

r u n w a y

issue six: watching

SPECIAL ISSUE!
NEW AUSTRALIAN
VIDEO ART
DVD INSIDE



twelve dollars

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Editorial

Jaki Middleton

In 2001, serial political stuntman Andy from The Yes Men spoke at a 'Textiles of the Future' conference in Finland, under the pretence that he was a representative of the World Trade Organisation. In his keynote address Andy proposed a new innovation that could increase productivity. During his speech his assistant Mike stepped in to rip off Andy's tearaway business suit, revealing a golden 'leisure suit' that included an inflatable 'Employee Visualisation Appendage'. This appendage was a metre-long phallus complete with attached control screen with which a factory manager, it was suggested, could remotely watch and discipline workers in a sweat shop thousands of kilometres away, while at the same time engaging in personal exercise or recreation.

Absurd as the presentation may have been (even if the conference attendees didn't seem to notice), remote surveillance—minus the golden suit and phallus—is already a reality. Companies such as Network Surveillance Software boast that their workplace surveillance systems can boost productivity by an average of 6.25 hours a week per worker¹. How this system impinges on the personal freedom of the employee is unacknowledged by its advocates. Obviously, this kind of surveillance is not limited to industry; we live in a sophisticated panopticon and are being watched on an ever-increasing scale. Authorities justify this escalating surveillance as a necessary measure to protect against the persistent threat of terrorism. It is our freedom that is being protected, we are told—but freedom and free market are not the same thing. And, despite the fact that there is a growing opposition to the loss of freedom brought about by this surveillance, it feels like all we can do is watch.

Being watched and watching can, of course, be pleasurable experiences. While several contributors to this issue consider the more serious and sinister implications of watching, such as Teo Treloar's discussion of the parallels between recent world tragedies and Hollywood disaster films, other submissions, like Soda_Jerk & Sam Smith's *The Phoenix Portal*, or Anna Peters' *Watching Cartoons*, look at the theme of watching in a more positive and playful light.

As a special addition to this, our sixth issue, we are very excited to be able to offer our readers something to watch as well as something to read. We commissioned ten Australian artists to produce new video works, and the collection is included on our limited edition DVD.

¹ <http://www.network-surveillance-software.com/productivity.htm> viewed September 28 2005

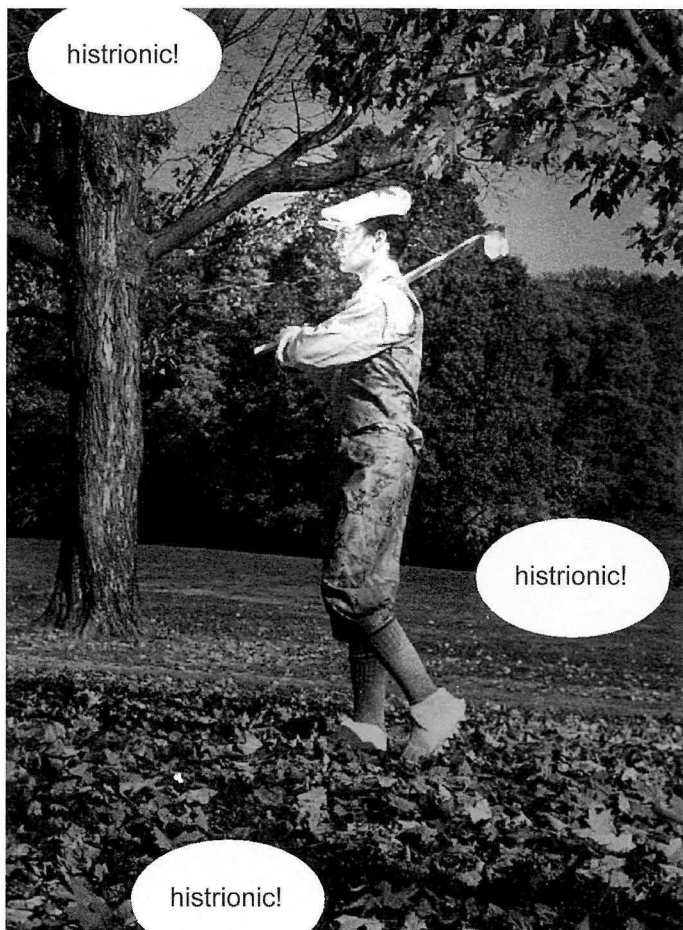


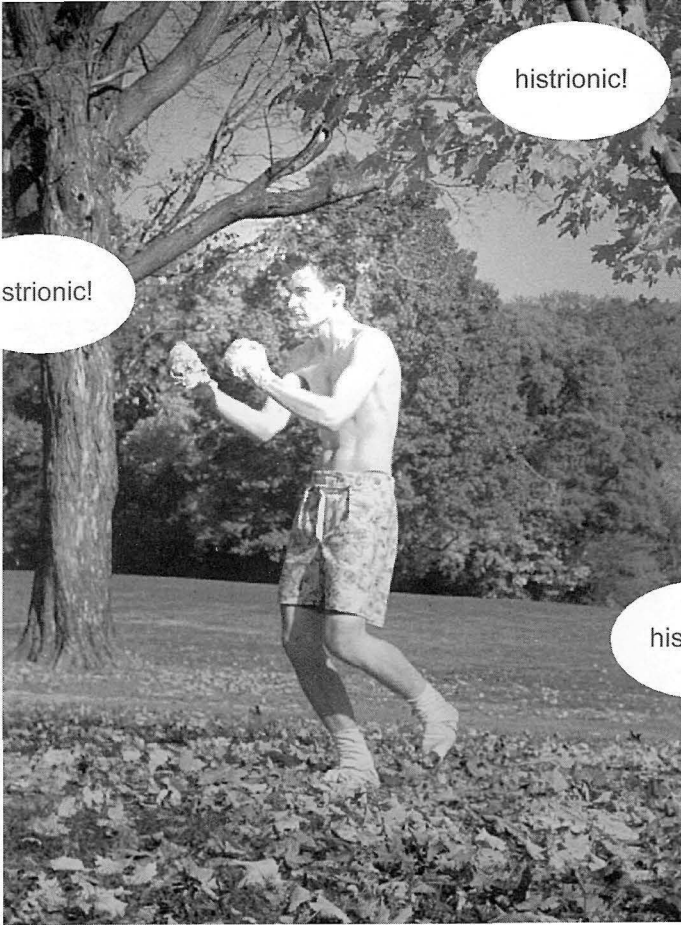
Image: Andy of The Yes Men demonstrates the 'Employee Visualisation Appendage' Image courtesy of www.theyesmen.org

Bucolic Landscapes

Katy B Plummer







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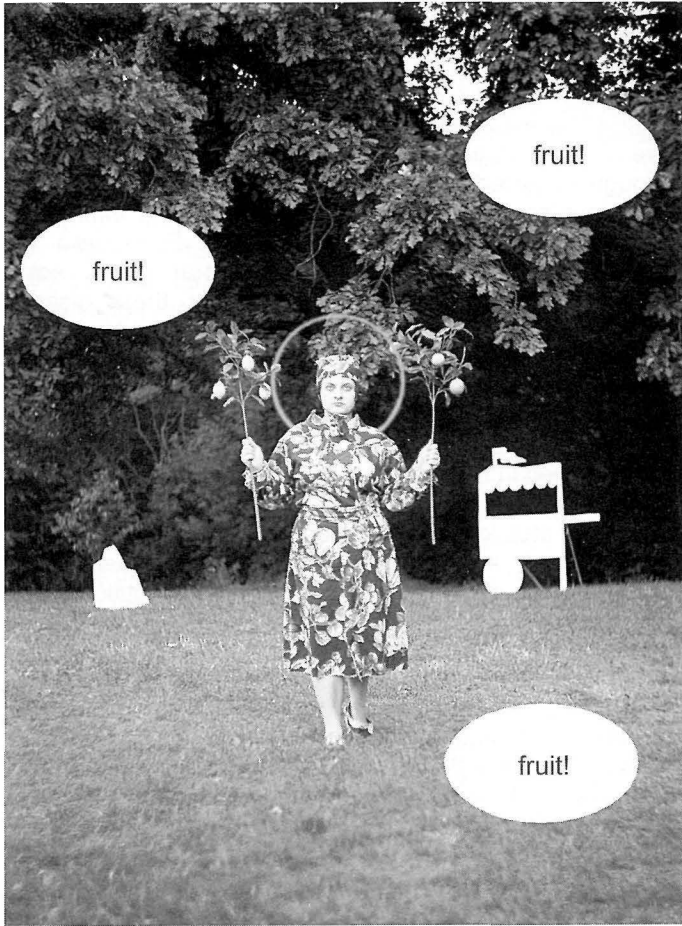
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his



fruit!

fruit!



Watching Catastrophe

Teo Treloar

On September 11 2001, I switched on the television and watched an aeroplane fly into the World Trade Center in New York City. Thinking I was seeing a late-night made-for-TV disaster film starring B-grade soap stars, I switched channels, only to see the same scene repeated, this time with a CNN logo and a caption reading 'Breaking News: Two planes crash into the World Trade Center'. The astounding nature of this footage still did not register. Although I realised that this event was really happening, the memory of countless disaster films lingered in my mind. As consumers living on a super-sized diet of visually mediated information, how should we interpret that information when it is so clouded by the un-real? There is an aesthetic and theatrical similarity between (and I use these terms cautiously) the real and un-real catastrophes portrayed in Hollywood disaster films and the television or web broadcasts of terrorist attacks, natural disasters and the military invasions that saturate contemporary news media.

In the first world economies of the West, Hollywood films reflect an axis of popular culture. For me, the disaster film more than any other genre can reflect social, political and cultural issues within the mass culture of first world countries. This is of particular interest in the context of the US as it is the dominant world power. Hollywood disaster films usually follow very similar plot lines. On the surface, they are stories of hope, survival and spectacular destruction. Yet the genre as a whole can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the fear of the castration of power, and the regaining of power once lost. This metaphor is visible in both

the catastrophe and the narratives of survival depicted in the films. The survival of the films' protagonists or humanity itself ultimately represents the survival of American power.

Postmodernism can be considered the epoch for cinematic productions in which the locus is the catastrophe. The disaster film genre that boomed in the sixties and seventies questioned the mechanisation and industrialisation of life in films such as *The Towering Inferno* (1974), *Airport* (1970) and *Earthquake* (1974). Rather than celebrating the achievements of industrialism, these disaster films were more of a postmodern critique examining the consequences of its failures, and an exploration of the accident's necessity.¹

After the end of the Cold War and victory in the first Gulf War, there was a shift in the socio-political and cultural environments of the US, and in Western democracies in general. Further developments in the techno-scientific realm—specifically the success of the digital revolution both in military operations and network broadcasting—changed the way catastrophe was viewed. The simulations of war displayed on the visual screen gave an illusion of safety; one could sit in comfort and watch smart bombs proficiently destroying their targets, witness the green haze of a battle through night vision and be a virtual participant in the victories of the US and its allies. During events like the first Gulf War, the global community of the spectator was being forged through live broadcasts of the mass destruction of the Iraqi military.²

After these events, the need to deconstruct the technological successes of the modern and postmodern epochs became superfluous. Buoyed by the defeat of communist Europe and the victory in the first Gulf War, the early nineties saw George Bush Snr. pronouncing the concept of the New World Order. From this point, one can surmise that Western democratic powers—the US in particular—came to the conclusion that their power was absolute.

In this kind of socio-political and cultural environment and the advancements in digital technology, the disaster film took on gigantic proportions. As there was no longer anything on earth that could destroy the West, filmmakers looked to the stars to provide them with catastrophes. Blockbuster films such as *Independence Day* (1996), *Deep Impact* (1997) and *Armageddon* (1998) focus on catastrophe in the form of alien invasion. The narratives of these films are similar; they all show seductive computer generated simulations of New York being utterly destroyed by various means—a severe meteor shower, a tidal wave, or an energy beam from a gigantic alien spacecraft—in these scenes a destroyed and burning World Trade Center is prominently featured.

Throughout the nineties, cinematic productions predicted terrorist catastrophes. Films such as the *Die Hard* series are focused on the thwarting of terrorist actions against US cities or airports. The 1999 film *Fight Club* also focuses on terrorist actions. The film's main protagonist, Tyler Durden, who leads an extreme group of urban terrorists, proclaims in the penultimate scene, 'This is it, ground zero.'³ The scene that follows

is of the implosion of multiple buildings in a city's financial district, including two that are identical to those of the World Trade Center.



Image: Still from *Fight Club* (1999), directed by David Fincher.

