shocking. We used creative licence to present the images in a visually pleasing way, to mesmerise the viewer, without hitting them on the head with a sledgehammer"- Jeff Jaffers Encore magazine NSW.

(information provided by the artists)

JAWPAN Troy Innocent, 1992, 7 min 5 sec.

A tale about Otaku a small child obsessed with the gathering of information and his SD (super deformed) robot. The content of the information Otaku collects is irrelevant, it is the consumption of it that matters. He has very big eyes and a constantly smiling mouth. In the side of his head is a standard Cyberdada 3 point jack which accepts all Cyberdada new reality modules. He constantly runs a pop culture module and is addicted to video games.

When Jawpan, a 'nice life ATM' error and evil entity, begins to morph the world Otaku transforms and battles Jawpan gaining entry to the inside of his body and CPU.

(information provided by the Artist)

Stefaan Decostere:

Travelogue Series

Stefaan Decostere is among a handful of truly innovative directors working within television, creating new forms to explore complex ideas. He has worked as a director for the Belgian Televisions Arts Unit since 1979. He studied film direction at the National Film School (RITCS) in Brussels from 1974 until 1978. There he directed his first documentary *Marcel Duchamp*.

Decostere caused quite a stir in 1983 with *There is a Videocassette in the Soup*, a program with strikingly unusual imagery. To quote Skrien, programs such as *Nam June Paik*, *The Double Portrait*, *Dance+Camera*, *Warum Wir Manner Die Technik so Lieben*, *Polyphonists* and the series *Charbon-Velours*, are 'not documentaries in the usual sense, where a work of art or specific issue is an object to be presented, but appear to regard presentation itself as the interesting issue.' Fortunately the somewhat moralising (and formalistic) type of circular theme - making television about television - is abundantly balanced by Decostere's fascination for the image in general and for TV and video as new-fashioned 'Gesamtkunstwerk' in particular.

The *Travelogue* series explores parallels between different forms of cultural display: the museum, the worlds fair, the city, film, television, the shopping mall and the tourist site. Within all of these forms, legacies of power, colonialism and sexism are revealed.

Program 1.

Travelogue 4: *Coming from the wrong side*, 1992, 58 min. - Speaking of the heritage of Indians, this extremely slowly evolving documentary on the Canadian Rockies. The tourist site, Banff, is presented as a recycled product of a generic past, where archetypal images are layered to create only the illusion of the passage of time. Sites are mediated through TV and tourism until the moment becomes a petrified memory, an image captured as a future that might have been.

Travelogue 1: *The Dream of Leopold Two*, 1990, 11 min - Leopold II, second king of Belgium, owned central Africa as a personal property and wanted to make Brussels the most beautiful capital of Western Europe (he failed

obviously). He founded an international geographic society called colonization, visited many world fairs and bought here and there a national pavillion which he then re-erected in Brussels. This great dream of the king is here visualised and "completed" in some aberrant way.

Travelogue 2: *The Metamorphoses of Tintin*, 1990, 11 min - A tour through a museum of Africa in Brussels exploring the means of fabrication of exoticism: how to make Africa exotic, and Brussels, and Nature, and Morale, and - why not - this Travelogue: an exotic critique, a daring travel exercise.

Travelogue 3: *Alchemy Bruxelloise*, 1990, 11 min - A video trip ultimately inside the

"Poeme Electronique", a bizarre and ideological film loaded film made by Le Corbusier, Varese and Xenakis for the Philips Pavilion in the Brussels World Fair of 1958, and a visualization of the old metaphor of the city as a human body.

Program 2.

Travelogue 5: *Deja-Vu*, 1994, 58 min. An attempt to seek out and explore the characteristics and directions emergent in this next generation of cultural experience, through both the European and, not so contrasting, Japanese models. Japan as World Fabricator of *Deja-Vu Future*.

THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE

Phantom train to Technopia

Curated by Erkki Huhtamo with Machiko Kusahara

The *ride film* is a remarkable instance of the cyclical processes underneath the "progressing" surface of the moving image culture. Hailed as a major new audiovisual genre, it is actually one of the oldest. The early film audiences of the late 1890's enjoyed the impression of rushing straight into the screen world, as if carried by a "phantom" train. According to one contemporary observer, writing in 1897, the spectator of such a film "was not an outsider watching from safety the rush of the cars. He was a passenger on a phantom train ride that whirled him through space...¹

Phantom ride films, shot from the "cowcatcher" of the engine combined the experience of "virtual voyaging" (well known from stereoscopic photographs and panoramas) to the sensations provided by mechanical amusement parks attractions, such as the roller-coaster. The parallel between the development of early film culture and the amusement park "ride" went even further: in Hale's *Tours and Scenes of the World*, an extremely popular film-based attraction which debuted at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904, the "phantom train" became a stationary railway carriage, which was used as a theatre for projecting phantom ride films. Additional sensory stimulation - mechanically produced sound simulating the clacking of the railroad tracks, rocking of the carriage, even gusts of wind - was used to provide a total simulation of an actual train ride.² Actually, such a system had been patented much earlier in England by film pioneer Robert W. Paul, who wanted to build a multi-sensory simulator attraction based on H.G. Wells' novel *The Time Machine* (1894).³ Even though Paul's time travelling project never materialized, it can be considered as the conceptual prototype for all subsequent motion simulator attractions, long before Douglas Trumbull appeared on the stage.

