

TRANSMISSION LEGACIES OF THE TELEVISION AGE

Artwork labels

Steven RENDALL

English 1969–, worked in Australia 2000–

Flat screens

2010

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

Dara BIRNBAUM

American 1946–

Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman

1978

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 5 min 50 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

‘When I was editing [this work] I was selecting specific scenes, especially those of the “transformation sequences” ... so that Wonder Woman was caught up in them, endlessly spinning like a doll in a music box ... However, I had no idea how to end the work ... Then I, miraculously, heard a song called “Wonder Woman in Discoland” ... I immediately got to work, editing it in much the same way as I approached the visuals, because I probably think of visual and sound as the same thing – dynamic structures ... It gave me the very dialectic for that work, which I had been looking for.’

Dara BIRNBAUM

American 1946–

Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry

1979

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 6 min 50 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

'I realised the strong interplay between the two industries: television and the popular music industry ... I purposefully sought out songs [that] were No. 1 on the charts, much like "Hollywood Squares" was No. 1 on television, being shown as much as three times per day in New York ... It was like hand-in-glove, putting together two top dance-floor hits ("Georgy Porgy" by Toto and "Found A Cure" by Ashford and Simpson). I then found a wonderful jazz singer, Dori Levine, who did her own style of "Georgie Porgie" ... we mixed them – so that one track was from the industry and the other was "independent".'

Dara BIRNBAUM

American 1946–

MTV: Artbreak

1987

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Birnbaum was commissioned by MTV to create this *Artbreak*. She was given access to original drawings from Max Fleisher's *Out of the Inkwell* series, produced from 1918 to 1929, and worked with animators to redraw the key scene, converting the kiss that is thrown by the 'mechanical woman' into the MTV logo, which knocks Koko out. 'Then the whole ink-bottle turns over and characters form out of the spilled ink ... [t]he camera pulls back and you see that it is a woman animator sitting at the Paint Box, creating not only these new images of women, but even having Fleischer as part of her palette'.

Darren SYLVESTER

Australian 1974–

You should let go of a dying relationship

2006

two channel colour video transferred to DVD, silent,
3 min 45 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

'I saw *Heroes* on a video jukebox ... I couldn't hear the song, however knew the video and felt a solitary sadness in the clip ... This is where the original idea came – to make a silent dance video recreation of a clip where the song would almost play in the viewers' head ... After two weeks of searching I found *Wuthering Heights*. I don't know how many times I watched those clips ... The fact of just repeatedly watching them and dancing in front of the TV became part of the process ... Both songs speak of love, losing someone, wanting them back.'

Keith SONNIER

American 1941–

TV in and TV out

1972

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 10 min

Purchased, 1974

EA4-1974

The video works of Keith Sonnier from the early 1970s investigate the inherent characteristics of the medium (colour, surface, space, materials), often employing a mix of recorded and live broadcasting techniques. This video was shot with two cameras placed in front of a monitor. One performer is with Sonnier in the control room; the other cannot see her own image and relies on microphone contact for information. As Lizzie Borden has written, 'The tape is about modes of signalling and transmitting information, sometimes involving a psychological interchange between the performers as they continuously switch roles'.

Richard SERRA

American 1939–

Anxious automation

1971

black and white video transferred to DVD, silent,
4 min 30 sec

Purchased, 1975

EA10-1975

Joan JONAS

American 1936–

Left side right side

1972

black and white video transferred to DVD, sound, 7 min

Purchased, 1975

EA12-1975

Often using her own body as their subject, the video works of Joan Jonas from the early 1970s connected the video monitor and performance art. As she said, 'Video allowed for the immediacy and the continuity of television's live broadcast, while also allowing real-time, ongoing viewing via a monitor. It was simultaneously a recording medium. Video offered a continuous present'. *Left side right side* saw her using the video as a mirror through simple, repeated gestures.

Joan JONAS

American 1936–

Vertical roll

1972

black and white video transferred to DVD, sound, 20 min

Purchased, 1975

EA8-1975

In this video work Joan Jonas revealed the peculiar mechanics of the technical aspects of television transmission as a structural device for her performance: 'Video as we used it was personal, and the personal was political ... The video monitor's screen or the projected image was another mask for the construction and deconstruction of persona ... In a belly-dancer's costume, I jumped in and out of the bar of the vertical roll like frames in a film going by. This out-of-sync dysfunction of the television – the rolling pictures – presented on the screen parts of the body, never as a whole. I had begun to dance with the TV'.

Borna SAMMAK

American 1986–

Splash into me yeah

2014

colour high definition video, silent, 15 sec (looped), high definition television, electrical cord, metal, artist's proof

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2015

This digital 'canvas' shows a cacophonous animation of morphing abstracted forms, calling to mind the lurid, high-key colours of Nickelodeon cartoons, lashes of paint in an expressionist painting, or a visualisation of catastrophic weather patterns. The screen is affixed with a framing device consisting of store-bought pulleys and lime green cord that seems to contain the 'paint' that splashes across the screen through the use of pulsating computer-generated imagery.

