

## **Big Bang for Australian Media Arts!**

Media art has proliferated and blossomed in Australia, with a spectacular survey of playful and political, intellectually and visually engaging media works currently being exhibited at the *Premier's National New Media Art Award* at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) in Brisbane.

Beautifully demonstrating the diversity and maturity of these expansive new art practices' is the visionary work *Earthstar* of David Haines and Joyce Hinterding - a monumental multi-sensory portrait of the sun. Haines and Hinterding are talented artists in their own right, but together their work is visually and conceptually explosive! Embracing research across the fields of arts and sciences their sun study allows the audience to see, hear and smell our closest cosmological neighbour.

While media arts work often tend to be global, *Earthstar* has a particularly Australian sensibility. The images dominating the installation space - that of a harsh and powerful sun were recorded with the artists own telescope in the West Australian desert. Solar transmissions are captured live in the gallery by two alarmingly simple looking, yet technically complex artist created antennas, allowing us to experience the suns energy at a vibrational level. The installation also contains two smell stations - one containing the scent of a bushfire and the other with the refreshing smell of new rain. Utilising age-old techniques the artists have created a limited edition ozonic perfume - *Solaire Amour*.

Approaching media art as a site for social change ex-pat Natalie Jeremijenko's *Greenlight* addresses the Global climate crisis with very local, practical and aesthetically delightful solutions. Jeremijenko has designed a self-sustaining, carbon-neutral installation of indoor hanging native rainforest ferns, growing under a soft light powered by solar collectors on the roof of GoMA. As well as greening an indoor environment the ferns operate as a highly efficient and beautiful air purification system.

Showcasing the enormous impact new media has had on traditional arts practice the exhibition also presents two artists extending their painting practices into video and 3D animation. Julie Dowling's *Oottheroongoo* is a timely and intimate four channel video installation, narrating her and her family members' displacement and return to their Badimaya country. The Premier's Award recipient Peter Alwast's 3D-rendered, visually luscious hyper-realistic space *Everything*, utilises a multi-layered mashup aesthetic, inserting divergent source material seamlessly into a three channel video installation. As part of the \$75,000 Award Alwast's work will be acquired for the GoMA Collection.

Expanding sculptural notions into real time intimate relationships, artist Mari Velonaki presents a love story between two magnificently crafted and networked auto-kinetic robots embodied within sculptural wooden cubes. The magical texts displayed on the crystal screens of the *Circle D: Fragile Balances* boxes distorts if handled roughly, but respond poetically if treated gently, reminding us of the fragility and care needed in human interactions.

Master artist/programmer John Tonkin's elegant *Time and Motion Study V2* provides an insightful glimpse into our culture's absorption with self-observation. Within his darkened installation the software discretely captures and smoothly renders the viewers almost imperceptible movements, re-presenting their image around the installation in toned time splices – each viewer's personal visual memory, providing instant recall in a searchable 3-dimensional futuristic image library. Sam Smith's equally engaging sculpture, *Control Structure*, also investigates ways of seeing and recording. A representation of his exploded head lies on the gallery floor, channelling tension between the primacy of two perspectives of the eye and the lens.

Media artists are increasingly working in the growing cultural spaces of virtual reality and gaming environments. A pioneering virtual artist, Adam Nash composes songs within 3-dimesional online multi-

user worlds. His series of moving geometric audio sculptures *Seventeen Unsung Songs* is located on an island in Second Life, and unlike a conventional song, the audience must bodily move via their avatar to play and hear it. In a similar vein to Tonkin and Velonaki, his work demands a different relationship with audience. The “do not touch” days of gallery viewing are dwindling as the participatory nature of media works demands audience engagement.

Anita Fontaine’s sophisticated *CutexDoom II* is a modified version of the video game Unreal Tournament 3. In this sequel to *CutexDoom I* the player is trying to escape from a religious cult, which believes that the possession of cute material objects will lead to happiness. Level II parallels our cultural experience of what Alain de Botton describes as *Status Anxiety*. In a reversal of visual hierarchy, *CutexDoom II*’s physical installation is modelled on Fontaine’s stunning signature in-game graphics, so wherever we look we are surrounded by her extravagant techno-rococo *Ideology* wallpaper.

Australian media art doesn’t stop here – in fact this is just the beginning of a constantly expanding field where artists are working with the latest technological development in bio-art, wearable technology, locative media, software development, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and gaming. Media arts culture is increasingly shaping our imitate and global perspectives, influencing our choices, spreading new ideas, enabling relationships and encouraging participation in spaces that were once strictly controlled.

ANAT is delighted that the prominence and importance of this art form is being acknowledged by the proliferation of Media Art Awards both nationally and globally. For comments please contact Amanda Matulick, Communications Manager at [communicate@anat.org.au](mailto:communicate@anat.org.au).

The Queensland *Premier’s National New Media Art Award* has been intelligently and sensitively curated by Jose da Silva and Nicholas Chambers, and the exhibition is viewable until February 8, 2009 at GoMA.

Media Kit

[http://qag.qld.gov.au/about\\_us/?a=62880](http://qag.qld.gov.au/about_us/?a=62880)

Media Images :

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