The phantom ride film, now simply called the *ride film*, is currently undergoing a major revival coupled with the motion simulator, a speciality theatre with hydraulically moving audience space. Pioneered by special effects master Douglas Trumbull in the 1970's and (re-)introduced in the context of the theme park in the 1980's, the motion simulator is currently entering the urban public space as a distinct attraction or as an essential part of new kind of entertainment centres, such as Iwerks Entertainment's *Cinetropolis*. It is even becoming "nomadic" in the form of the mobile simulation theatre, such as Iwerks' *Reactor*.

Program credits

Total length: 87 minutes

The program has been made possible by the collaboration of Angel Studios, Boss Film Studios, IMAX Corporation, Iwerks Entertainment, Links Corporation, Mega Productions, Rhythm & Hues, Ridefilm Corporation, Sega Enterprises Japan and Showscan Corporation.

1. Excerpt from Showscan promotional video (Showscan Corporation, 1993). An overview of the ride film phenomenon.

2. *Turbotour Colossus* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1990)

The ride film in its most classic form, as a "raw" filmic reproduction of the roller-coaster ride.

3. *Devil's Mine Ride* (Showscan Corporation, 1992)

A simulated roller-coaster ride inside an abandoned mine, created by the Belgium company Little Big One for the Showscan Dynamic Motion Simulator. Amazing computer graphics and a smooth transition between "physical" and virtual reality.

4. *Sub Oceanic Shuttle (S.O.S.)* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1991). Preshow and the Main Show. A entirelyly computer-generated futuristic ride on an high-speed underwater vehicle between San Francisco and Tokyo. Unexpected events will take place. Superb realization by the French CG company ExMacchina.

5. *The Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera* (Universal Studios, 1993). A major cartoon ride realized by the Rhythm & Hues company for the Universal Studios theme park. A Ride through the composite prehistoric-futuristic world of the Flintstones and the Jetsons.

6. *Megalopolice. Tokyo City Battle* (Sega Enterprises Japan 1993). A futuristic crime adventure as a ride, produced for the interactive AS-1 simulator. A wild rush through Tokyo in pursuit of a bunch of international ecoterroists led by the arch-criminal Brute Bombalez.

The ride film has become a growing industry. Major computer graphics and special effects companies, such as Trumbull's Ridefilm Corporation (now part of IMAX Corporation), Industrial Light and Magic, Boss Film Studios, Rhythm & Hues and Ex Macchina have produced high quality rides. Some companies, such as Showscan Corporation and Iwerks Entertainment have created a vertical product line designing, producing, marketing and exhibiting simulator-based attractions as their main business.

In a situation where competition is getting more and more intensive the ride film is looking for new directions and already influencing other audiovisual genres, such as the music video. The first major "rock'n roll ride" was *Peter Gabriel's Mindblender* (1993), which has been shown in the United States in a Reactor motion simulator by the Pepsi Cola Company, to promote their new product, Crystal Pepsi. More rides-cum-music videos are on the way, as the Pet Shop Boys' recent "ride-clip" *Liberation* has already demonstrated. But the ride film can also be used for pedagogical purposes, turning boring statistical information into exciting, yet highly informative rides in data-space. An example of this can be experienced in the open access HDTV or Hi-Vision theatre located in the lobby of Tokyo's new City Hall in Shinjuku.

The ride film has two "constant" aesthetic features: the exclusive use of the first person point of view and the simulation of the experience of travelling in a vehicle - a train, a motorcar, a roller-coaster, an aeroplane, a space ship or perhaps a futuristic high-speed submarine. In actual attractions these features are supported by the synchronized movements of the motion platform and often with a "preshow" which may feature an illusionistic set, live actors-cum-guards and supporting film material. Unlike conventional narrative cinema, which is somewhat distanced, based on the narrative logic of alternating points of view (the spectator is "moved" between the "inside" and the "outside"), the simulator ride is constituted as a "total" attraction, aiming at providing an "immersive" make-believe experience. Artificially produced "ultra-realism" - a feeling of "actually being there" - is considered a major goal, thus reactivating one of the basic "topoi" - that of "total immersion" - underlying media culture.

The emergence of the quest for "total immersion" seems to be connected with major ruptures in the system of audiovisual culture. The appearance of cinema around the turn of the century was such a moment, and so was the 1950's, when the coming of television forced the film industry to increase its attraction potential with features such as wide screen, 3-D and

7. *Robocop: the Ride* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1993). Preshow and Main Show. The figure of Robocop reappears in a ride adventure for Iwerks' Turbo Tour Theaters not directly based on any of the three Robocop feature films.