Regardless of the means of mass destruction in the aforementioned cinematic portrayals, a destroyed or burning World Trade Center was always central to the scene—arguably because it was the symbolic centre of Western capitalism. From this standpoint, it is clear that the destruction of the World Trade Center existed in the cultural consciousness before 9/11. In fact, the first cameras that captured the 9/11 disaster were webcams pointed at the New York skyline, as if in anticipation of the disaster.

The somewhat confusing and paradoxical symptoms of our simulated realities become more apparent with the broadcast of 9/11, as the scenes portrayed in the Hollywood disaster film are transformed into the real. With the broadcast of these events there is a representation of a catastrophic temporal reality; however, an origin of reference for that reality resides in many fantastical and prophetic screen simulations. Within the boundaries of the screen we are witness to the immediate '...implosion of history that is experienced when a false past and real present are undifferentiated'.⁴ The result is a kind of 'cultural schizophrenia'⁵



Image: Still from *Armageddon* (1998), directed by Michael Bay.

that contributes to a loss of meaning and understanding within a mass of cultural signs and signifiers.

This implosion essentially signals an immediate disappearance of a real history into a mire of falsified screen visions; it is a deeply embedded symptom of the technological narrative that feeds and satisfies the desire for catastrophic simulation. Since 9/11, whenever I turn on the television and am not confronted with a catastrophic event, I have twinges of an almost sinister urge to see cataclysm and destruction. This is a technological catastrophe that now infiltrates cultural discourse.

Disaster films made after 9/11 can be seen to symbolically deal with the ironic simulacra and theoretical paradoxes that this event engendered. Films such as the 2004 feature *The Day After Tomorrow* offer up catastrophic circumstances that present a different means of destruction to their predecessors. In *The Day After Tomorrow* we see New York City ('Ground Zero', the centre of real tragedy) devoured by an even bigger catastrophe, giant storm tides washing through the streets. In a cathartic, metaphorical cleansing that clears away all the evidence of 9/11, Ground Zero is digitally wiped off the face of the earth.

In the same movie, Hollywood—the Ground Zero for countless computer generated catastrophic realities—is utterly destroyed by multiple tornadoes. This is an emblematic gesture of death, a suicide wherein Hollywood deals out its own punishment for the films in which it prophesied the destruction of the World Trade Center.



Image: The World Trade Center on fire, September 11 2001 courtesy of <http://911research.wtc7.net>



Image: Still from *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), directed by Roland Emmerich.

Pre-9/11 pop culture had been saturated with seductive CGI interpretations of the catastrophes threatening human existence (specifically the US). The purpose of these visions of capitalist realism was to testify to the strength of (American) humanity. Their protagonists always pull through in the end, thus cementing their powerful place in the world. It is essentially a propaganda narrative akin to a classical myth, a symbolic statement showing the world the power of the empire against adversity, in effect saying that it can never be destroyed.

The interpretation of catastrophe, whether real or not, has become more complex since 9/11, as we see the scenes of fantasy turning into reality and vice versa. In Steven Spielberg's *War of The Worlds* (2005) the ashen-faced people running for their lives recall memories of 9/11, while the images of devastation from the Boxing Day tsunami and Hurricane

Katrina evoke scenes from *The Day After Tomorrow*. Cultural theorists will no doubt compare the aesthetics of catastrophe *ad infinitum*, but I believe the most complex issue for viewers is a moral one. The question we need to ask is whether we are watching to inform ourselves of humanity's plight, or whether we are watching to be entertained.

¹ The idea of the essential accident was introduced into postmodern thought by Paul Virilio, the hypothesis being that if one successfully designs and constructs a large ninety-story building or a passenger jet one is also designing its catastrophic failure.

² Jean Baudrillard talks extensively on these ideas in many of his texts, such as *The Gulf War did not take place* and *The Murder of the Real*.

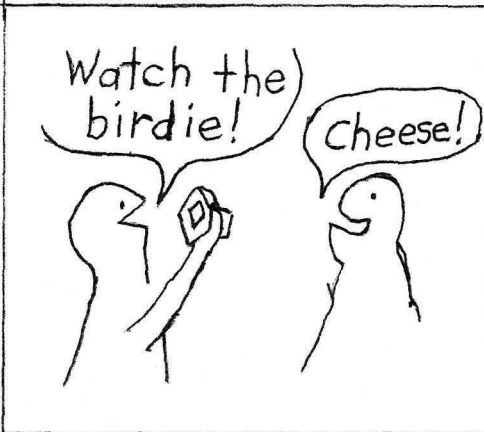
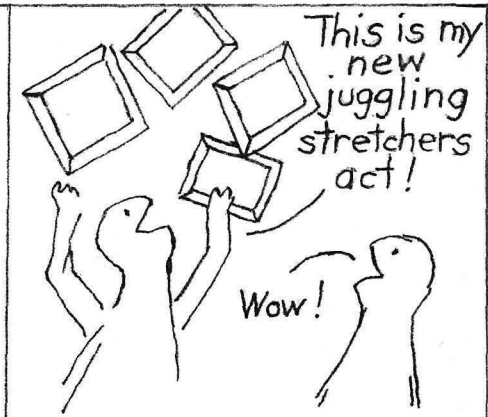
³ *Fight Club* (1999), directed by David Fincher.

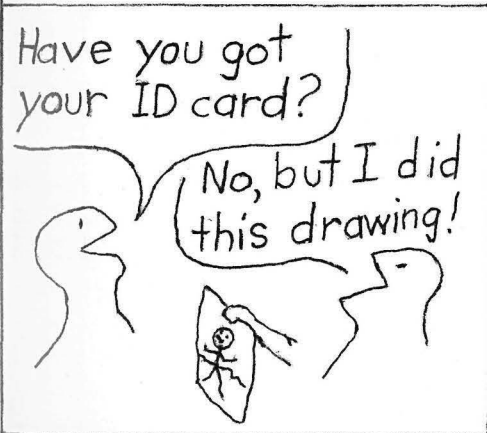
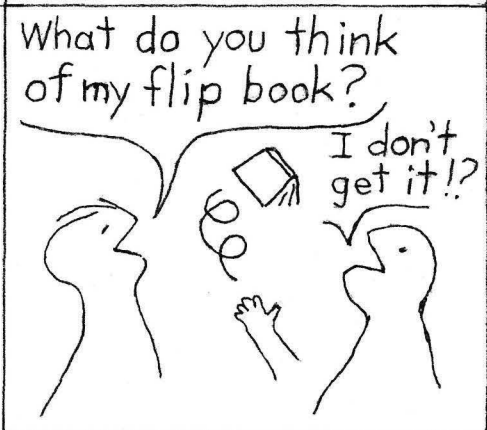
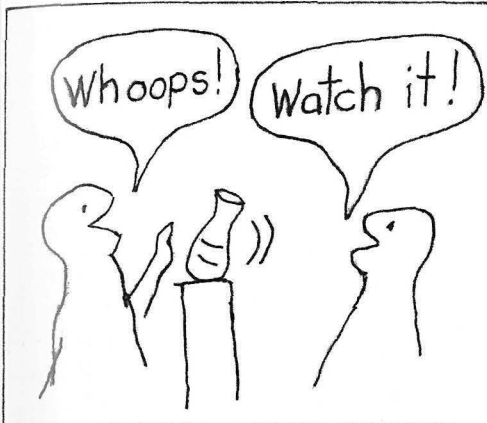
⁴ Smith MW, 2001. *Reading Simulacra: Fatal Theories for Postmodernity*. SUNY press, Albany. p.6.

⁵ *ibid*, p.6.

Watching Cartoons

Anna Peters





Life in a cave with wood

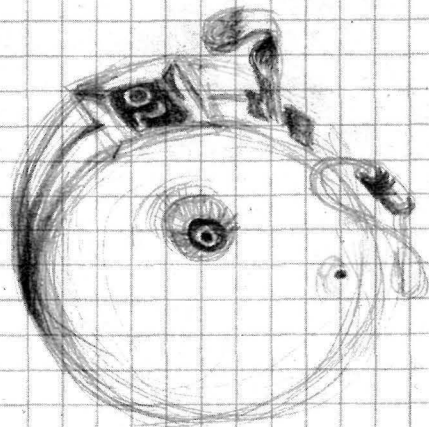
Jess Olivieri

The colourless sound of air resonates against cold walls, reminding me that winter is coming. The fear that the chill might forever be preserved in my bones hurries me as I gather my supplies and take up my position. Slowly the sound of air is swallowed by the sound of shuffling feet as the spectators invade my territory. Sliding in on sandals over the shiny grey surface of the ground, they become ice skaters, spinning and dashing towards the wood, but their balance is a little shaky and they come to a stop with unsettling suddenness. Moving as one, hands neatly behind their backs, they make half circles around my wood. As they become transfixed by it, a powerful need to embrace the wood swells from within. I see their eyes and mouths widen as if to take in the wood, but I know that looking is not enough to satisfy their hunger.

'*Non toccare,*' I say as they bend over, removing their hands from warm pockets in swift, graceful movements. Sometimes I'm too late, and greasy fingers collide with soft wood. As they rub it lovingly, I tell them again, '*non toccare,*' and they smile uncomfortably, trying to sweeten their disobedience.

'*Tutto lenio,*' I say sternly, to curb their curiosity. They repeat my words incredulously and I, in turn, repeat them in confirmation. We play like siblings antagonising each other, echoing each others' words until we tire of the game and they slump in dissatisfaction. They want so desperately to possess what I have disallowed them. At this point they tilt their heads, placing their hands on their chins and frowning half smiles. Eventually, after much thoughtful nodding, they skate away to another piece of wood, examining it as they did the first.

Jess Olivieri worked in the Australian Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale.



Automobiles

Justin Miles



This one was parked in Wattle Street. It has flames.



This one went to visit the Holiday Inn near the airport.



This one is a fisherman. It has rust.





This one was parked next to the Gates of Hell.

This is the Gates of Hell



This man smiled at me next to the Gates of Hell



This one started to run away from me but I caught up to it again but then I found another one across the street. Suddenly there were two.





I got away a fast as I could. But then this one followed me to Newcastle ...
Bruuummmmmn!

Satellite of Love (I like to watch things on TV...)

Jacqueline Millner

After Sputnik was launched into orbit in 1957, satellites began linking humanity together under a 'cosmic membrane'—an immense web of electromagnetic waves bouncing information from one corner of the world to another, overcoming distance and time.

The main consequence of this phenomenon, according to the late Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan, was the retribalisation of the structure of social and psychic awareness. After centuries of being alienated and divided through the culture of written text—which delivers information in a clear, linear form that

privileges the sense of sight above all others—in the age of electronic media, humans are able to re-enter the 'all-at-onceness' of 'acoustic space', where information is multi-dimensional and stimulates the full sensorium. In McLuhan's view, the millions of people sitting around the TV tube are absorbing the modern equivalent of shamanistic lore: the TV becomes the authorised source, analogous to the old tribal relations of instruction and control. We can now live 'not just in divided and distinguished worlds, but pluralistically in many worlds and cultures, simultaneously ... in a single space resonant with tribal drums'.¹



space around the ellipses *Satellite of Love* installation detail, Bus, Melbourne, June 2005.

