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**Video Void:
Australian
Video Art**
1970s, 1980s & 1990s

Presented by the Faculty of Art & Design,
Monash University

Video Void: Australian Video Art
1970s, 1980s & 1990s

In Australia there is a significant lack of knowledge regarding early Australian video artworks and an audience faces substantial difficulties in accessing these works and tracing the history and leitmotifs that connect them. American theorist Fredric Jameson described this as the 'disappearance of history'—the way in which our society is losing the capacity to retain its own past and has begun to live in a perpetual present. Jameson blamed electronic images like these because, in his opinion, they represent a paradox for memory and history as they connote the immediate instead of the past.

Video Void will re-engage the audience with important historical Australian video artworks from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s through a series of lectures and parallel screening programs. These works have been loaned from Australian collections and archives such as the Australian Video Art Archive, National Gallery of Australia and Griffith Artworks. Our aim is to draw attention to the seminal works of Australian artists, which would otherwise remain lost in time.

Convened by Matthew Perkins, Studio Coordinator of Photomedia in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University and Dr Elena Galimberti, research assistant for the Australian Video Art Archive in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University.

WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 6.15PM

MATTHEW PERKINS, MONASH UNIVERSITY
Video Void: 1970s

In his paper *Archive Fever* (1998) Jacques Derrida suggests that the archive is motivated by a need to discover the seminal historical moment, as a way of owning those initial times in history. So while the archive can be seen as an institution dedicated to issues of preservation, storage and retrieval, it is also motivated by a need to capture and own those moments in history. This knowledge may affect our translation of events and objects that occurred after and indeed before those archived artifacts were created.

In the context of video art in Australia identifying that 'historical moment' is not without its problems, primarily because documenting this history has been somewhat neglected. In Australia in the 1970s video was marked by its experimental pluralism with a variety of approaches to the medium, for example: commenting on the social or political; documenting performances; and exploring the synthetic potential of the video image and television as a mass-media icon. This lecture will trace a number of these important historical threads through the 1970s and highlight the importance of accessing these works via archives and collections.

Matthew Perkins' video and photographic works have been included in exhibitions such as *Testing Ground*, Melbourne; *Figuratively Speaking: The Figure in Contemporary Video Art*, Brisbane, *Stranger Geography*, Italy; and *Skin Alive*, Canberra and Melbourne. He has also curated a number of exhibitions such as *Vernacular Terrain*, China, Japan, Australia, *Anxious Bodies*, Melbourne, Hobart, and *Unsharp/Unconscious*, Brisbane, Launceston. He has contributed to a number of publications including *The International Journal of the Humanities* and *When You Think About Art: The Ewing & George Paton Galleries 1971–2008*. With Professor Anne Marsh he founded the Australian Video Art Archive in 2006—a project dedicated to the archiving and distribution of Australian video and performance art. www.videoartchive.org.au

VIEWING PROGRAM
Warren Burt *5 Moods* 1979
Bush Video *Meta Video Programming One* 1974
David Perry *Interior with Views* 1976
Gary Willis '*… and the Leopard looked like Me!*' – *Play for You* 1979
Peter Kennedy and John Hughes *November Eleven* 1979–1981

WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 6.15PM

IAN HAIG, RMIT
Video Void: 1980s

A cultural shift occurred in terms of video art in the 1980s with the introduction of the domestic VHS video recorder, the first video libraries, and the ability to record and cut up appropriated material—the seeds of an early remix culture. At this time, developments in technology with the introduction of digital systems such as the Fairlight Computer Video Instrument and Amiga computers saw the early hybridisation of video which lead to new funding initiatives to support video and emerging technology.

There was also a shift in the critical reception of video art, as the practice became contextualised within 'screen culture' and less within the space of the gallery due to theatrical screenings of artwork at festivals such as the Australian Video Festival.

Ian Haig works at the intersection of visual arts and media arts. His work explores the strangeness of everyday reality and focuses on the themes of the human body, transformation and psychopathology. His work has been exhibited in galleries and video/media festivals around the world, including exhibitions at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. In addition his animation and video works have screened in over 120 festivals internationally. In 2003 he received a fellowship from the New Media Arts Board of the Australia Council. He is currently undertaking a PhD on the abject and uncanny in contemporary media arts practice.

VIEWING PROGRAM
Randelli *A Taxi to Temptation* and *Dial T for Terror* 1981
Philip Brophy *ADS* 1982
Ross Harley *Beauty and the Beat* 1988
Geoffrey Weary *Failure to Materialise* 1988
Peter Callas *Neo Geo: An American Purchase* 1989

WEDNESDAY 17 NOVEMBER 6.15PM

DARREN TOFTS, SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Video Void: 1990s

In his book *Mutant Media* (2007) John Conomos discusses the possibility of a reclusive narrative, a narrative yet to be written. That narrative, of local video art in Australia, remains as elusive today as it was in 1994, when Nicholas Zurbrugg asked a similar question. Zurbrugg was writing on the cusp of the emerging paradigm of interactive media art, Conomos at a time when the fervour of new media had all but disappeared. Perhaps somewhere between these two poles of anticipation and longing we may find some answers to a persistent question, but also to the question of why we keep asking it in the first place: why is the history of Australian video art *as yet unwritten*?

Darren Tofts is Professor of Media and Communications at Swinburne University of Technology. He is a well-known cultural critic who writes regularly for a range of national and international publications on issues to do with cyberculture, new media arts and critical and cultural theory. His work appears regularly in publications such as *Photofile*, *RealTime*, *Rhizomes* and *Scan Journal of Media Arts Culture*. His books include *Memory Trade: A Prehistory of Cyberculture* (with artist Murray McKeich), *Parallax: Essays on Art, Culture and Technology* and *Interzone: Media Arts in Australia*. He is currently working on a book project with Stelarc on the history of the body. www.darrentofts.net

VIEWING PROGRAM
Troy Innocent and Dale Nason *Cyber Dada Manifesto* 1990
Ian Haig *KRad Man* 1991
John Gillies *Techno/Dumb/Show* 1991
Ross Harley *The Digital Garden* 1992
VNS Matrix *Beg and Gen in the Bonding Booth* 1993
Lauren Berkowitz and Lisa Andrew *Sightseeing Tours* 1993
Justine Cooper *Rapt* 1998
Barbara Campbell *Inflorescent* 1999

COVER IMAGE
Peter Kennedy and John Hughes
November Eleven 1979–1981 (video still)
single channel video, sound
00:21:00
courtesy the artists and Griffith Artworks, Brisbane

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