8. *Intergalactic Travel* (Links Corporation, 1991). A Japanese ride for a simulator called Conceptor at the Fujita Vente. "Travel through universe, sea, ruins, maze, and so on by a high-speed beagle, to a future city called Bio City". Composited from actuality films, miniatures, computer generated images and SFX.

9. *Space Race* (Showscan Corporation, 1992). The passengers of a space ship embark on a journey to experience NASA's vision of space colonization in the future. The space ship is swept through a space vortex and ends up in a curious space demolition derby. A humorous computer generated ride by Industrial Light and Magic.

10. *Journey to Technopia* (Boss Film Studios, 1993). Preshow, Main Show and Main Ride. A major ride adventure directed by Kim Nelson and made to be shown at the Technopia Pavilion at the Taejon Expo in Korea, 1993. An utopian technosociety of the future is attacked by the dark forces of the Overlord. A curious combination of Asian mythology, techno romanticism and comic book-like adventure.

11. *Escape to Planet Earth* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1991). Preshow and main ride. Another space adventure with an elaborate preshow film. Shown at Iwerks Turbo Tour Theatre theatres.

12. *Intergalactic Interface* (Links Corporation, 1993). Another ride for the 8 seater Conceptor-simulator, which is open to the public at the Fujita head office in Tokyo. "You can experience the process of design production using a computer, through the medium of a designers consciousness".

13. An excerpt presenting the Hi-Vision theater in the hall of the Tokyo City Hall in Shinjuku. Ride as a way of presenting statistical information in the form of a trip through dataspace. From the television series *The Empire of the Monitors*, directed by Erkki Huhtamo and produced by YLE (The Finnish Broadcasting Company), 1994.

Technicolor. The basis of contemporary immersive "location based entertainment" (LBE) was laid at the same time with these developments, with the launching of Disneyland.³ 1980's and 1990's have seen the audiovisual landscape enter again a period of turmoil and major re-structuring. The hegemony of cinema has been contested by the music video, new forms of television and the whole spectre of computer-based interactive applications from arcade videogames to domestic media machines and promising new formats such as CD-ROM.

The simulator ride is clearly an attempt to synthesize these conflicting lines of development into a formula, which sells and entertains, but offers also creative possibilities. It combines features from traditional cinema with state of the art digital technologies. Douglas Trumbull, whose most ambitious creation to date is the conglomeration of three rides labelled *The Secrets of the Luxor Pyramid* at the Luxor Hotel, Las Vegas (1993), thinks that the simulator ride should be a new, more involving genre of narrative cinema: "In this new form of entertainment, you'll feel like you are up on the stage with the characters and integrated into the story in a much more participatory way, so it's really a new dramatic art form. It's a new way to tell stories and it requires new technology to create a total immersion experience."⁴

Several recent rides have indeed been built around a narrative line, however rudimentary. Iwerks' *Robocop - the Ride* uses a well-know character from the big screen in an adventure which does not derive directly from any of the three Robocop films. More than any other, this ride reveals that the speciality cinema business, which was launched largely outside the main commercial film companies has started to flirt with Hollywood. People like Trumbull, and Iwerks' founders Stan Kinsey and Don Iwerks seem to be convinced that the traditional film culture has lost its energy and has to be reactivated by their offerings. The recent merger of two major speciality cinema companies, the Canadian IMAX Corporation and Trumbull's Ridefilm Corporation, is a sign of growing self-confidence and strategic thinking. Other mergers will certainly follow. The structure of the audiovisual entertainment industry will look quite different five years from now on.

What will be the future of the ride film? Is it a passing fancy or a lasting phenomenon? The only thing that is certain is that a lot of creativity, hardware development and capital will be invested in

14. *Virtual Adventures* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1993). A demo tape of the major interactive simulation attraction created by Iwerks Entertainment with Evans & Sutherland. Six people ride a "submersible" capsule, and each one is assigned a specific task. The first program is called The Loch Ness Expedition, the task being to save the eggs of the endangered Loch Ness monster.

15. *Dino Island* (Iwerks Entertainment, 1994). A sneak preview of a prehistoric ride developed by the French CG company ExMachina. Due to Iwerks Entertainment's Turbo Tour theatres in the summer 1994.

16. *The Secrets of the Luxor Pyramid* (Ridefilm Corporation/IMAX Ridefilm, 1993). An ABC television feature about the making of three major ride attractions for the Luxor Las Vegas hotel. They were opened in 1993 and created by Douglas Trumbull. Simultaneously a portrait about Trumbull's career as a pioneering ride film developer. Longer excerpt from the Luxor rides can be seen in the Prix Pixel 94 program.