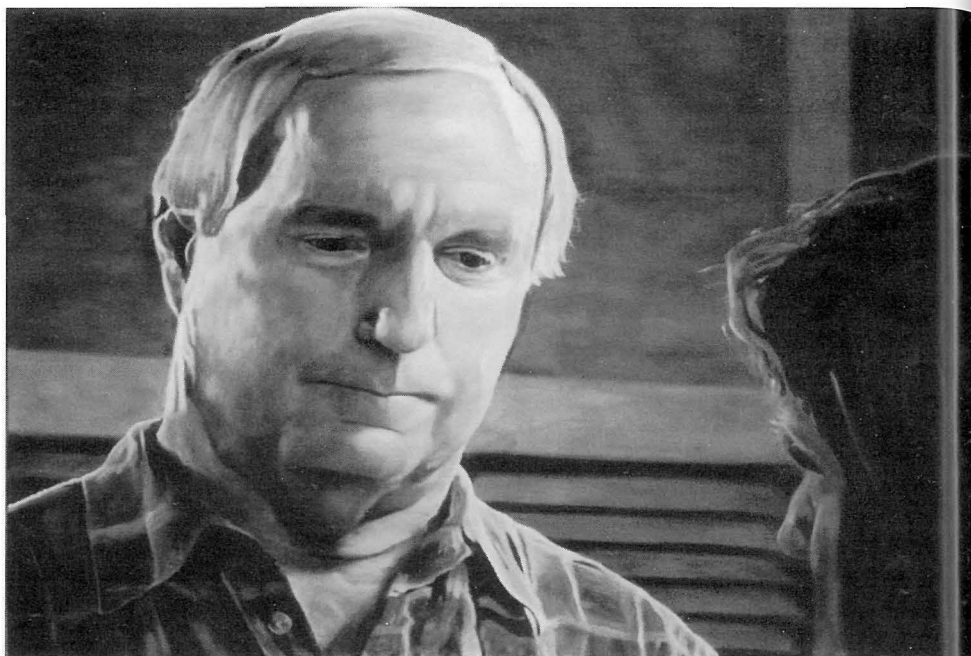
McLuhan famously said that 'the medium is the message', meaning that it is not so much the *content* of TV that transforms a society, but its *form*, the way it revolutionises how we take in and process information, how we make sense of the world, how we dream and imagine. McLuhan termed TV a 'cool' medium: whereas media that are low in participation are 'hot', 'cool' media are high in participation or completion by the audience. Each has very different effects. While content-rich, high-resolution forms such as a written text provide little room for participation, TV invites the 'user' into the communication process to become a sort of co-producer. As McLuhan put it, '... we find the avant-garde in the cool and the primitive, with its promise of depth involvement and integral expression. The highly developed situation is by definition low in opportunity for participation and rigorous in its demands for specialisation for those who would control it'.² McLuhan indeed drew an analogy between avant-garde art and TV, seeing both as 'cool': 'In leaving something unsaid, the beholder is given the chance to complete the idea ... until you seem to become actually part of it'.³

The generation of artists represented in the exhibition *Satellite of Love* is self-consciously formed by TV. TV has been such a pervasive and integral part of these artists' lives that their innermost creative impulses are indebted to it. Their work is readily characterised neither as homage nor critique, although there are elements of both. Rather, it encompasses a subtler and more complex response that uses the language of TV as the *lingua franca*, the tribal speech that we all recognise, but de-naturalises it by displaying it within the discourse of art. This decontextualisation

allows for an analysis of the form of televisual communication, and facilitates the exploration of alternative ways of relating to the screen—in particular, alternatives to the predominant mode of engagement, namely, narrative absorption and identification. This exploration of alternatives also means raising a number of questions; about the difference between a painting and a screen, between the handcrafted and digitised, between the deeply personal and the superficially public.

The works are predominantly paintings and videos, with some photography; we are compelled to compare the effects of each medium and to muse on the relationship between them. For example, Luis Martinez and Mariusz Jastkowiak freeze the televisual flow of images in single paintings. Martinez's style is photorealist: he deploys his prodigious drafting skills to depict stills of apparently random TV programs, from drama to the weather report, or to create a typology of characters, such as TV dads. His isolation of the elements of TV's language focuses our attention on *how*, rather than simply *what*, this medium communicates. Jastkowiak also begins with a realist approach, faithfully transcribing a screen still to canvas, yet his paintings become abstract fields of colour as the pixels increasingly lose their coherence in the magnified translation. The paintings are not, however, permitted the free flow of abstraction for long; they are pinned back to brutal reality by titles that belie their beauty: *Bombing of Iraq*, *Industrial Blaze*, *Exploding Gas Tank in Car*.

Kenzee Patterson's photographs also deny TV its quintessential quality, its constant flow. His photographs arrest



Luis Martinez *Alf*. Oil on canvas, 55x40cm 2003.

the televisual current, transforming the dying gasps of a TV image into ghostly abstract patterns. Again, the emphasis is on the form of TV as a medium, as the viewer is drawn to consider images that are usually invisible, part of the secret life of TVs. No-one has programmed this content; it's been created instead by the machine itself. This motif also informs Carl Henwood's video installation, a feedback loop where image and sound reflect each other; the sound is created from the screen's light readings and the TV's own electrical current, while the image is created from a sound input into the TV.

This distillation of TV's formal, rather than narrative, elements continues in the videos of Ivan Lisyak, Peter Newman and Phill Williams. In a gesture comparable to

Jastkowiak's, Lisyak has transformed a piece of found TV footage by de-naturing it. He has removed those elements that render TV coherent narrative, such as dialogue and standard film time, to create an almost psychedelic meditation on the materiality of the screen image, a pixellated pointillist-painting-in-motion that recalls McLuhan's 'cool' media of high viewer participation. Newman's videos comprise a montage of images taken from the most low-rent of daytime TV programs, such as game shows and celebrity vehicles, now barely recognisable after the material degradation the artist has wrung them through. Resembling mouldering old celluloid, the images swell and disappear, returning distended and fragmented in an ironic simulation of our own psychic processes as we watch TV. Williams' series of videos

are, by contrast, mesmerising minimalist recordings of sunlight's daily passage on a domestic wall. Williams' work reminds us of the mutual exclusivity of sunlight and screen: to bask in one, one must eschew the other. It also recalls the phenomenon whereby something's worth and significance is judged according to whether or not it has been shot on camera. *Sunlight Variations*, like early structuralist cinema, makes us acutely aware of ourselves as viewing subjects.

Even those works that rely on more conventional televisual representation underline the viewer's self-consciousness as a viewer, and tease apart the material components of the audiovisual experience. Take George Tillianakis' *Silent Concert*, where the artist himself features as archetypal, mascara-smudged rock-god, performing the outpouring of his soul in music—except, like with John Cage, we can't hear him. With the removal of the vital acoustic dimension and its capacity for immersion, we are no longer watching a solo rock singer, but are instead alienated by a discomfiting choreography of self. The Motel Sisters' *Motel Show*—a trailer for a fictional TV series—also perpetually frustrates the audience's desire for action and immersion: it hints at a story, but the narrative flow is literally stunched by still images and constant repetition. Meanwhile, in *Miss Becky's Fauxmercials*, Rebecca Lewis betrays a sound knowledge of the language of TV advertising through her accurate lampooning of TV hype as much as low-rent TV types—the dishwasher blonde pathetically going through the TV motions of seduction, the bland young man going through the TV motions of domestic bliss.

In many respects, the artists in *Satellite of Love* echo McLuhan's insights about the effects of electronic media. Having been formed by TV, they are tribalised by its specific language. They are also active participants in making meaning from televisual data, having in effect become co-producers in the medium. Their work has certainly gone beyond critique, as it is complicit with, indebted to, insightful about as well as exasperated with TV. Perhaps Jemima Isbester's tragi-comic lamentations about the content of TV shows that rely on the viewer's low self-esteem for ratings, epitomises this complex ambivalence. At one moment Isbester despairs about how TV preys on our insecurities and undermines our capacity for critical thought. The next, not only does she admit that TV has all the answers—and we're in desperate need of someone reassuringly telling us what to do and how to think—but she vehemently, even aggressively, exhorts us to 'Just turn it on!'

The exhibition Satellite of Love was held in Sydney at Phatspace from March 31st - 16th April 2005, and in Melbourne at Bus from 14th June - 2nd July 2005.

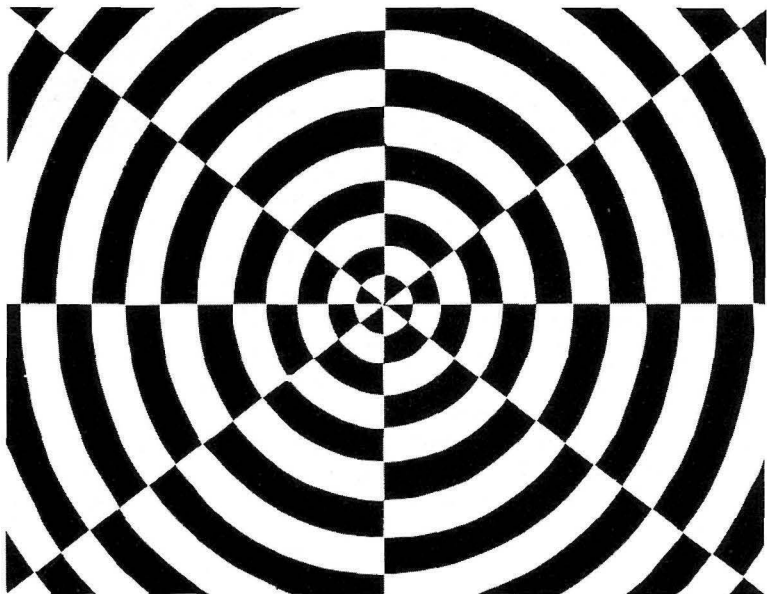
¹ Marshall McLuhan, 1962. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto. p.31.

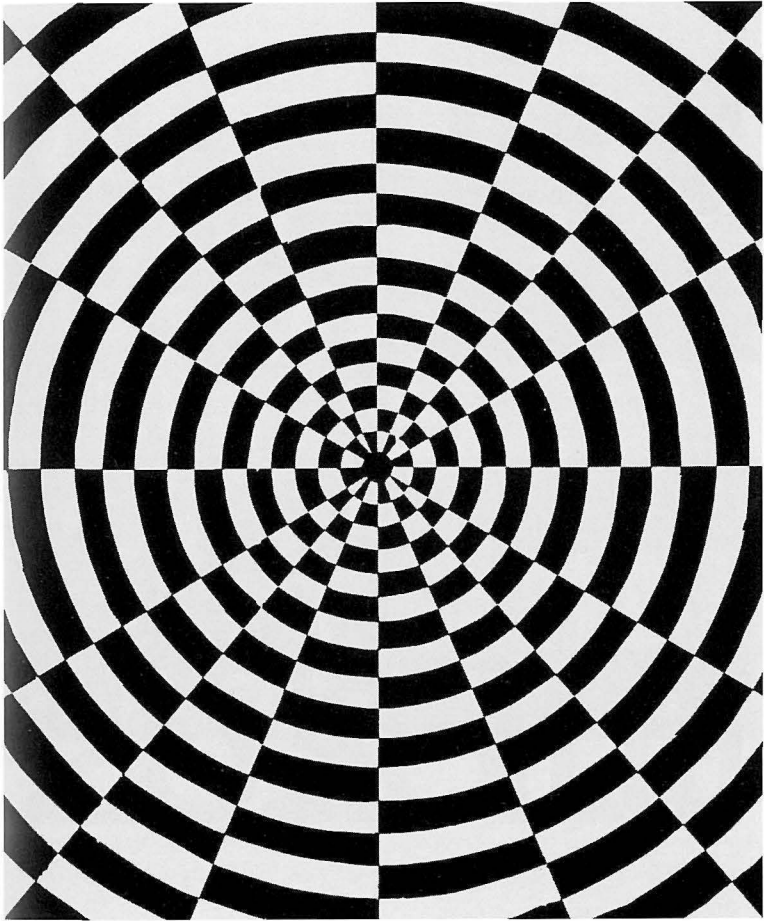
² Marshall McLuhan, 2001. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. MIT Press, Cambridge. p.27.

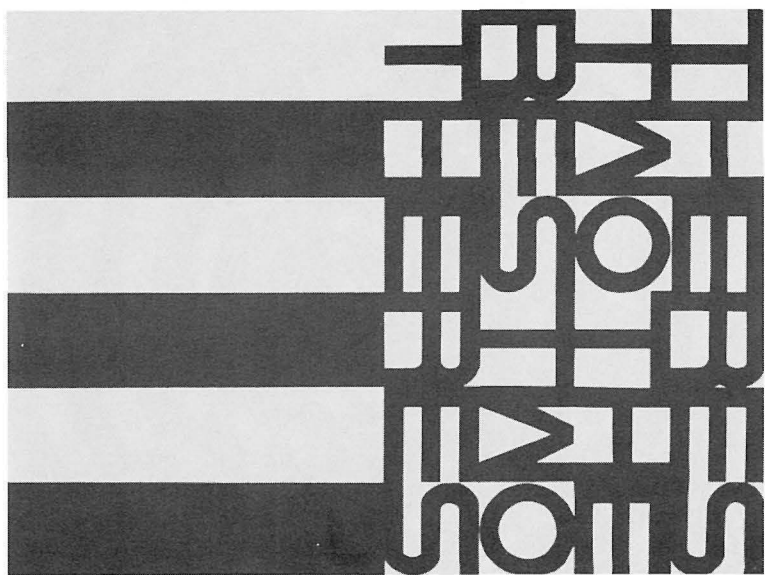
³ McLuhan M & Parker H, 1968. *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Poetry and Painting*. Harper and Row, New York. p.266.