Adelle MILLS

Australian 1987–

Acting, doing

2013

two channel colour high definition video, silent,
29 min 28 sec

Courtesy of the artist

For this work Adelle Mills performed in front of a live monitor, with her actions recorded and transmitted to subsequent performers, who only saw one another on screen. Each performer watched footage of the previous person; they were then instructed to ‘undertake a memory exercise whereby their movements were determined by the previously watched footage of the last person “doing”’ – this is the ‘acting’. They then had to ‘self-direct their own movements for the “doing” component of the performance’. The separation between the recording, viewing and performance allows for elements of chance, as well as a process of self-observation and self-mediation.

Simon DENNY

New Zealander 1982–

New display (Samsung)

2013

aluminium, paint, inkjet print on transparent synthetic polymer resin, 3D smart TV, remote control

The Michael and Janet Buxton Collection

Simon Denny's work examines the physical presence, role, language and use of technology and tech-design. *New display (Samsung)* is one of a series of sculptural works created by Denny that embeds the technology of the Samsung Smart television and remote control within the installation itself. The screen is superimposed with images relating to promotional materials associated with the new Samsung products, with their promise of a new and 'smarter' experience of television.

Patrick POUND

New Zealander 1962–, worked in Australia 1989

Remote abstraction (Belgium)

2008

collage of remote control, cut book binding, adhesive, pen and brown ink on lined paper

Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington and Stills Gallery, Sydney

‘The pages are empty stamp album pages. The little abstract collages are all made up entirely of linen book parts ... The abstractions are sometimes miniatures (models) of actual obscure (historical) modernist abstract artworks, and sometimes they are inventions. I was interested here in the way European modernist abstraction spread across the world like the absent stamps of the album pages. Abstraction in all its forms became a near universal style and a sign of modernity ... The remote controls also quietly and beautifully echo the abstract forms as well.’

Patrick POUND

New Zealander 1962–, worked in Australia 1989

Remote abstraction (France)

2008

collage of remote control, cut book binding, adhesive,
pen and brown ink on lined paper

Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington and Stills Gallery, Sydney

Patrick POUND

New Zealander 1962–, worked in Australia 1989

Remote abstraction (Chile)

2008

collage of remote control, cut book binding, adhesive,
pen and brown ink on lined paper

Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington and Stills Gallery, Sydney

Patrick POUND

New Zealander 1962–, worked in Australia 1989

Screen capture

2015–

collage of photographs on graph paper

Courtesy of the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington and Stills Gallery, Sydney

'Screen capture is a selection from ... hundreds of found photographs which hold related, yet seemingly contradictory, ideas of the screen, of portals and mirrors; of projections and reflections. These found analogue photographs refer to the television screen and the camera lens ... I recapture these images and put them back to work – setting them a new task ... Digital television and radio and the vast store of recently redundant images now available on the internet encourages the desire to rewind, to recollect and to search for meaning in the details of the remnant and to search for coherent connections between things.'

Susan FEREDAY

Australian 1959–

Untitled

from the *Value* series 1989–90

1989

type C photographs

Margaret Stewart Endowment, 1989

DC30.a-b-1989

'In *Value* I was trying to understand photography as the primary medium of mechanical reproduction ... When I re-photographed [details] off the television screen [from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* TV series (1979)], the paintings' original texture would merge with the tapestry-like grid of an analogue screen ... Where Walter Benjamin had claimed that the original aura of a work of art is lost by mechanical reproduction, I found that in the era of electronic reproduction another form of aura accrues: one resulting from an increased distance from the original, produced by the spectral, evanescent qualities of the medium itself.'

Robert ROONEY

Australian 1937–

Repeat performance

1982

colour super 8 film transferred to DVD, silent, 3 min

Courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Elvis RICHARDSON

Australian 1965–

Televisuals: Salute Elvis

2008

colour video, sound, 6 min 16 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Gallerie PomPom, Sydney and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide

In the first decades of analogue television broadcasting it was common to see mechanical test patterns, which had similar geometric structures but unique visual qualities according to the broadcasters, appear during breaks in transmission. They were used to measure and set contrast controls for both the receiver and the transmitter. Elvis Richardson's *Televisuals: Salute Elvis* takes the hard-edge abstraction of test patterns and recreates them in animated watercolour drawings using a specific range of colours and lines, each pattern containing an anagram of the word 'televisuals'.

Tracey MOFFATT

Australian 1960–

Gary HILLBERG editor

Australian 1982–

Artist

2000

colour DVD, sound, 10 min (looped)

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

2012.314

Tracey Moffatt worked with film editor Gary Hillberg to create a suite of video collages utilising imagery from television sitcoms, melodramas and Hollywood films to focus on the representation of one scene, emotion, action or genre. *Artist* brings together decades' worth of representations of the 'artist', underscored by a fast-paced musical track. The visual and audio components paint an insightful and amusing picture of the ways in which artists have been represented on the small screen and in cinema.