17. *Peter Gabriel's Mindblender* (Mega Productions/Angel Studios, 1993). The first "rock'n roll ride" based on Peter Gabriel's song Kiss That Frog and shown in Iwerks Entertainment's travelling Reactor simulator. Realized by Angel Studios in a style deviating from the exclusive first-person point of view typical of ride films. Used by the Pepsi Cola Company to promote their new product, Crystal Pepsi.

it during the next few years (although some sceptical voices have already been raised about the real economic vistas of the present "experience industry")⁵. More and more rides will be made using synthetic computer imaging, which will emphasize the trend to take the audience from "physical" reality for rides in virtual fantasy worlds. A central development will be the interactive ride, which has already been pioneered by NAMCO's 28 person (!) "spaceship" Galaxian, Sega's AS-1 simulator capsule and Iwerks Entertainment's *Virtual Adventures*. The traditional passive ride experience is combined with features deriving from professional training simulators and video games. A case in point, in *Virtual Adventures* groups of six people are sent on an underwater adventure. All the participants are assigned a specific task in operating the capsule, an "underwater vehicle". The success of the mission depends on collaboration among the "crew" members. Here is a new idea for family entertainment, a far cry from a group of couch potatoes lying in front of the television screen.

The ride film is largely a corporate phenomenon. Beside Trumbull - a kind of Griffith of the ride film - no names are known to the general audience. All rides are more or less collective creations, designed within the parameters of the commercial entertainment capitalism. We seem to have returned to the anonymity which reigned in the film culture during its first decades. Does this leave any space for an independent ride film culture to develop? Will there ever be an "artistic" ride genre, perhaps even a countercultural one? Do these questions make any sense in a media saturated world, where most creative talents seek their satisfaction in the corporate world anyway? And what about art: will there ever be classic rides, timeless museum masterpieces which will be experienced and maintained five hundred years from now, like the Sistine Chapel today? Or, does it really matter?

Footnotes.

1. The Phonoscope, August-September 1897, p.6 cit. Charles Musser: "The Travel genre in 1903-04: Moving Toward Fictional Narrative", *Iris*, Vol.2, No 1 (1er semestre 1984), p.53. About the history of the ride film, see my "Encapsulated Bodies in Motion: Simulators and the Quest for Total Immersion", *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*, Edited by Simon Penny, New York: SUNY Press (forthcoming).
2. Raymond Fielding: "Hales Tours. Ultrarealism in the Pre-1910 Motion Picture", *Film Before Film*, edited by John L. Fell, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 116-130.
3. See Terry Ramsaye: *A Million and One Nights. A History of the Motion Picture Through 1925*, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986 (orig. 1926), p.155.
4. See my "Encapsulated Bodies in Motion: Simulators and the Quest for Total Immersion", op.cit.
5. Ron Magid: "Brainstorming with Doug Trumbull", *American Cinematographer*, August 1992, p.59-60.
6. Michael Krantz: "Dollar a Minute", *Wired*, May 1994, p.108, 140.

LYNN HERSHMAN

VIRTUAL LOVE

Lynn Hershman: Virtual Love.

1993, 73 min

Directed, written and edited by Lynn Hershman

Director of Cinematography: Kathleen Beeler

Director of Cinematography and effects editor: Skip Sweeney

Cast: Rinde Ekert, Scott Fisher, Todd Gitlin, Ingrid Hardy, Michael Edo Keane, The Krokors, Jaren Lanier, Jean Mullis, Sandy Stone, RU Serious

Commissioning Editor: Claudia Tronnier

Produced in association with ZDF Das Kleine Fernsehspiel

Synopsis: Valery, a Virtual Reality archivist falls in love with Barry, an identical twin Virtual Reality researcher. To gain his attention she inserts an idealized electronic image into his computer and begins an on line correspondance. The other twin, Chip, discovers the secret and begins his own underground adventures with Valery. When Barry insists that he meet the virtual image, disasterous results occur. This is a love story for the '90's.

"Virtual Love" undercuts its mainstream erotic-thriller structure with cotextualizing doc interviews that put intermedia authorities like Todd Gitlin, Jaron Lanier, R U Serious and Arthur and Mary Louise Kroker on the hot seat.

They expound on the horizons and repercussions of hyper-tech advancement.

PRIX ARS ELECTRONICA '93

A selection of the best computer artworks from the Ars Electronica Festival (Linz, Austria) 1993, organised by ORF and LIVA

Pascal Roulin (France): *Lakme*, 2 min 57 sec. One part of a TV special in which 10 directors give their personal visions of 12 famous arias.

Mark Malmberg (USA): *Grateful Dead - Infrared Roses Revisited*, 3 min 40 sec. Computer generated music video.

Beriou (France): *Ex Memoriam*, 5 min 9 sec. Explores various ways of manipulating digitized analog images.

Darrin Butts (USA): *Legacy*, 2 min 6 sec. Animation exploring the myths and story telling of different cultures and regions of the world.