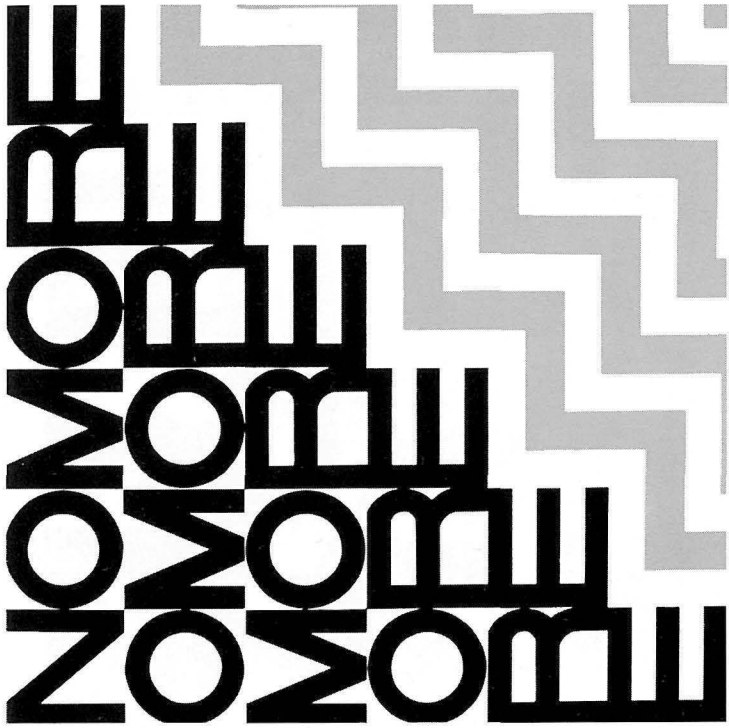
Watching People Paintings from the Human Manual

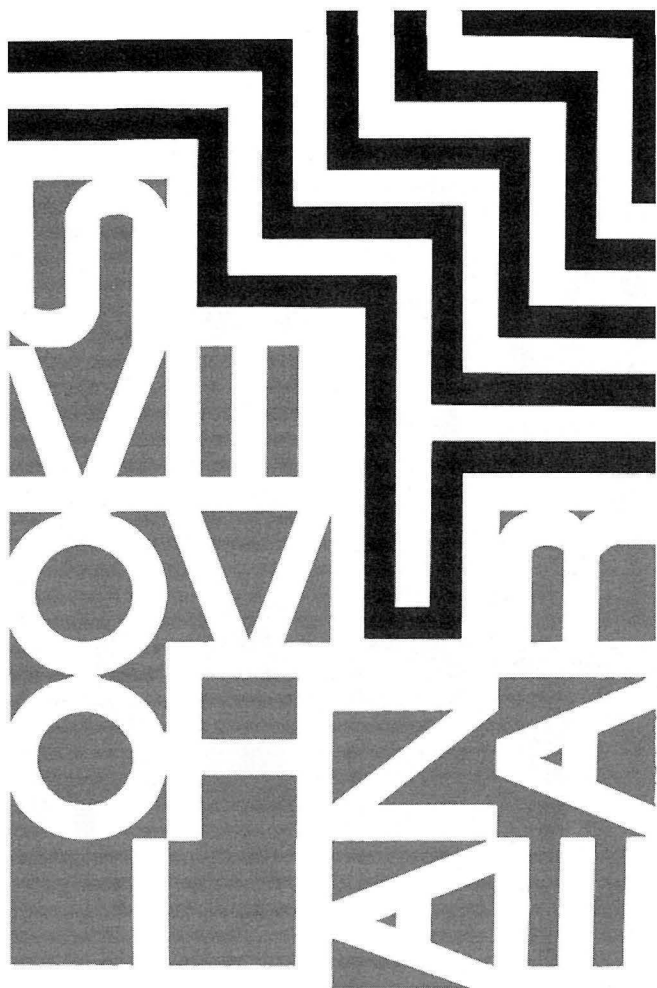
Ron Adams

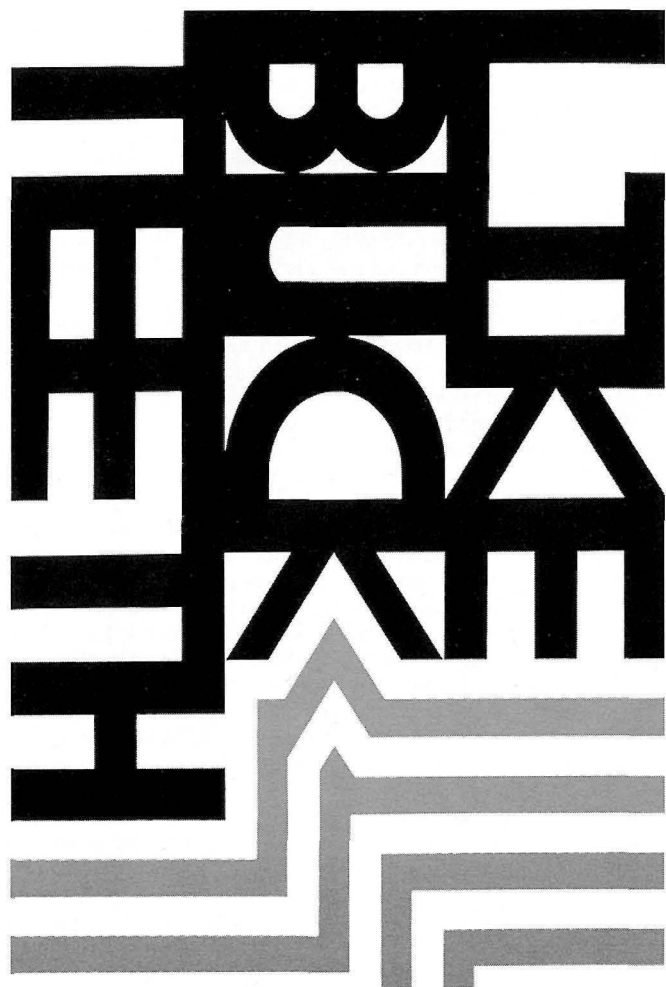












From: Rommel Catuncan <rommel@hotmail.com>
Subject: **Bragging Rights**
Date: 23 March 2005 5:06:55 AM
To: Emma White <emma@runway.org.au>

Hi Emma

How goes it?

I went to this Star Wars preview at Fox Studios last night. It was hyped as this exclusive preview and it was hard to get a ticket. I couldn't win a ticket so went to just check out the actor Hayden Christensen (Anakin Skywalker) walk the red carpet (I had to have something, it was Star Wars in Sydney). I got there early and found a place at the fence closing off the red carpet. There were some people gathering already. To my right at the fence there was a young Asian girl. She got a bit irritated with me and said that the space next to her was reserved for her and her friends. I said there was plenty of space and that she was "Nice". To my left there was a young girl and her brother. The girl was talking to a female "student-journo" there to cover the event. I overheard the young girl say she was 14. She also said in complete seriousness, "I'm going to marry Hayden. And then Justin. And my brother is going to marry Natalie Portman. I want my brother to marry Natalie Portman!" Her brother was this older guy talking about his impressive showbiz resume and how Sandra Bullock and Naomi Watts were going to be there (they weren't) to the student-journo girl (who was wearing a "Hooters" t-shirt), who said how she loves Sandra Bullock. I started feeling weird being there and part of the masses, hanging at the side of the red carpet waiting for the celebrity, something I actually once thought I would never do. Hayden soon arrived in a black SUV and the kids ran to him as he signed things over the fenced-off red carpet. As I waited in my section for him to make his way down I got word that some tickets to inside were being given away, so I left my spot and went up to the two women at the ticket desk. I asked if I could have one of the passes. One of them gave me one, which pleased me. I decided to forgo waiting for Hayden beside the red carpet and to just go in, since inside was the exciting exclusive hot ticket and Hayden would soon be in there. So I got onto the red carpet and walked past Hayden who was still signing. I stopped and took a photo of him. A blonde schoolgirl still in uniform reached over the fence and hugged him. A burly security guard in sunglasses then told me that if I had a pass I had to keep on walking inside.

Once inside, I took a seat. The teenage boy next to me was with his mother and he was telling her how this was his fourth premiere. He had seen "Hitch" and "Miss Congeniality" etc. etc. An Australian Fox exec. soon stood at the front and announced that the Star Wars preview was to start. They started by showing two "webdocs". It was not really very exciting or new since it was already released on the internet. Then Hayden came in with his assistants and made a welcome speech and they showed the trailer, something else already released on the internet. Then Hayden and the Fox exec. sat out front for an Audience Q&A where Hayden was asked stuff like "Can you sign my lightsabre?" and "Do you have a girlfriend?" ("No". *Grins*. Squeals and whoops erupt from audience. Fantasy still intact.). I kind of got bored and started thinking about maybe I could get to meet him afterwards instead of this boring stuff. The Q&A ended and Hayden said thanks and goodbye and that was it really. Then he left. No more new footage. And it turned out you couldn't meet

Hayden afterwards unless you had a super-duper exclusive gold pass for the bar he would be at. So I left, got in a taxi and went home.

After all that I was a bit, Is that it? I really thought the preview would be new and exciting, as hyped. And then I thought maybe I would've enjoyed it more if I had met Hayden, just so it would feel like there was more of a point. So I regretted not waiting to meet him on the red carpet. Then it bothered me that it bothered me. So basically I just went home after the preview surprisingly feeling a bit let down instead of elated, and wondering why. I thought getting in would be this great thing and it turned out to be just sort of hype and promotion.

And then it started- reflecting back on the night, I started feeling a bit icky about being part of the masses part of this celebrity culture. What surrounds it. It was all so commercial and felt too controlled. I started thinking about how there was all this security, "VIPs" (a term I have never liked), Aussie execs and American entourages, who got off on the celebrity they hover around and the movie they're attached to (acting like they are fans all of a sudden). How we are supposed to be grateful that we even get the chance to gawk at a celebrity. How lots of people just WERE so happy gawking at a celebrity. I thought back to the people working at the cinema at the door and guarding the celebrity's SUV and realised how pompous some of them were ("Only celebrities can come in" the woman said at the door to one guy and "Hayden will be in shortly, like they had the scoop). Acting like it was so important. Maybe I'm being over-analytical but I wasn't left with a great feeling. Maybe I wouldn't have complained had I got what I wanted or been in on all of the "exclusives". Or maybe the hype sux. Whatever.

I imagined what LA is like with all that Demi Moore/Ashton Kutcher bullshit. All the celebrity talk, the Did-you-hears and the I-Know-So-and-So. I think it would kind of be a nightmare.

At the end of the night I kind of surprisingly felt drained and empty, physically and mentally, which I found strange. Other people seemed really happy and I wondered why I wasn't why I just couldn't just lighten up and enjoy it and why I am so analytical and sensitive. (A couple of years ago, I got pissed off when I was an extra on "All Saints" because the extras couldn't eat the catered food until the cast and crew had finished with it.). I wondered about celebrity and fame. Sex. Power. Money. The usual.

Why did Hollywood leave me feeling empty???)

Meh- maybe I'm just getting old. (Good thing.)

Anyway, then this morning I woke up and it was pouring and I went to Bondi Jct. to apply for volunteer work.

Back to stupid reality...esp. while in the fantasy...

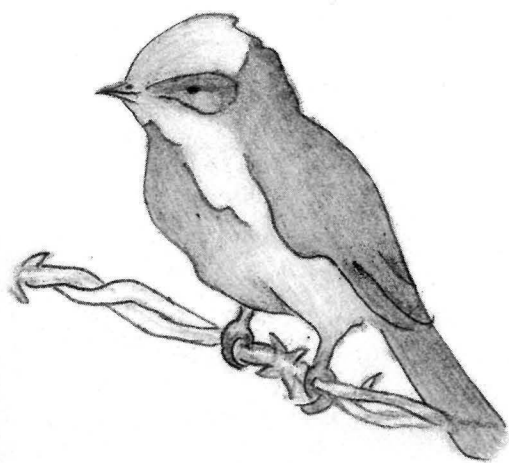
Rommel.

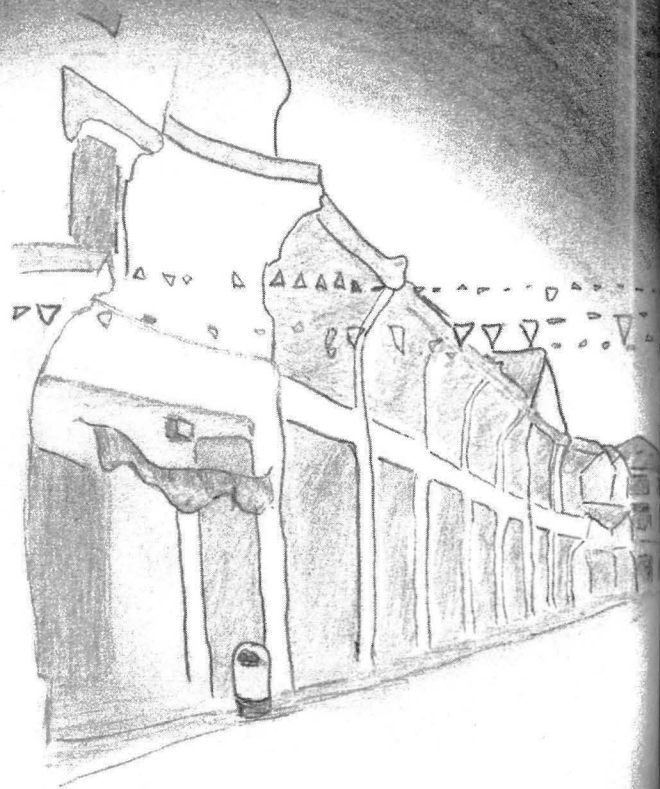
PS. When Fox Studios used to be the Easter Show I went there one year and saw the cast of "Home and Away"!!! In a tent!

