



Steve Danzig: Mind's Eye

A philosophical point: Plato speaks (metaphorically) of an inner artist painting pictures in the soul, and suggests that memory might be analogous to a block of wax into which our perceptions and thoughts stamp impressions. Aristotle endorses this wax impression model of memory, and describes this impression as a sort of picture. He introduced the notion of a mental faculty of imagination, allied to perception, and responsible for producing and recalling imagery. He asserts that "The soul never thinks without a mental image", and maintains that the representational power of language is derived from imagery, spoken words being the symbols of the inner images. In effect, for Aristotle, images play something very like the role played by the more generic notion of "mental representation" in modern cognitive science. This was almost universally accepted in the philosophical tradition, even by non-Aristotelians, up until the 20th century.¹

Within this exhibition we have in the mind's eye three important artists connected by a philosophical rubric. We see within the collective a partnering of ideas constructed by time, place and journey. Memories discovered, uncovered and recontextualised engage those objects drawn from our histories and re-mapped within the digital aesthetic.

Edited prints, as well as 3 installation boxes from Vicki McConville's Memento Mori series are presented in this exhibition. This work topographically traces a time and space narrative filtered through memory and the imagination. They contain an eclectic range of materials; found organic objects, media images, digital photos of the urban environment as well as historical documents. Leah King-Smith's work integrates a reworking of the printed surface with hand drawn elements. Stephen Jones uses digital collages of photo-media to build rich layered textures within the panoramic view. All in all they are bound together as hybrid maps, evoking a state of constant flux and transformation within a new contemporary (Australasian) landscape.

This art (digital) is increasingly on the radar, as it finds a strong foothold in the collections of important private and institutional collections. This exhibition continues a fine art tradition from artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Starn Brothers and Richard Hamilton who used electronic (mixed) media to reshape our understanding of traditional artistic process.



Leah King-Smith

In the early 1990's Leah's work was brought to prominence with the exhibition of a series of 10 large-scale photographs titled Patterns of Connection. The series re-presented 19th century library archival pictures of Victorian Aborigines in a way that evoked the spiritual presence of the people who were being contextualized (and thus imprisoned) by the government archival document worldview. Leah King-Smith is asking people to see the presence of the Aboriginal ancestors as being strong in the present, and to think about historical overviews (especially 19th century governmental) as limiting to indigenous people.

Leah has a black Aboriginal mother and a white Australian father, and whilst she feels her Aboriginality is a large contributing factor to her creative motivation, her cultural blend has fostered human principles of resolution and mediation. Most of Leah's work is essentially about coming to terms with struggle, either on the cultural level or the artistic.

Leah's current series of pictures titled Beyond Capture revisit the La Trobe Library's historical pictures, but reveal only visually liminal fragments. These fragments, as well as the artists' drawings and photographs of landscapes, are brought together in the digital environment. The autobiographical presence of the artist is whispered in shadows against the rocks or toes caught by the fish-eye lens. It is also in the pencil effects revealed in the surface of the print. Beyond Capture utilizes the ability of the digital interface to mediate varying capacities of presence and representation to evoke spiritual and multidimensional notions of reality.

Leah King-Smith has a Bachelor and a Masters degree in fine art photography and is currently doing further postgraduate study in Brisbane. Beyond Capture was first exhibited in Melbourne in May 2004 at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi



Vicki McConville

Vicki McConville's recent project work Memento Mori utilises constructed mirrored box dioramas combining found objects with digitised images (viewed via peepholes), screen based DVD's of archival Super8 footage, soundscapes including the artists voice, and digital prints.

McConville borrows from the wunderkammer tradition of collection and display and explores the links between 'new media' and the 'older media' that inspired it, such as the mirror, the grid, the perspective box and the anamorphic drawing. Precursor to the modern museum, the wunderkammer celebrated the idea that all the wonders of our world could be contained within a box. McConville muses that "the computer is our contemporary wunderkammer" with a series of mirrored box dioramas, a contemporary version of what artist Joseph Cornell described as 'boxes of memory'.

Exhibiting professionally since 1982, Vicki McConville has exhibited extensively in Australia, the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Russia and the USA.

In 2000 Vicki's new media project 'The Private Eye', featuring a series of archival digital prints and dioramas, was toured to London and Bristol in the UK, with support from Arts Victoria, as part of the Centenary of Federation Festival in London.

Her work is in prominent public collections and private collections throughout Australia, USA, UK, France, Italy and Germany.

Vicki has worked in print media, installation, video and radio, voice and performance and has recently completed her Master of Fine Arts (Research) at Monash University, Melbourne. She has been the principal artist, artistic director as well as a project manager on large-scale projects in both urban and regional areas. Vicki was the Secretary and Exhibitions Advisor for the Print Council of Australia in the 1980's, was a Juror for the International Digital Art Award from 2000 to 2004 and is currently on the Board of the National Association for the Visual Arts.



Stephen Jones

Born 1951, lives in Sydney, Australia is an Australian video artist of long standing. He was originally a member of Bush Video (1974-5) and then worked at the Paddington Video Access Centre for several years (1976-78). He provided technical support for many major exhibitions including the Sydney Biennales and Perspectives from 1976 to 1985. He curated VideoTapes from Australia (with Bernice Murphy) which toured the United States and Canada as well as being shown at the AGNSW (1979-80). He established the independent video production facility Heuristic Video in 1982, working with numerous video artists and independent videomakers. From 1983 to 1992 he was the videomaker for the electronic music band Severed Heads. Between 1989 and 1996 he worked as an engineer for several major video post-production and computer graphic production facilities. In 1996 he re-started his career as an artist and in 1998 received a New Media Arts Fellowship.

In 1998 he produced a first pass of a history of the electronically generated image in Australia for dLux Media Arts for a symposium called Synthetics, which was presented at the PowerHouse museum in July that year. He also built and showed The Reading Machine a Brain Project installation at ArtSpace, Sydney, July, 1998. He has been involved with the philosophical aspects of the nature of consciousness for almost longer than his involvement in video and has been producing The Brain Project web site <http://www.culture.com.au/brain_proj/> since August 1996. He provides technical support for artists, developing sensor-controlled systems for interactive video/DVD installations and has also built Artificial Life installation projects for artists at ATR in Japan. As an artist himself, he builds physical immersion installations based on the incunabula of computing, as well as developing theoretical perspectives on artificial intelligence and augmented environments. His considerable experience in electronics in the arts means that he is now Australia's first conservator of electronic art.

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¹An Introduction to the Science and Philosophy of Mental Imagery (a.k.a. "Mental Imagery, Philosophical Issues About). Nigel J.T.Thomas California State University, Los Angeles