Jules Bister (Germany): *Endogenesis*, 1 min 54 sec. Portrays a fantasy world in which the viewer encounters various organic looking shapes.

Jos Claesen/Anton Roebben (Belgium): *Devils Mine*, 4 min 36 sec. Animated movie which takes the viewer on a wild ore cart ride through an abandoned gold mine.

Philippe Gassie/Bruno Simon (France): *Racoon*, 2 min 48 sec. A promotional film about the Renault car "Racoon".

Ken Ralston/ILM (USA): *Death Becomes Her*, 3 min 32 sec. The "Madeleine Falls" sequence from the film "Death becomes Her" in which Meryl Streeps character appears with her head twisted around

backwards.

George Barber (Great Britain): *Curtain Trip*, 3 min 43 sec. Explores the synaesthetic experience of the combination of image and soundtrack into a kaleidoscopic whole.

Eku Wand (Germany): *Gedichte von Ernst Jandl*, 2 min 31 sec. Interpretation of a work of poetry via computer art.

Knowbotic Research (Ostria/Germany): *Simulationsraum-Mosaik mobiler Datenklänge*, 2 min 56 sec. Graphics inspired by digitized sound samples.

Stephen Wilson (USA): *Is Anyone There?*, 4 min. Explores both the concrete technological possibilities and the poetry of using pay phones.

Jill Scott (Australia): *Paradise Tossed*, 9 min 44 sec. A dreamy computer animated survey of techno-logical terrain, idealism and design from 4 young womens point of view.

Michael Tolson (USA): *Founders Series* - transformations of a digitized face to explore the notion of surface in computer art.

Char Davies (Canada): *The Yearning* - computer depiction of 3D still images intended to have a hierophanic effect.

LIQUID LIGHT

Recent Australian video and computer works.

Exhibition and screenings at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Curated by Julie Vulcan.

"Video has amongst its many qualities a simple and most alluring aesthetic, it is a light form with a luminous liquid quality. Images seem to melt and mould themselves within this landscape. Metamorphosing before our eyes, then slipping into other continuous realms, realms that expand from the macrocosm to the microcosmic. These are reminiscent of our minds many layers of consciousness.

Art is a process, not a product. The subconscious, the imagination are not static forces but liquid, visceral, meshing. When an idea is realised the creative force does not stop, it moves on exploring further. The electronic image can thus be seen as a metaphor for this process, pouring its visionary light across the screen. When one process, idea, image is completed it does not end but begs for more, humming, enticing, suggesting that something continues behind the scene/screen.

The works in the exhibition and screened at the Australian National Maritime Museum all reflect this simple liquid aesthetic. The technology, however, is associated with progress(ion), and is this questionable? As Maryella Hatfield ironically states in *Range of Experience*

"You too can enter an amazing world, once created naturally by the sub-conscious mind."

Thus, these are works in "process", they do not end here, they continue on, expanding, exploring, delving and questioning in the liquid landscapes of the mind.

LIQUID LIGHT:

THE SCREENINGS

Program 1.

Sintu, Elena Popa, 1992, 1 min 38 sec.
Sintu is dancing freely by herself when she encounters a male figure. She is seduced by his strength and beautifully patterned body. Mesmerised... the dance begins.

Kinder-Aund Hausmärchen #3, Gregory Ferris, 1994, 7 min.

Someone gets runover by a train; a man sings.

"If you go down to the woods today you're in for a big surprise..."

Excerpt from *Kinder-Aund Hausmärchen*; format single chip domestic Hi-8 to one inch.

Range of Experience Maryella Hatfield, 1993, 11 min 10 sec.

An ironic piece looking at synthetic experience available as a product once accessed naturally through the subconscious.

Improvised Live Video Sub-Vertigo, 1993/94, 2 min 40 sec.

Excerpts from live real-time video/scratch mixes, mainly at raves and dance parties, improvising to music provided by DJs or musicians. Video sources include video tape, video cameras, computer graphics, CVI, oscilloscopes, video synthesizers and optical and electronic feedback loops.

Pet Helen Meany, 1993, 8 min.

Computer assisted animation addressing the issue of cruelty to animals.

Robot Cycle Elena Popa, 1992, 3 min 15 sec.

The robot is taking her last walk. She is dying. Obsolete...she views the later models in a shop window with sadness...

Improvised Live Video Sub-Vertigo, 1993/94, 2 min 10 sec.
see above.

Desire Lachlan Creagh, 1992, 3 min 25 sec.

Set on a stark and rusting merry-go-round. A cycle of relationships. In its canopy are the ideal...and sitting below is the individual grown weary and cynical; compelled by desire and also condemned. Animation drawn via a mouse into D paint 4 on an Amiga 2000.

Curbside Ainsley Crabbe, 1992, 3 min 45 sec.

A story of a fish discovering the world on a motorbike.