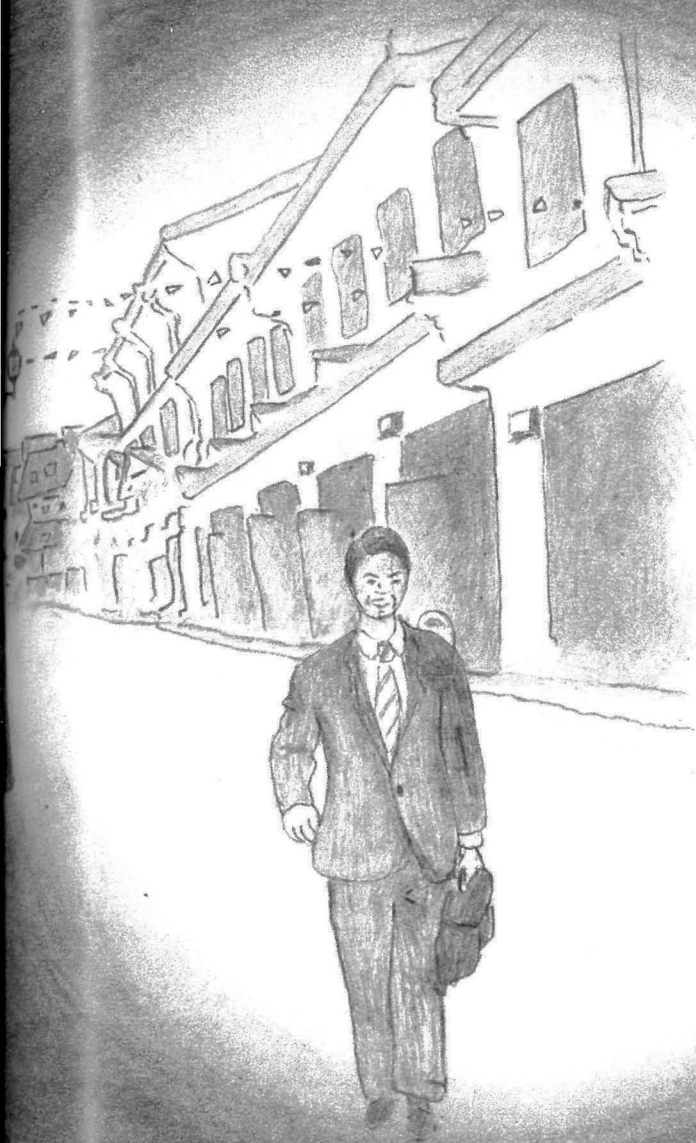
We're not sure who he is yet, but we know it isn't him

Tsering Frykman-Glen









High-Functioning Hollywood Hippy Personality Syndrome: Bill Viola's *The Passions*

Sara Oscar



Image: Bill Viola 'Emergence' 2002 © Bill Viola
Photograph: Kira Perov

The National Gallery of Australia's latest blockbuster exhibition is Bill Viola's *The Passions*. This is a show with big themes, a show that aims to represent emotions like grief, happiness, sadness and anger through the medium of video. Viola's big-budget plasma screens feature slowed down, silent video works of actors simulating the physical symptoms of emotional expression—actors who are meant to depict biblical characters from Medieval and Renaissance paintings.

'Viola grapples with one of the oldest problems in art: how to convey the power and complexity of emotion by depicting the faces and bodies of models,' says the NGA's brochure about *The Passions*. 'Viola intends for his work to be a means of transformation, both for himself and for viewers, through a heightened experience of the world and the self.' Viola means to arouse

empathy in his audience through sight. That is, to watch actors *acting* emotions may somehow lead to the experience of empathy and thus *transformation*. I imagine that this 'transformation' would produce a 'heightened awareness' of big themes like death's inevitability, thereby creating a 'consciousness' that emotions are universal. I may as well assume that in Viola's world 'we', as subjective individuals, are all connected through our capacity to feel empathy by watching other people simulate emotions. And these emotions are, of course, collective and objective. While most critics address the 'big theme' aspect of Viola's work, how much of *The Passions* is about simulation, hidden behind the reinterpretation and justification of art historical paintings?

Viola is an art supernova. He deals with 'big' issues. Even his schtick is big. He works with large video installations, and his videos are slow. Dealing with death, loss, birth, memory and perception allows Viola to work autobiographically. He has exhibited videos of his wife giving birth, his mother dying and meaningful things like walks in the desert. Viola's work is wrapped in the desire to return to nature and meditate on life's beginnings and endings. His video installations are immersive, experiential and, consequently, super-seductive. This time, Viola has moved away from large scale installations to smaller displays that are conceptually more in keeping with the idea of intimacy and the passionate emotions. This scale also references the small size of devotional paintings in art history.

The Passions draws on Christian

iconography, and spiritual and art historical themes and aesthetics. The work was initially developed by Viola during a yearlong residency at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, and Viola spent a lot of time looking at the museum's collection. This period appears to be reflected in *The Passions*: weeping men and women, writhing saints, sublime chiaroscuro effects, heads dipping into water and references to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Almost every work in *The Passions* serves to illustrate Viola's fascination with art history. Let's take for example *Quintet of the Astonished* (2001). *Quintet* is based on a painting by Hieronymus Bosch depicting five viewers present at the crucifixion of Christ. Viola attempts to replicate the expression of emotion on the faces in Bosch's painting. The only differences: time, technology, and Jesus Christ. In Viola's interpretation, five actors huddle together. They wear plain 'contemporary' clothes, and gaze out to the horizon. Because the projection is slowed down so much, it is possible to see the range of physical symptoms that make Viola's actors an astonished quintet. Torturously, the actors move their bodies and faces towards the other side of the frame. During this movement, the actors express a range of emotions. The slow motion is realised by using high-speed film played back in real time. With its lush tones and atmospheric lighting, this technical slickness distracts the viewer from the fact that the actors respond to something we can't see, because there is nothing to see.

Just one of the consequences of pilfering from art history is the peculiar work *Emergence* (2002). This work looks like a

promo video for some religious sect that claims Christ died by drowning. In this work, two women crouch by a water-filled tomb. Slowly, a young Christ-like figure emerges from the tomb, spilling water out over the floor. He rises and collapses into the arms of the two women. They lay him on the floor and cover his body, sobbing with grief. Here, the appropriation of Christian iconography pushes visual poetry into the arena of melodramatic cliché. I looked to the NGA's brochure for answers, but it just focuses on the technical difficulties of the making of *Emergence*. The brochure mentions the 'technical prowess and talents of many specialists' and says 'except for the calm atmosphere, for three days the studio resembled a Hollywood movie shoot'.

Hollywood? It was not only the set that resembled a Hollywood movie shoot. It was Viola's fetishisation of the video medium in concert with the visual 'drama' of Christian painting. Whilst Christian painting had a specific function—to visually illustrate biblical narratives and promote the church—Viola's work eliminates the narrative of religious and historical context. Instead, Viola takes the visual codes from these paintings, couples them with traditional Hollywood-cinematic manipulative devices (such as turning on the waterworks) and, sadly, leaves content for dead.

Like the other video works, *Observance* (2000) carves up art history—and this one really drives the nail in. A wall-mounted, coffin-sized plasma screen features actors slowed down, lining up in single file to look at something. One actor looks, reacts and then turns away, revealing another actor who repeats the action. What they are looking at

doesn't appear to be good. Others peer out from the background, pretending to be horrified or teary-eyed. Each actor comes to the foreground to look at this *thing* and others come out in pairs, supporting one another in their collective grief. Viola plays on the relationship between subjective and objective, subject and object, however, the *source* of the actors' grief is missing. Using non-verbal communication to describe the repercussions of an undefined event is confusing and problematic. Not even Lacan could deduce the cause of the actors' grief. The effect of this is alienating: isn't empathy supposed to draw me into universal pain and suffering? Leaving out the cause of pain and suffering, my vicarious experience stops at the readability of human physiognomy and the desire to deduce causes from effects. This indicates that the readability of human physiognomy is bound up in stereotypes generated by pictorial representation.

If empathy is the primary goal in Viola's work, his intention is hindered by the audience's inability to project empathy onto the work in the first place. *Six Heads* (2000) really made me feel like an emotional philistine. A single screen features six repetitions of an older man's face, each one expressing a different emotion. As if for theatre or a game of charades, the actor moves very slowly between happiness, grief, nostalgia, anguish and the emotions in between. Maybe it was the lack of authenticity of emotion in this piece, but there was a breakdown in the correlation between physical symptom and actual emotion. This highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between brands of emotions when there is no information except for the physical

symptom. I may be an emotional cripple, but I can't empathise with someone's situation if I don't know the cause of their emotions—even if they over-act.

Even though Viola's work is deeply influenced by religion and art history, *The Passions* resembles nineteenth century scientific attempts to represent the emotions through simulation, for example Charles Darwin's *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1870). Generally, one of the goals in Darwin's experiments was to establish how capable society was of distinguishing seven different emotions from one another. Darwin showed several photographs to about twenty people of varying age and sex, and they were asked to describe the emotions they saw. The photographs were made according to two methods: the first, by the application of a galvanising instrument to a man's face; the second, by directing actors to simulate emotions. The results of the experiment were varied: most respondents got it right, some didn't and some described the emotions in an ambiguous manner. Darwin noted that the photographs couldn't portray a definite meaning, nor could they replace the authenticity of experience¹. Whilst the semiotic ambiguity of the image is a component of Viola's work, it seems to be by accident. Viola attempts to unite his audience under the banner of universal and collective themes, yet seems to overlook that emotional responses to big themes don't come from physical symptoms.

Viola unites the works in *The Passions* through the installation *Five Angels for the Millennium* (2001). This is a large-scale installation in a separate room, featuring

five large projections of underwater shots, where a figure occasionally plunges into the water. Viola has described this work as 'another form of *The Passions*, the reservoir from which they come.'² Given the 'reservoir' is water, it would appear that Viola is again talking about the departure from, and return to, nature.

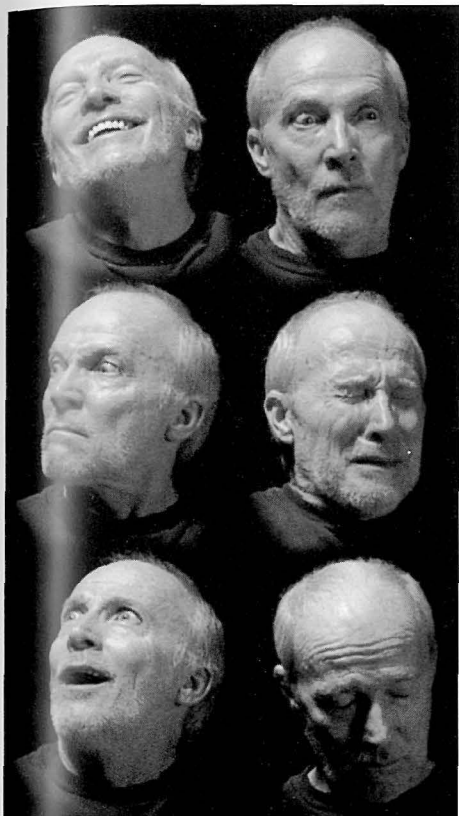


Image: Bill Viola *Six Heads* 2000 © Bill Viola, photograph: Kira Perov

That is, to be born and to die. This suggests that Viola treats his imagery as universally recognisable by the individual. Considering the numerous biblical references in the show and the title of

this video installation, it would seem that Viola intends for 'big themes' to be the catalyst for the transformation of his audience's awareness.

The Passions demonstrates the difficulty of affecting an audience with effects and universal signs. It also shows that the aesthetics of 'big themes' can't replicate the pain and joy of everyday human experience, and especially the narrative and content of that experience. Bypassing life for the canon of art history, *The Passions* seems to be more about the spectacle of emotion, and seeing what emotions look like slowed-down, in two dimensions. Showing the physical affectations of emotions feels vacuous to me — empathetic responses can't be triggered simply by watching physical symptoms. If you keep that in mind when considering the show, it's hard to know where art history ends and the emptiness of soap opera begins.

Bill Viola's The Passions runs from July 29th to November 6th 2005 at the National Gallery of Australia.

