



John Gillies, *Road Movie (part 1)*, 2008, High Definition digital video, stereo sound, 9:00 min. Image courtesy the artist.
Cover image: Deborah Kelly, *Beastliness*, 2011, digital animation, stereo sound, 3:17 min. Image courtesy the artist & Gallery Barry Keldoulis. Deborah Kelly is represented by Gallery Barry Keldoulis.

The Car as a consumer society fetish is explored with humorous surrealist undertones in *Road Movie* by John Gillies. Gillies creates a hot, steamy atmosphere along Sydney's Parramatta Road where buildings, bitumen and cars are compressed into a jumble of reflecting surfaces that seem to melt into one another. Out of the traffic chaos a young guy appears. He is driving his car – a *Subaru* – toward some unspecified destination out of the city. On arrival, he performs an unthinkable act.

Nicola Walkerden's *CINAMNESIA* is a work that like *Drums and Trains* foregrounds the physical materiality of the 16mm film medium. The difference for Walkerden is to be found in a series of equivalences that occur throughout *CINAMNESIA*. The play between the bodies of two women being immersed in a tidal pool and wrapped in coils of nautical rope with archival footage of a female patient being anaesthetised for a spinal operation strikes a suggestive tone that defines the work.

Baby Please Don't Go by Grant Stevens is a cinematic remix of a sequence

from the opening moments of the film, *Apocalypse Now* (1979). In the original scene Lieutenant Willard "waits for a mission" through a drinking binge in a hotel room in Saigon during the Vietnam war. Stevens captures the moment when the semi naked Willard is at his most crazed, contorting his body in a drunken ritual dance. The notion of Willard's "waiting" is turned into a plea to "stay" with the insertion of a pop song repeating the phrase: "*Baby Please Don't Go*".

Geoffrey Weary
Curator

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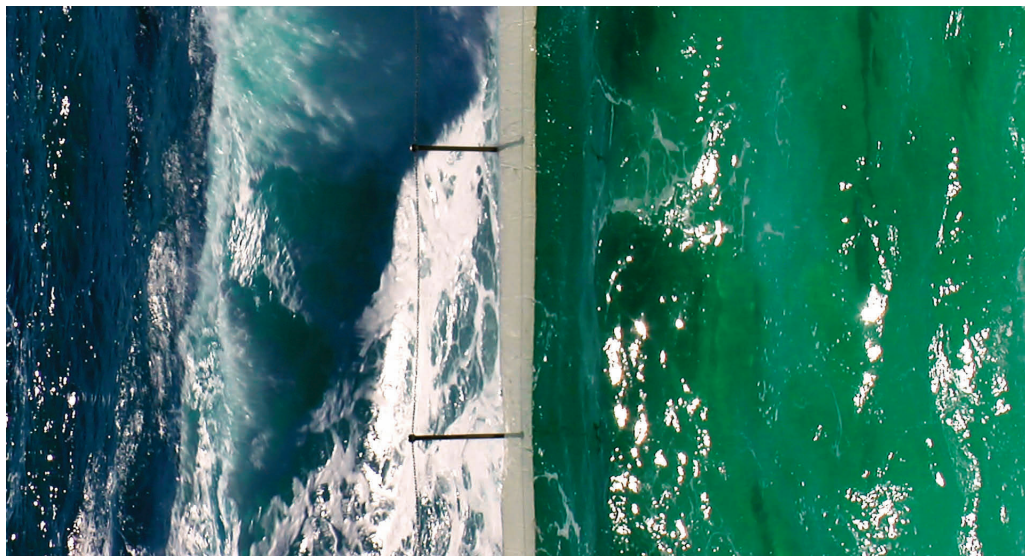
STRIKING CONTRASTS



Curated by dLux MediaArts in association with Geoffrey Weary, Sydney College of the Arts,
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Jess MacNeil, *The Wall*, 2009, High Definition digital video, stereo sound, 7:00 min. Image courtesy the artist.

Over the past decade the screen as presence in projection, installation, immersive or interactive space has come to dominate contemporary art practice. The selection of films and High Definition (HD) video works in this exhibition have been drawn from the vast cultural landscape of material and grouped together based on common tendencies that typify the works of groups of artists be they senior, mid career or emerging in the field.

The salient trends or tendencies that are explored in *Striking Contrasts* include works that foreground the material or physical properties of the mediums of film or HD video. Some artists draw on the appropriation and recycling of existing cultural artifacts while the articulation of the spiritual or transcendent is juxtaposed with works that explore a preoccupation with erotic or consumer fetish. The corporeal presence of the body on the screen remains one of endless fascination and exploration.

The works of Paul Winkler and Jess MacNeil both echo the aesthetic concerns of the Structuralist cinema of the 1960s. In the case of Paul Winkler's

highly personal 16mm film, *Drums and Trains*, a seemingly innocent child's toy train and the ominous sounds drawn from archival footage of a boy-soldier striking a drum are looped, masked and optically reprinted across the screen surface of the work. The striking drum and the movement of the toy train becomes increasingly abstracted as the film blisters and burns.

By way of contrast, Jess MacNeil's *The Wall* was filmed at the iconic Bondi Life Savers Club pool at Bondi beach. MacNeil's HD digital video work is shot from a fixed position and recorded in a single take. The sense of reality, of recording a real space is immediately abstracted as the horizontal wall separating pool and sea is flipped vertically and the scene is suddenly disassembled. Waves crashing vertically against the white line – The Wall – imbue the work with a powerful psychological resonance that is to be sensed rather than explained.

Tony Lawrence is an artist who works exclusively with found or existing film footage that has usually been sourced from online sites such as *GumTree* or *eBay*. *Girl on Fire* was originally a



Angelica Mesiti, *Rapture (silent anthem)*, 2009, single-channel High Definition video, colour, silent, 10:10 min. Image courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery. Angelica Mesiti is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery.

1940s 8mm documentary film of an underwater ballet performer. The long term storage of the film has produced a red staining effect that engulfs the dancer in an almost iridescent glow as her body moves gracefully through the pool where she once performed.

Joan Ross on the other hand borrows from the colonial paintings of Joseph Lycett in her digitally animated film, *BBQ This Sunday, BYO*. The work revolves around the tranquil setting of a group of Aboriginal people having a campfire barbeque. Through a series of highly inventive displacements and visual puns many strange and inexplicable events unfold over the course of the film and through the composite spaces of Lycett's paintings.

Rapture (silent anthem) by Angelica Mesiti dwells on the faces of two teenage girls as they watch, transfixed at something or someone at an event that is off screen, unseen and therefore unknown. The fixed position of the camera, the absence of montage or digital manipulation and the single take close-ups of the two girls, defies the conventions of traditional filmmaking. We are left to meditate, sometimes

uncomfortably on faces that speak of innocence, ecstasy and transcendence.

The inference of the transcendent is also present in *Lake George (After Rothko)* by John Conomos. The work was shot as a 360 degree continuous pan around Lake George (ACT) and surrounding hills. The ephemeral nature of the "lake" that periodically fills then disappears has long been a source of fascination and mythic projection. The slow pan also suggests another inspiration or cinematic trace that inspired Conomos's conception: a scene from a film shot in black and white of a boat slowly drifting down the Nile river.

Erotic fetish is visualised to great effect in the animated film *Beastliness* by Deborah Kelly. *Beastliness* opens with a close up on the closed eyes of what appears to be a doll-android like creature. She awakens as her face is enveloped by a thick mane of bright red hair. The camera magically spirals into the doll-android's mouth, and from there, into a dark void that is inhabited by a writhing host of interspecies creatures that appear to be part human, part animal and part insect.