A Visceral Moment Fabian Astore, 1994, 4 min

A Visceral Moment is a product of the abject. It is a dislocation from the everyday, a confrontation with my identity.

Program 2.

The Obvious Michael Hill, 1993, 33 min

The voice of the analytical eye, activity at the lower levels, animals native and introduced and the victory of seeing over telling.

LIQUID LIGHT: the exhibition

Australian National Maritime Museum.

June 3/4/5 1994.

Curated by Julie Vulcan.

Peter Charuk: *The Dance of Death*

The Dance of Death uses the metaphor of the book as the basis of the work. The concept revolves around Hans Holbein's book of the same name. The Dance of Death by Holbein encompasses a journey of descriptions, political and social, associated with the occurrence of death. *The Dance of Death* is an interactive work reconstructing some of these possibilities using medical images of the body, 3D animations and text in a poetic description of a body transformation.

The interface for *The Dance of Death* encompasses the site of a skeleton chair constructed from timber in which the computer resides. The chair invites associations of domesticity and rest with the audience. The audience is then invited to interact with the book on the computer screen.

A dancing skeleton is the index to the book, by touching the skeleton with the mouse pointer the participant can navigate to various sections of the book in order to view animations, still images or read the text. The touching of the skeleton highlights the participant's own body as a means of communication with the inner.

The work explores potential sites of investigation and images associated with death. There is a mixture of current and dated technologies. The skeleton being made from timber and metal counterpoints the technology of the computer.
(Information supplied by the artist)

Greg Ferris: *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*

Kinder-und Hausmärchen (Fables for the home and children) comprises of a collection of narratives, historical references, sounds and images that weave around one another. The paths of the narratives are directed by the choices of the "player" in the interactive, or by the set structure of the linear video in the screened version.

On the computer the main interactive screen is a Ouija board which the player uses to guide themselves through the stories. The order of the narrative is determined by touching the letters on the board. The Mystifying Oracle (the Ouija board) is, on one level, a game, but on another, something quite sinister.

Kinder-und Hausmärchen is a continuing project for the artist. The title is taken from the original title of the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm.
(Information supplied by the artist)

Maria Stukoff: *Phase 3*

Phase 3 is a part interactive and part computer animated installation which explores interference as a means for interaction. Through the exploration of this digital water, the audience interfere with the uninterrupted flow of animated pixels. Like the reflection of light on water, the images are refracted to create various moving forms only visible to the observer inter-acting.

The work is a perception of the intrinsic elements of water. The image, or the computer pixel, is only the catalyst for visualising movement. It is this motion, of the audience in conjunction with the animated forms, that is the core of this work.

This installation is the third part in a series of works first shown as a computer animated environment at the *Real Time Exhibition*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space in October 1993. The second stage *Bridge Over Troubled Water* a black and white television installation is currently on exhibit as part of the Next Wave Festival, shown at Gallery 101 Melbourne.

(Information supplied by the artist) Maria is the winner of the 1993 Special EMA Grant.

Prix Pixel 1994:

The prize winning computer animations from the Imagina 1994 Festival, Monte Carlo.
Imagina is organised by Monte Carlo Television Festival and INA.