¹ Darwin C, 1872 *On The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. John Murray, London. pp.14-16.

² <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/viola/exhibition.html>, viewed 24/08/2005.

Do they eat babies in China?

Danielle Coonan

Urban Legends and Folklore

Do They Eat Babies in China?

From the Mailbag

Dear Guide:

I received an email last week which was quite disturbing and, to say the least, disgusting. It is about dead babies that can be bought from hospitals in Taiwan for \$70 to meet the high demand for grilled and barbequed babies!

I am sure this must be a hoax, although the message comes with an attached slide show, showing how the baby is prepared, cooked and eaten.

Could you please investigate?

More of this Feature

- [Part 2: Doll Parts](#)

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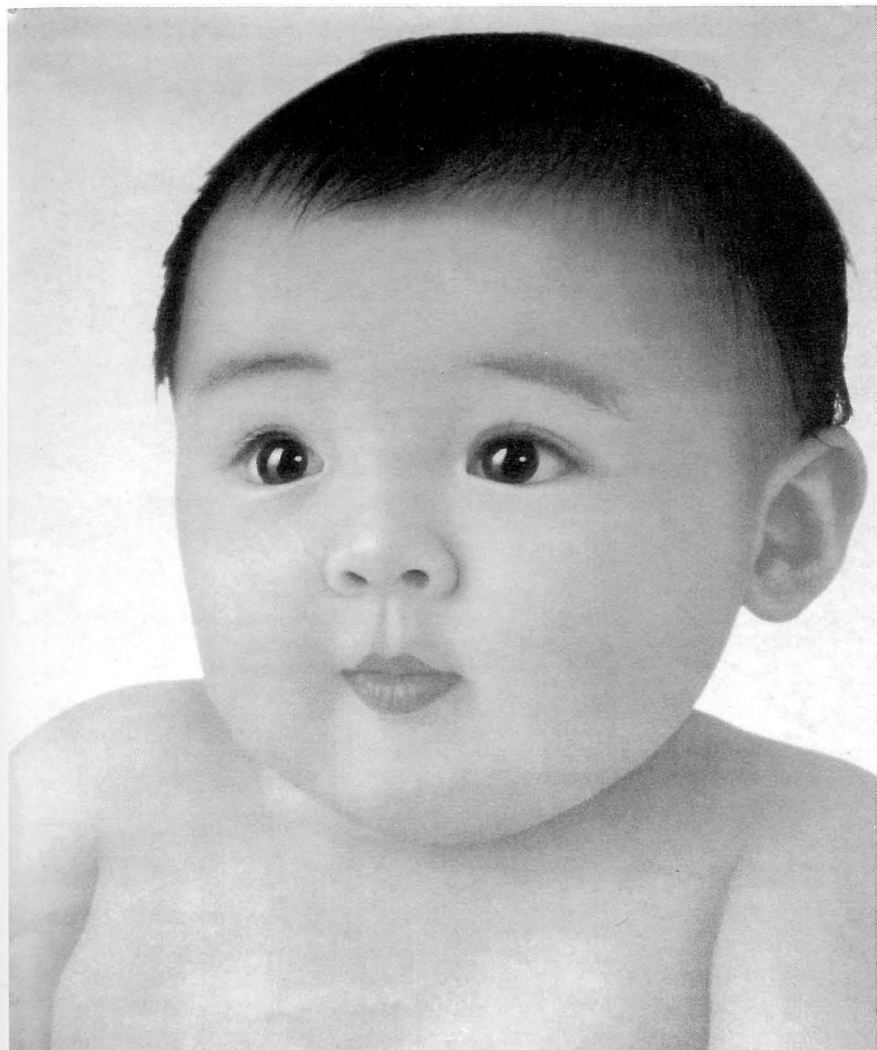
- [Human Meat for Sale!](#)
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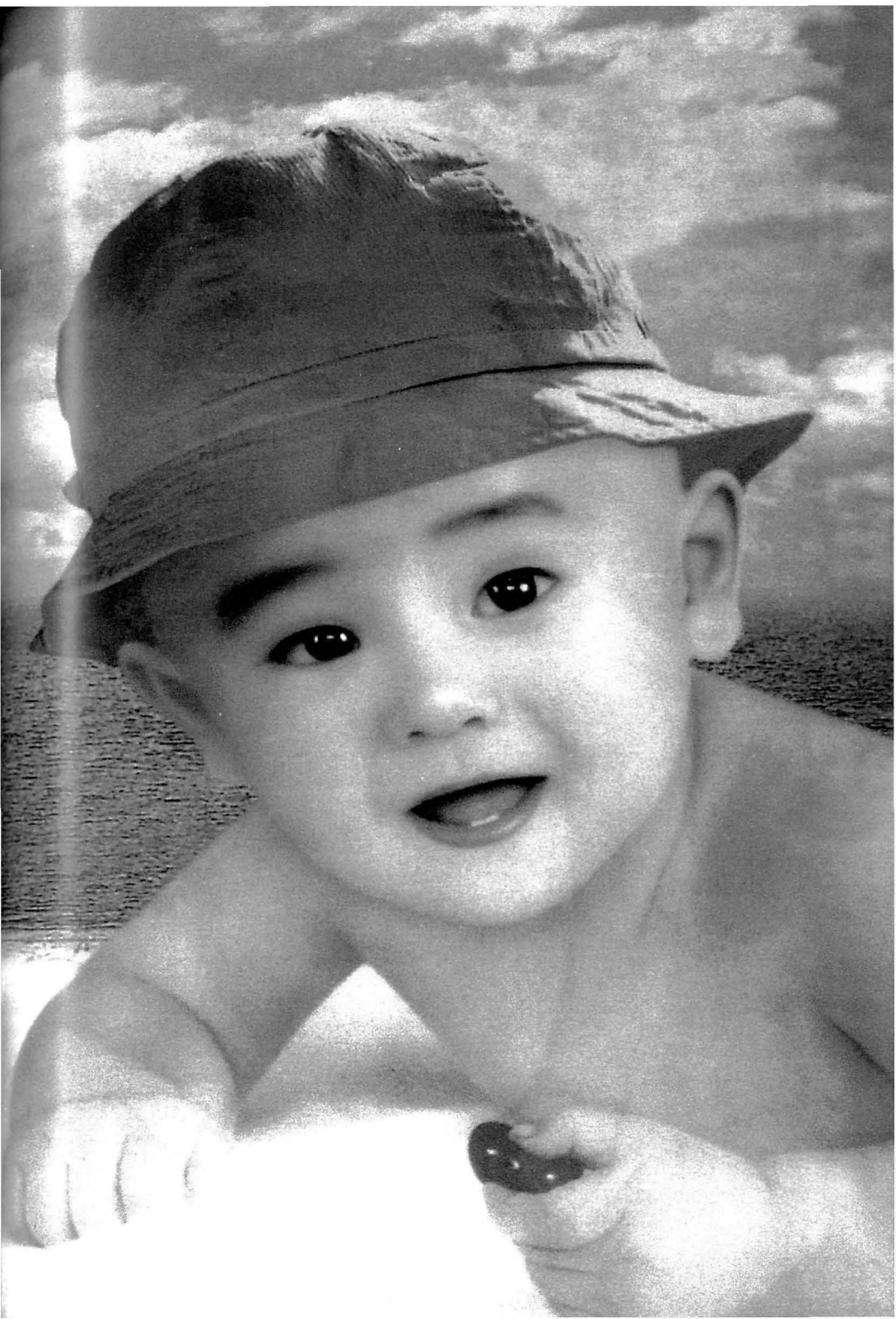
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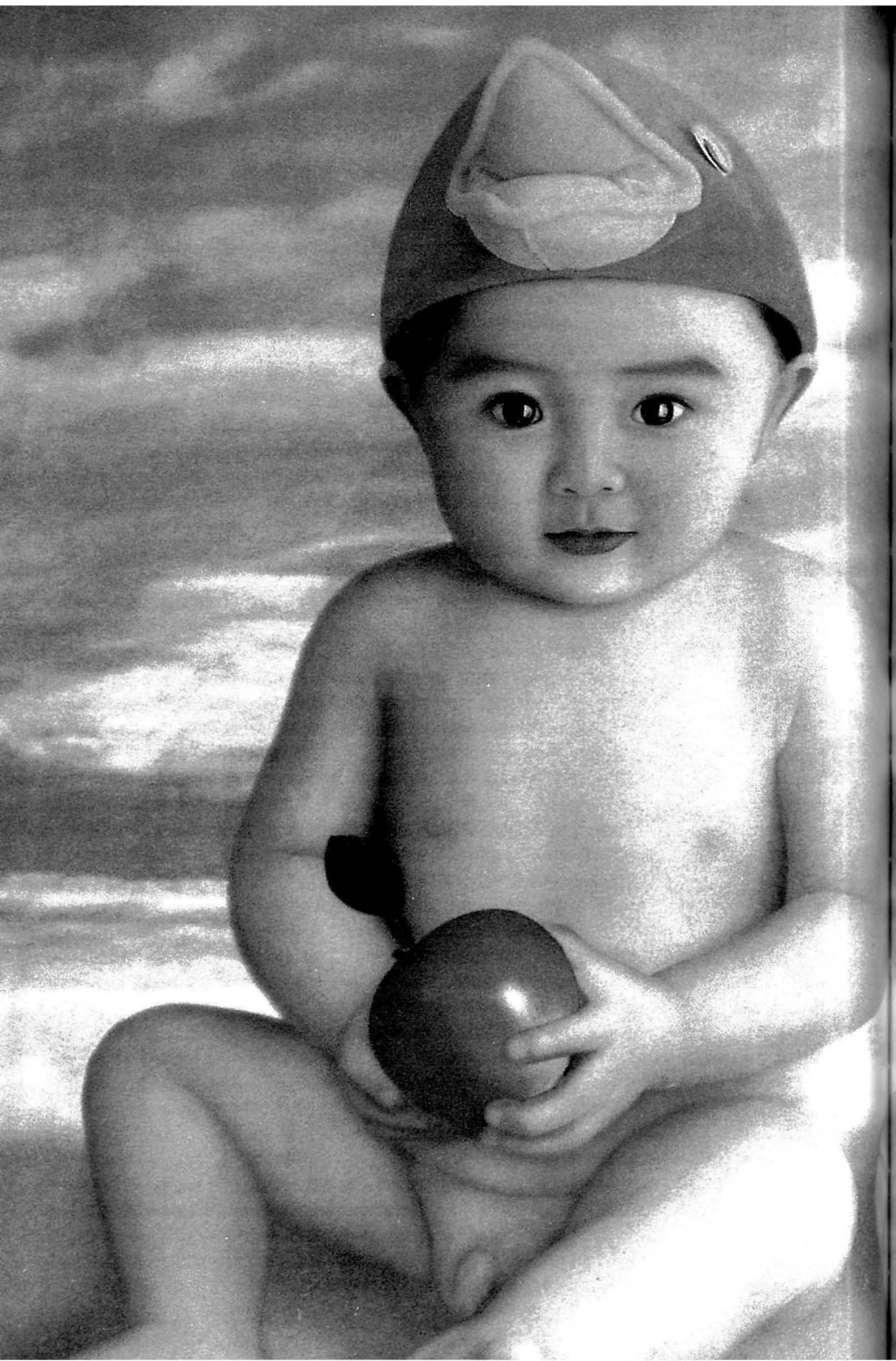
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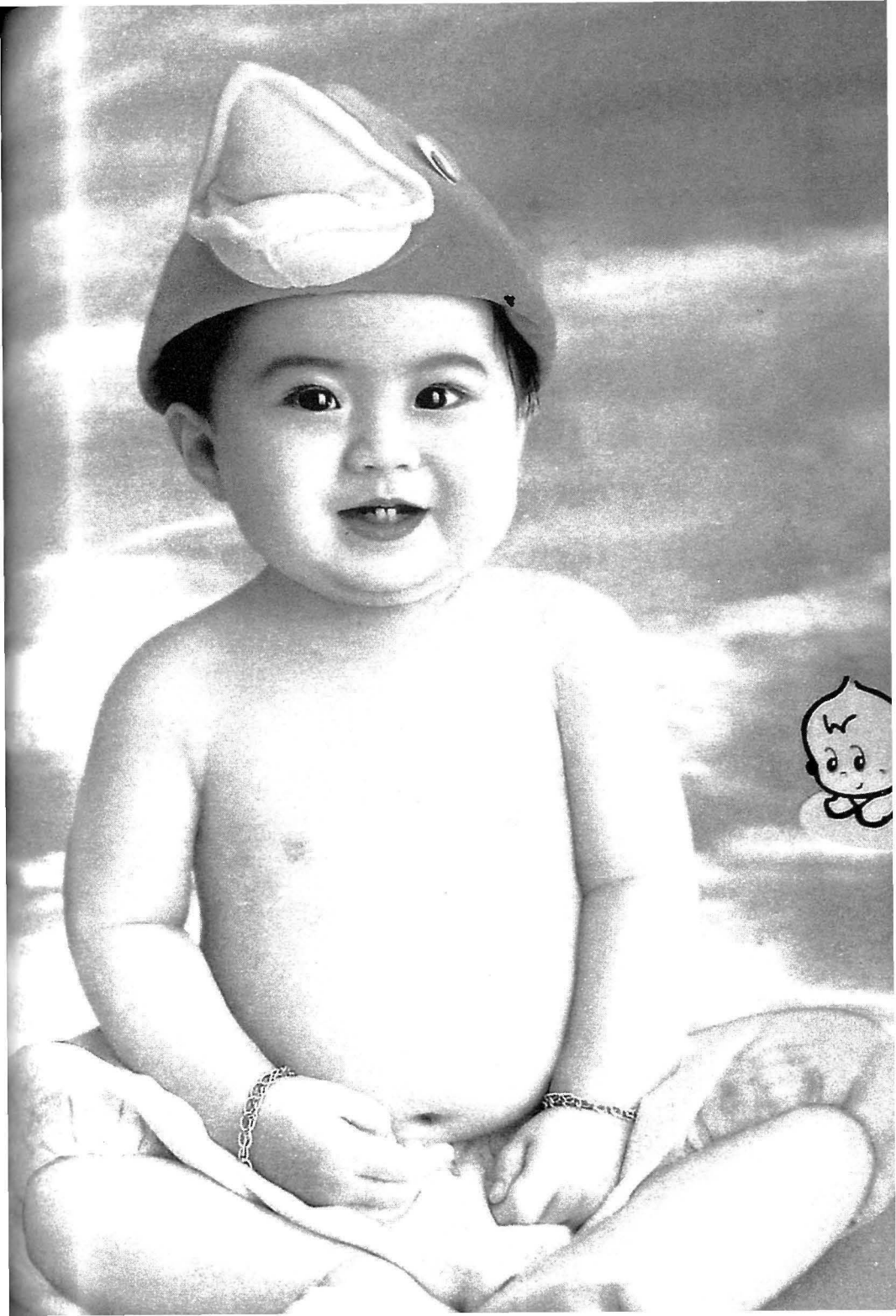
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The Gates of Discrimination