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|--|--|---|---|
| Category: Credits Title: <i>Musikstreifzüge</i> Realisation: Pokorny/Stalf/Zauner (Scanline Production) Production: Alexander Hefter Country: Germany | Country: France Category: Research Title: <i>The Art of Talking Pictures</i> Realisation: Peter Litwinowicz (Apple Computer) Production: Apple Computer | Tesside Country: Great Britain Category: Credits Title: <i>Nicktoons Open</i> Realisation: Chris Wedge (Blue Sky Productions) Production: Blue Sky Productions Country: USA | Production: Spots Country: Great Britain Category: Simulation-Visualisation Title: <i>Rhapsody in Light & Blue</i> Realisation: Hiroshima University Production: Hiroshima Production: Abbott Mead Vickers University Country: Japan |
| Category: Fiction Title: <i>Evoluzioni</i> Realisation: Pascal Roulin/Ex Machina Production: Cine Fiat Country: France/Italy | Category: Credits Title: <i>Les guignols de l'info</i> Realisation: Denis Van Waerebeke (Buf Compagni) Production: Le Village Country: France | Category: Fiction Title: <i>Inter Galactic Interface</i> Realisation: Takahiko Akiyama (Links) Production: Links Country: Japan | Category: Music Video Title: <i>Steam - Peter Gabriel</i> Realisation: Colossal Pictures/Homer & Associates Realisation: Peter Conn (Homer & Associates) Production: Real World Productions Country: USA |
| Category: Simulation - Visualisation Title: <i>The Ancient World Revisited</i> Realisation: Kunio Kida (Taisei Corporation) Production: NHK Country: Japan | Category: Special Effects Title: <i>Luxor Excerpts</i> Realisation: The Trumbull Company/Kleiser-Walczak Production: Kleiser Walczak Country: USA | Category: 3D Animation Title: <i>CGI work in "Aladdin"</i> Realisation: Walt Disney Feature Animation Production: Walt Disney Feature Animation Country: USA | Category: Fiction Title: <i>Ils sont là (les Quarxs)</i> Realisation: Maurice Benayoun Production: ZA Production/Ellipse/Canal + France 3/Club d'Investissement Media Country: France |
| Category: Music Video Title: <i>Stand by me</i> Realisation: Pascal Vuong Production: Cougar Films/Riff Country: France | Category: Advertising Title: <i>Perrier "l'attaque du frigo"</i> Realisation: ILM Production: ILM/Premiere Heure Country: USA | Category: Special Effects Title: <i>Journey to Technopia</i> Realisation: Kim Nelson (Boss Film Studios) Production: Boss Film Studios Country: USA | Category: Simulation-Visualisation Title: <i>Tasse de thé</i> Realisation: Bruno Simon Production: Renault Design Country: France |
| Category: Advertising Title: <i>Volvo "on your side"</i> Realisation: David Garfath (The Paul Weiland Film Co) Realisation: Mark Benson (The Moving Picture Company) Country: Great Britain | Category: Schools and Universities Title: <i>49 bis rue de la Citadelle</i> Realisation: Khemiri/Raynaud/Niquet Production: Sup Info Com Country: France | Category: Schools and Universities Title: <i>The Hit</i> Realisation: Jordi Marogues Production: Université des Iles Baléares Country: Spain | Category: Research Title: <i>20 000 lieues sous les mers</i> Realisation: Didier Pourcel (Gribouille) Production: Gribouille Country: France |
| Category: Research Title: <i>Duel</i> Realisation: Paul Provenzano (Acclaim Entertainment) Realisation: Wes Trager (Acclaim Entertainment) Production: Acclaim Entertainment Country: USA | Category: Art Title: <i>D'après le naufrage</i> Realisation: Alain Escalle Production: Mikros Image/Grand Canal Country: France | Category: 3D Animation Title: <i>Koa la grenouille</i> Realisation: Fantome Production: Fantome/Canal + /Club d'Investissement Media Country: France | Category: Research Title: <i>20 000 lieues sous les mers</i> Realisation: Didier Pourcel (Gribouille) Production: Gribouille Country: France |
| Category: 3D Animation Title: <i>KO Kid</i> Realisation: Marc Caro Production: Midi-Minuit/Duran/Buf Cie Country: France | Category: Music Video Title: <i>L'ennemi dans la glace</i> Realisation: J B Mondino (Bandits) Realisation: Mac Guff Ligne Production: Bandits Country: France | Category: Art Title: <i>Tableau d'amour</i> Realisation: Beriou Production: Agave/Canal + /Club d'Investissement Media Country: France | Category: Special Effects at Grand Prix Pixel-INA Title: <i>Jurassic Park</i> Realisation: Steven Spielberg Production: ILM Country: USA |
| Category: Art Title: <i>Variations</i> Realisation: Daniel Borenstein Production: Medialab | Category: Schools and Universities Title: <i>Flamenco Dolly</i> Realisation: Natalie Zita Production: University of | Category: Advertising at Prix European Imagina Title: <i>Smirnoff "Message in a bottle"</i> Realisation: The Mill | |

Game / Art Interface

An exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW in conjunction with Electronic Media Arts Australian International Video Symposium. Curated by Erkki Huhtamo (Finland) and Machiko Kusahara (Japan).

Games and game playing has become an increasingly important aspect of our relationship with technology. This is particularly evident in the case of the digital computer and its applications in business, research, education, entertainment and - art. When communicating with the computer, we explore playfully its options, making choices and combinations, even "navigating" inside the virtual realms of computerized dataspaces. Modes of playing are becoming one of the most important models of behaviour in societies which are increasingly saturated by technology. Playing constitutes a "rite of passage" for entering the "culture of interactivity", which is already materializing around us.

The exhibition Game / Art Interface investigates the ways in which contemporary media artists have adopted game playing as a central aspect of their aesthetic strategies. The exhibition should be seen as an art game arcade, thus referring to an institution which, although ignored, despised or feared by those devoted to high culture, has already played an important role as a breeding ground for new modes of interactivity, and as a consequence, for new cultural formations.

Several pieces in the exhibition come from Japan, thus paying attention to the fact that artists living in a highly media saturated "zone" have already begun to consider games as second nature, a self evident part of the media environment. For established media artists like Toshio Iwai or Yoshinori Tsuda video games provide a possibility to reflect on the logic of media culture by re-enacting some of its forms. For younger generation artists, like Shigeyuki Handa, who have practically grown up with Pacman, Tetris and Space Invaders, they seem to provide a natural source of inspiration, somehow as a picturesque landscape or the features of a beautiful girl might have done in past centuries. There are still others, for whom the interactive possibilities offered by the CD-ROM technology have provided a strong inspiration. Japanese CD-ROM artworks combine eccentric humour, multiple intertextual references and mystery with educational, narrative and game-like elements. Several recent examples will be shown.

On the other hand, there are artists who have set out to deconstruct the ideology underlying games culture, identifying it as a mechanism for maintaining the masculine power structures prevailing in a technological society. For artists like the Australian group VNS Matrix or the American Christine Tamblin interactivity is may be just another strategy for disguising the male domination behind the "innocence" of entertainment; yet at the same time, it provides a way to investigate critically the promises of the "democratic" empowerment of the subject connected with the coming of interactive media. Interactive technology is an efficient way of reworking existing systems of communication also for Australian "cyberdadaist" Troy Innocent, whose feverish creations have set out to create an ambivalent, playful and constantly moving digital cyberlandscape, framed by manifestoes composed by the artist in true reborn dada-spirit.

The artists exhibiting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales:

Christine Tambllyn (San Francisco, USA): *She Loves It, She Loves It Not: Women and Technology*. Interactive CD ROM artwork. 1993. Created in collaboration with Marjorie Franklin and Paul Tompkins.

This work focuses on privileged depictions of the relationship between women and technology, including commercials depicting women's enslavement by domestic appliances, industrial film clips revealing pervasive gender stereotyping in the workplace and science fiction film excerpts that image the invasion of women's bodies by futuristic machines. Autobiographical anecdotes transcribed in letters to the viewer are collaged with these cultural artifacts, while mechanistic sound effect loops create a textural ambience. Interactive computer technologies are self-reflexively interrogated as consumer oriented epistemes.

VNS Matrix (Adelaide/Sydney, Australia) *All New Gen*. Interactive computer installation. 1993.

All New Gen is an interactive multimedia module, designed as a "Gamegirl", a kind of reverse Nintendo game console. The aim is to deconstruct the ideology lying hidden behind the male dominated video game culture. All New Gen (ANG) is an anarcho cyberterrorist agent of the new world disorder. ANG and her band of renegade DNA sluts, Patina de Panties, Dentata and the Princess of Slime, are the saboteurs of Big Daddy Mainframe. They tangle with a motley crew of techno mutants and data deviants on their quest - the most virulent being Circuit Boy, a dangerous techno bimbo and BDM's sidekick. In one smooth manoeuvre our heroes perform a major morph on the bimbo's extremely sizeable tool and take the shine off his texture map.

Troy Innocent (Melbourne, Australia) *IDEA ON!* An interactive CD-ROM artwork.

Four proposed virtual worlds, an interactive CD-ROM: a catalogue of experience and artistic ideas groomed together in four electronic worlds that may be explored intuitively through a three dimensional interface. The information landscape becomes coded with its own language for communication from the inner computer/personal reality to the physical reality. "Amid hard data bursts of cyberhype will be embedded soft clouds of information regarding the remapping of human consciousness to a new reality." (Troy Innocent)

Toshio Iwai (Tokyo, Japan): *Music Insects*. Interactive artwork for creating audiovisual "music". 1990.

Four abstract "insects" (actually computerized dots, pixels) moving around on the screen of an Amiga computer make sound and music according to the lines in different colours drawn by the user. Insects are either bounced off by the lines, or they get through. Every time an insect hits a line it will make a different sound, which depends on the color combination. This ingenious and entertaining work is based on software written by the artist himself. The software will be commercially available for Nintendo game consoles later in 1994. A version of this work was created when Iwai was artist in residence at the Exploratorium, San Francisco.

Yoshinori Tsuda (Tokyo, Japan) *The Discredit Series*. Interactive installation for a digital Fujix TV-photo player and a mouse. 1989 onwards, different versions.

This intelligent and humorous work satirized mindless consumerism, mindless responses to advertising and mindless participation in economic systems of vast scale. Within these systems the individual is little more than an interchangeable entity quantified by the currency he carries and the credit cards he commands. By moving the mouse along a "slide" the use effects changes in the video image visible on a small liquid crystal monitor. Monetary icons, such as credit card images, undergo surprising changes. For Tsuda, credit cards are the religious icons of modern society.

Shigeyuki Handa (Tokyo, Japan) *Game Center 'Self Conclusion'*. A series of game parodies. Interactive computer installation. 1994.

This innovative and surprising "game center" was created by a true Japanese game "otaku" (nerd), an art-student at the University of Tsukuba. A video image of the player is grabbed into a MSX personal computer, an early inexpensive game computer connected to a regular TV monitor. The player's multiplied face becomes an element of well known games like Pac Man or Space Invaders. In a sense the player fights against oneself. The cynical sense of humour evident in the piece represents the feelings of the present Japanese "game generation". The software was written by the artist.

In addition examples of recent CD-ROM artworks from Japan will be shown. List of titles and schedule will be available at the AGNSW.