Volker Zimmerman

POW



It's the opening of the Palais de Tokyo's new exhibition *Translation*, and the whole Parisian art crowd, or what I imagine it to be, has gathered, as always. There are the art students in their calculatedly shaggy clothes, the super-beautiful/successful/intelligent, and the rich-but-elderly, showing off what glamour they have left. Every face, every hairdo, every set of clothes suggests a super-refined personality. There is an immense interpersonal tension created by this almost über-individual plurality of styles. And, of course, there is the usual freak, the village idiot; this time a bald guy with a pink ballerina skirt and an empty stare in his eyes (I am scared). This crowd, almost uniform in its eccentricity, is kept under control by a couple of tall black bouncers in dark suits guarding the entrance to the exhibition. Openings at the Palais de Tokyo—that is the great thing about them—are free for the public, so this is the poor man's chance to look at all the art without having to pay for it. Nevertheless, probably as a symbolic bow towards the wealthy collectors and other heavyweights in the art scene, the organisers have made the first floor into a VIP area. As egalitarian as the approach of the Palais de Tokyo may be, there are some things that will probably never go away.

With this formidable spectacle of society unfolding before my eyes, I find myself thinking back to *Discrimination Day* staged by Jota Castro in February 2005 in the very same place, maybe even with the same attendants. *Discrimination Day* was a show opening cum performance where 'pour une fois, on inverse' ('for once, things are inverted'), as Castro put it. That meant: in order to enter the exhibition, one had to pass through either

the gate that said 'whites' or the one that said 'others', with the artist himself being the one who made the discrimination. Subsequently, all the 'white' people had to undergo double security checks to get in, resulting in a long queue and quite a few blank and humiliated faces among the visitors. Meanwhile, all those considered 'others' breezed through security easily. Once inside, the 'others' were free to go wherever they wanted, while the 'whites' were refused entrance into a special room, which only the 'others' were allowed to access: a little black cube whose interior's only illumination was a set of warmly glowing, red light bulbs forming the words 'LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ'.

On the video documenting the opening, some girls can be seen who (for some reason) try very hard to get into this room. After having been sent away, they come back with black visitors to the exhibition, pretending that they are their friends in order to be let in together with them. There is a young man who is ushered off to the exit because he starts a heated argument with one of the bouncers. There is another guy who actually tries to bribe one of the bouncers to get inside. The girls, in the end, start chanting in a choir 'On veut rentrer! On veut rentrer!' ('We want to come back in!') and stomp the ground with their high-heeled shoes. This was exactly what Castro must have been looking for.

The concept of *Discrimination Day*, if one gives it thought, is fairly blunt. It does not say much else than: 'Today, everything will be turned around for once. Ha! In your face, white people!' One wonders why Jota Castro had to label the two gates where the people are

'discriminated' in the sense of the word 'whites' and 'others', when this is the exact reproduction of the racist/colonial frame of mind: there is the standard, the normal/neutral/blank, which is 'white', and then there is everything else, labelled 'the others'. Furthermore, what are the implications of the sentence: 'for once, everything will be turned around'? It suggests that normally, there is a discrimination between whites and people of colour that is as much out in the open as is Castro's gate for separating the people (which it is, of course, not). There is discrimination, that's for sure, but a discrimination whose workings are much more subtle and perfidious than the opposite of what Castro presented.

But however blunt and clumsily made *Discrimination Day* might have been, it revealed behaviour in some of the visitors that haunts me to this day. Keeping in mind that this whole performance was a mere game, one is terrified by the ignorant and silly protests of those who have never been refused anything. The childish stubbornness with which the privileged react to what they believe to be an infringement of their rights, contrasted with one's knowledge of real discrimination, cannot but provoke a feeling of disgust in the onlooker.

What the performance also achieved was to render visible how the audience that visits exhibition openings at the Palais de Tokyo is composed in terms of skin colour. It reminded everyone in the art world that, in proportion with the French population as a whole, there are very few people of colour that make part of the 'crowd'. It is this largely undiscussed and taboo fact that *Discrimination Day* put on the agenda.

With *Discrimination Day* in mind, the opening of *Translation* becomes a very unsettling experience, because this

time, there is no game, there is no irony, there is no exposing of things. Art show openings, one realises, are something for the white, the rich, and the stylish. Today, there are no gates labelled 'whites' and 'others' to remind us that there still remain inequalities in democratic societies. Today, one realises that these gates are actually situated outside the exhibition space, in the past, in people's biographies. And one witnesses the actual functioning of discrimination: the disenfranchised are represented only by their absence, and the many gates that sorted them out are invisible.

But what exactly is it that makes this spectacle such a sickening one? It is the fact that, observing the opening of the *Translation* exhibition, one has to acknowledge an inner contradiction in the Palais de Tokyo's approach to art. Calling itself a 'site of contemporary creation', the Palais de Tokyo positions itself as a place for the bleeding edge of art. Also, it has been and is a place for outspokenly political shows, the discussed *Discrimination Day* being only one example. In short: the Palais de Tokyo combines contemporary creation with political action to raise awareness about global injustices and ongoing conflicts of race, class, and gender. And it is this claim which, in fact, contrasts starkly with what one sees at the exhibition openings. Because even if the Palais de Tokyo may be *the* space where criticism of contemporary society is uttered, it still is a part of that very society and cannot but reproduce its inequalities. Inside, Jota Castro or any other artist may symbolically condemn discrimination and inequality in the world and show politically dissident works of art, but downstairs at the TokyoSelf, it is still some black guy from the ex-colonies who prepares the gourmet salads for the white hipsters.

Projection (observing the residue)

Sean Rafferty





Application (Princess Chrissy)

Anthea Behm

Hi, I'm Chrissy ...

Ever since I was a little girl I've *always* dreamed about becoming a princess, I think it would be the most fantastic job in the world ... seeing new places, meeting new people and helping people ... wearing amazing clothes ... it's just the ultimate!

I think my favourite princess would have to be Princess Diana, because she has made a difference in the world ... and always looked amazing while doing it. I think that if I became The Australian Princess that I would like to make some changes for the better in the world. I think that would be one of the most amazing opportunities to be able to do that ... and not to mention all the clothes and the shoes!

I *love* going shopping and I love reading magazines. I love talking on the phone with my friends and going out dancing.

I'm 27 and I'm a Virgo.

I think that I would also like to do a lot of charity work and to make a big difference in the world. I used to work with disabled children ... although now I'm working as a waitress and I *do* love my job ... I meet some really amazing people and I work with some beautiful people, but I think that I *am* ready for more ... I'm ready to make some changes ... to take control ... and to start realising my dreams ... and I think that this show offers the most amazing opportunity to do that.

I also love the spotlight! I just love going on stage and I love performing which is another reason that I would love to go on the show — I think that it would be the most *challenging and fantastic experience*, and I think that if I *did* get crowned Australian Princess that I would definitely love all the travelling and the clothes and making a difference in the world, I think that's really important to me ... the world is a sad place and I think that it's important to do good and I think this would be a really fantastic opportunity to do that, and one that I would love and relish.

I also have a beautiful family and consider myself really lucky to have come from such a wonderful and supportive family. I have an older sister and two beautiful parents—my sister actually lent me this dress to do this video today—so I'll just give you a twirl [twirls]. She's just wonderful; they're all so wonderful to me. And I think because I *do* have such a wonderful family is one of the reasons I'd like to give a lot to the world ... and to share the opportunities that I've had ... and to be able to help people less fortunate than myself because I think there are a lot of less fortunate people out there ... and that *does* make me sad ... and I would really like to make a big difference in the world. And I've always wanted to be famous so I think that this would be the most fantastic opportunity and I hope you consider my application because it really would make *all* my dreams come true ... Thank you [curtseys].



AUSTRALIAN PRINCESS APPLICATION
ELIGIBILITY TERMS & CONDITIONS

RELEASE & WAIVER

1. By signing the below I hereby acknowledge and agree that:
 - (a) I am female.
 - (b) I am not married.
 - (c) I am in excellent physical and mental health; and if chosen agree to undertake a mental and physical examination by medical professional(s) selected by The Producers.
 - (d) I have read and I meet and agree to be bound by the above "The Australian Princess Application Eligibility Terms and Conditions".
2. I consent to the filming and recording of my voice at The Producer's sole discretion during The Application process and irrevocably grant to The Producers all rights and consents or waive the same so as to permit the fullest use throughout The World of any and all of this filming and recording in perpetuity in all media throughout the world.
3. I hereby assign to The Producers all right, title, and interest (including without limitation all copyright) in and to any material submitted by me in connection with The Series ("The Material") and grant to The Producers the right to use, edit and alter such Materials in all media throughout The World in perpetuity.
4. I consent to the recording, use and re-use by The Producers or their respective licensees, assignees, parents, subsidiaries or affiliated entities and each of their respective employees, officers, agents, and directors (collectively "Releasees") of my voice, actions, likeness, name, appearance, biographical material and any information derived from my application (collectively "Likeness"), including without limitation any recordings or stills submitted by me in connection with The Application as edited, modified or altered in all media throughout The World in perpetuity.
5. I acknowledge and agree that The Releasees may use any and all part of my Likeness and Materials in connection with the publicity, promotion, marketing or advertisement of The Series.
6. I agree not to make any claim against The Releasees as a result of the use of any part of my Likeness and Materials.
7. I authorise The Producers to investigate, access and collect information about me, about any of the statements made in my application, any supporting documents that I have signed, do sign, or any written or oral statements made in connection made with The Application for The Series.
8. I authorise The Producers to secure information about my experiences from my current and former employers, associates, friends, family members, educational institutions, government agencies, credit reporting agencies and any references I have provided and I irrevocably authorise such parties to provide information concerning me.
9. I hereby irrevocably release and forever discharge all such parties and persons from any and all liabilities arising out of or in connection with such an investigation. I specifically authorise the investigation of my employment records, government records including but not limited to my motor vehicle records, criminal records and credit and consumer

reports. I acknowledge that the above information may be used for the purposes of selecting contestants in The Series.

10. I acknowledge that even if I meet "The Australian Princess Application Eligibility Terms and Conditions" that The Producers have no obligation, under any circumstance, to interview me or select me as a contestant.
11. I acknowledge that all The Decisions regarding The Selection Process of The Contestants is final and not subject to challenge or appeal under any circumstance.
12. If selected I acknowledge that I must complete The Participant package, given to me by The Producers which will include amongst other things, release forms, confidentiality forms, and waivers for me and my immediate family.
13. If selected I acknowledge that I will be living in a house ("The House") for approximately nine weeks with approximately 10 – 15 other females where I will have little or no privacy.
14. If selected I acknowledge that The House, as well as any and all locations outside The House that I attend during The Production of The Series will be outfitted with video and recording devices which will record, video, broadcast and exhibit my actions at all times, twenty-four hours a day.
15. If selected I acknowledge that I will be observed at all times by The Producers and The General Public.
16. I acknowledge that The Producers reserve the right to:
 - (a) Make changes to The Application and production schedule;
 - (b) Change any of "The Australian Princess Application Eligibility Terms and Conditions", including the terms of The Prizes to be awarded at any time prior to the start of production of The Series without notice;
 - (c) To render ineligible any person who The Producers determine, in their sole discretion, is sufficiently connected with the production, administration, judging or distribution of The Series such that her participation in The Series could not create the appearance of impropriety;
 - (d) Not hold any participant application interviews, or to modify the manner in which it conducts such interviews; and
 - (e) Not produce The Series at all.

17. I have read, understand and agree with the foregoing.

Signed and agreed by:

 aka Chrissy

.....
Print Name:

Good luck princesses! Don't forget to check back on The Series' official website for further details.

Off

Kenzee Patterson

reports. I acknowledge that the above information may be used for the purposes of selecting contestants in The Series.

10. I acknowledge that even if I meet "The Australian Princess Application Eligibility Terms and Conditions" that The Producers have no obligation, under any circumstance, to interview me or select me as a contestant.
11. I acknowledge that all The Decisions regarding The Selection Process of The Contestants is final and not subject to challenge or appeal under any circumstance.
12. If selected I acknowledge that I must complete The Participant package, given to me by The Producers which will include amongst other things, release forms, confidentiality forms, and waivers for me and my immediate family.
13. If selected I acknowledge that I will be living in a house ("The House") for approximately nine weeks with approximately 10 – 15 other females where I will have little or no privacy.
14. If selected I acknowledge that The House, as well as any and all locations outside The House that I attend during The Production of The Series will be outfitted with video and recording devices which will record, video, broadcast and exhibit my actions at all times, twenty-four hours a day.
15. If selected I acknowledge that I will be observed at all times by The Producers and The General Public.
16. I acknowledge that The Producers reserve the right to:
 - (a) Make changes to The Application and production schedule;
 - (b) Change any of "The Australian Princess Application Eligibility Terms and Conditions", including the terms of The Prizes to be awarded at any time prior to the start of production of The Series without notice;
 - (c) To render ineligible any person who The Producers determine, in their sole discretion, is sufficiently connected with the production, administration, judging or distribution of The Series such that her participation in The Series could not create the appearance of impropriety;
 - (d) Not hold any participant application interviews, or to modify the manner in which it conducts such interviews; and
 - (e) Not produce The Series at all.
17. I have read, understand and agree with the foregoing.

Signed and agreed by:

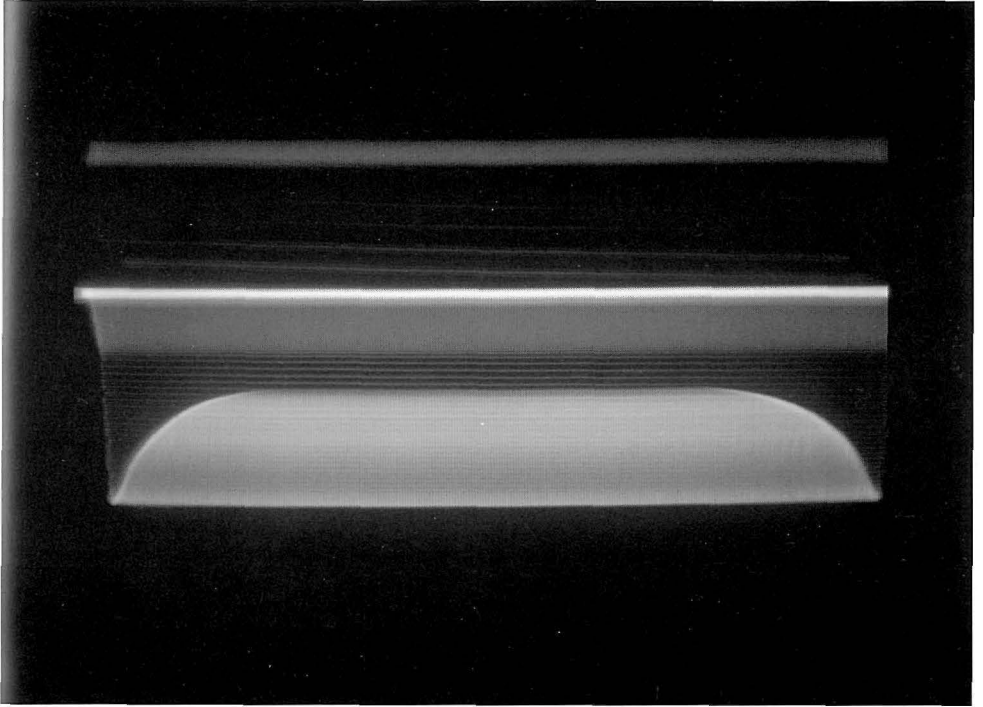
 aka Chrissy

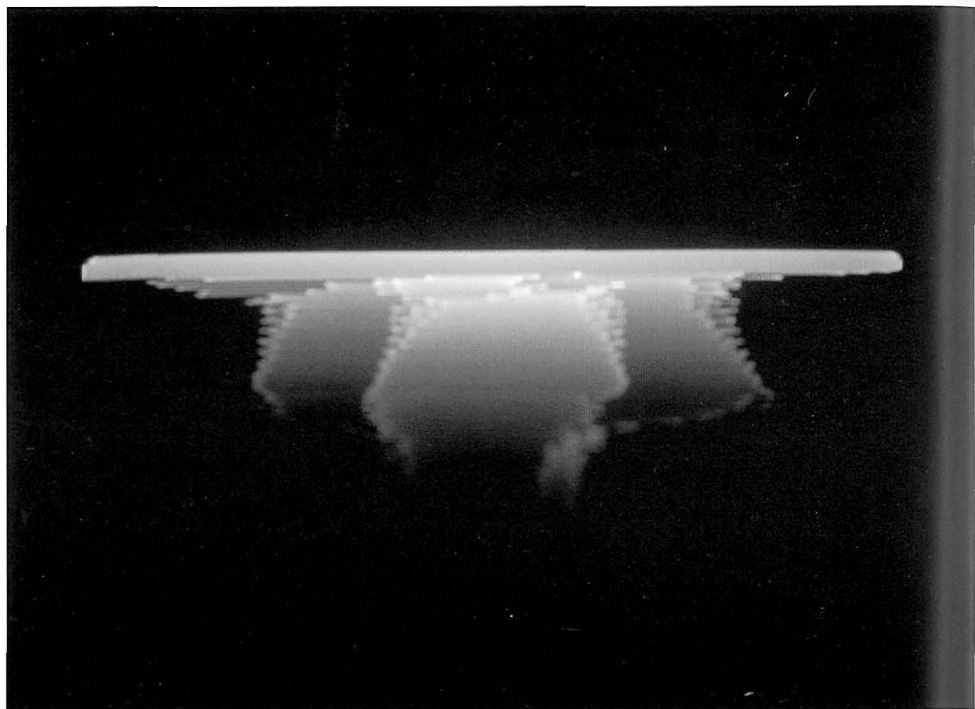
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Print Name:

Good luck princesses! Don't forget to check back on The Series' official website for further details.

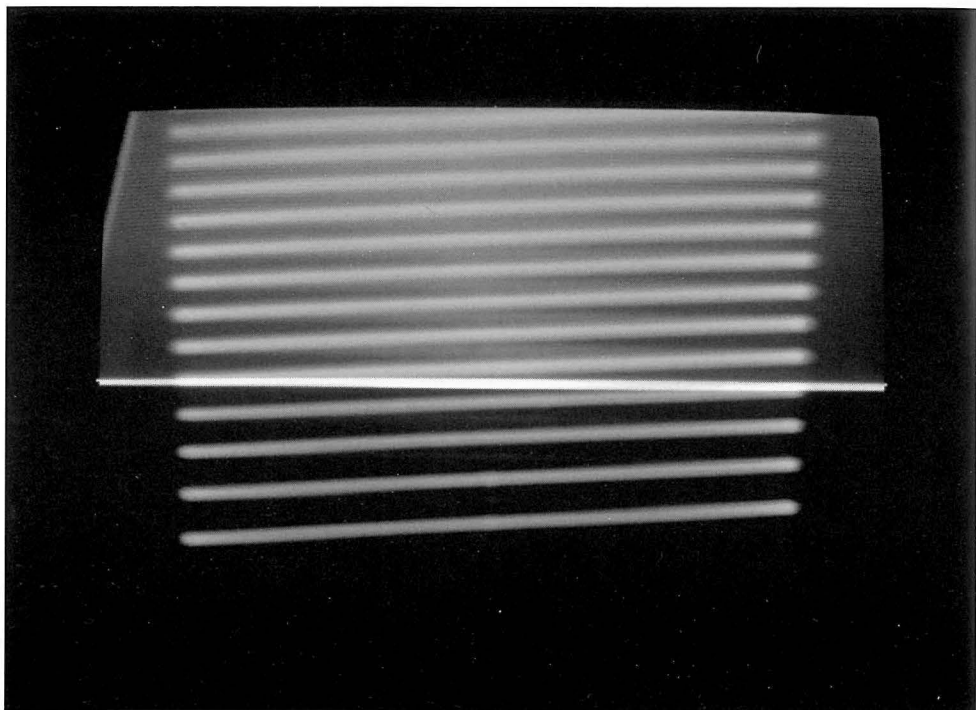
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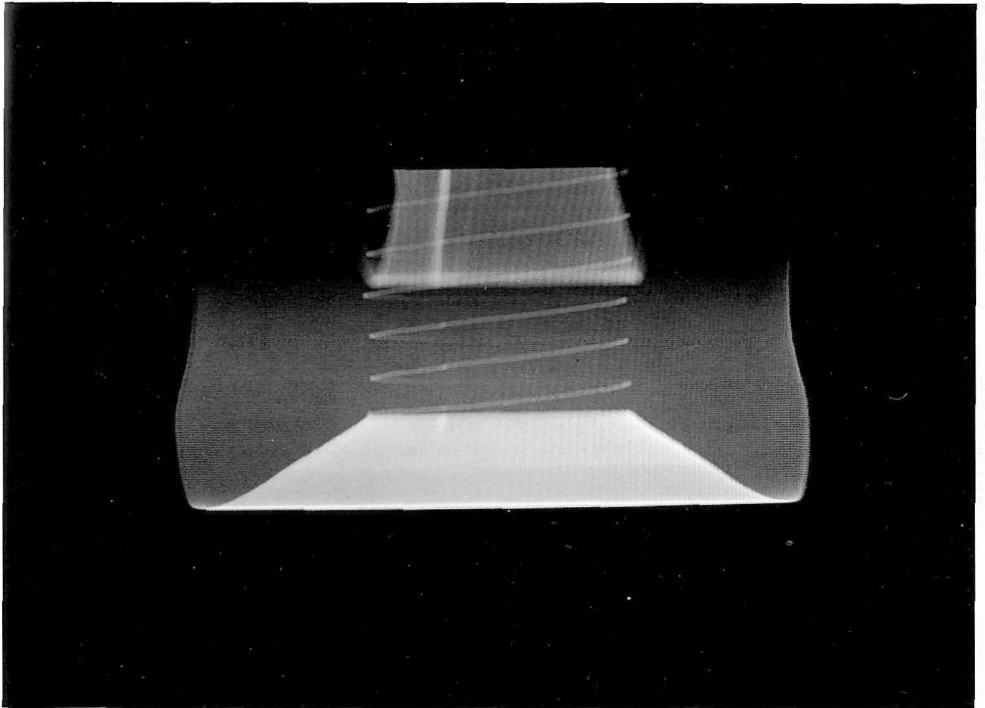
Kenzee Patterson











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m e n u

Samples from the busy box collection

Ms & Mr
2:26

Mananging Processes: Part One - Applying Methodologies

Emma White
4:29

Tumbleweeds

Rebecca Ann Hobbs
3:30

Murder in the Museum

Arlo Mountford
4:28

I'm waiting for my real life to begin

Rachel Scott
5:09

Electric Ladyland

Bianca Barling
3:22

Missing in Action

Kate Murphy
8:31

The Phoenix Portal

Soda_Jerk & Sam Smith
7:55

Weekdays

Penny Cain
4:16

Oh God, Oh Man, Oh Fuck

John Harris
2:41

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issue six: watching





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