Len LYE

New Zealander 1901–80

Rhythm

1957

black and white 16mm film transferred to DVD,
sound, 1 min

Collection of Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne.

Courtesy of the Len Lye Foundation and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, from material preserved and made available by The New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero.

This is the earliest work in the exhibition and a brilliant example of the jump-cut technique. It was intended originally for inclusion in the Chrysler Corporation's weekly television program in the United States. Lye obtained documentary footage which he manually cut together, using scenes he described as having 'a good, definite, contrasty quality'. This spliced footage was overlaid with a soundtrack of traditional African tribal drumming and chanting. *Rhythm* received the New York Art Directors' Festival First Prize for the year's best television commercial in 1957, but was later disqualified because Chrysler had refused to broadcast it.

Mark LECKEY

English 1964–

Fiorucci made me hardcore

1999

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 14 min 44 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown Enterprises, New York

In this video Mark Leckey cuts and rearranges video footage of British dance culture and subcultural groups, commencing with late 1970s Northern Soul, televised dance-a-thons and images of 'Casuals' through to rave parties of the early 1990s. Covering several decades in time, the footage is united by the pulsating rhythm that rises and falls throughout the work, its editing creating an ebb-and-flow effect.

Richard HAMILTON

English 1922–2011

Kent state

1970

colour photo-screenprint, ed. 2960/5000

Gift of Dr Douglas Kagi through the
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013

2013.441

'I set up a camera in front of the TV ... In the middle of the week the shooting of students by National Guardsmen occurred at Kent State University. This tragic event produced the most powerful images ... yet I felt a reluctance to use any of them. It was too terrible an incident in American history to submit to arty treatment ... I didn't really choose the subject, it offered itself. It seemed right, too, that art could help to keep the shame in our minds; the wide distribution of a large edition print might be the strongest indictment I could make.'

John IMMIG

Dutch/Australian 1940–

No title (T.V. images)

from the *Vietnam* series 1975–76

1975–76

gelatin silver photograph

Purchased with the assistance
of the Visual Arts Board, 1977

PH4-1977, PH5-1977, PH6-1977,
PH7-1977, PH8-1977, PH9-1977,
PH10-1977, PH11-1977,
PH12-1977, PH13-1977

It was the 'live-ness' of television and the unique daily broadcasting of images relating to the Vietnam War that led to it being known by many in the West as the 'first TV war'. As artist John Immig explained, he attempted to return a sense of historical significance to the events and subjects of war: 'I attempted to break up the flow by separating fractions of seconds from the flow. Vietnam was right in your face at the time. The war was lost on TV and on the street of course'.

Elvis RICHARDSON

Australian 1965–

Now 7 years later

2008

colour high definition video, silent, 15 min

Courtesy of the artist and Gallerie PomPom, Sydney and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide

This poignant video explores how the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001 are remembered. Richardson was in New York herself when the events took place, and was curious about the reactions and recollections of people who had witnessed it from a distance, usually through television imagery. She interviewed a group of people about their memories and was 'struck by how their collective emotions were mediated by technology', and that the experience of interviewing these virtual witnesses made her rethink her own memory of the day.

Anish KAPOOR

Indian/English 1954–

Wounds and absent objects

1998

colour pigment-transfer prints on polyester, ed. 4/12

Purchased with funds donated by the
National Gallery Women's Association, 2005

2005.21.1-9

Anish Kapoor was commissioned to create this 'TV sculpture' for British Television Channel 4. Kapoor experimented with post-production digital TV equipment and by using electronic matting devices made an electronic impulse morph into these coloured forms which seem to gently pulsate. The project emphasises the sculptural presence of the television set, with Kapoor asking the viewer to truly stop and watch the television, rather than constantly flick through programs and channels.

Nam June PAIK

Korean 1932–2006, emigrated to Japan 1950, worked in Germany 1958–2006, United States 1964–2006

Global groove

1973

colour video transferred to digital betacam, sound, 30 min

Purchased, 1976

EA7-1976

Nam June Paik is frequently credited as a pioneer in the field of video art. His work with television from 1959 onwards transformed how the medium was understood, as well as its potential for artistic exploration. As a counter argument to the one-sided nature of commercial television broadcasting, Paik's *Global groove* is about exchange and discussion and, at its heart, is an invitation for a global television party. The content is global in focus; it does not follow any predetermined narrative structure, and cuts and pastes content from earlier video works – a precursor to the editing formats later popularised in music videos.

Polixeni PAPAPETROU

Australian 1960–

**Arthur Hibbert, sculptor and painter
with television people**

1986, printed 1987

gelatin silver photograph

Purchased with funds donated by
Hallmark Cards Australia, Pty Ltd, 1988

PH58-1988

Tony OURSLER

American 1957–

De-doublement

1996

dolls, wood, colour DVD projection, sound, 2 min 30 sec

Private collection, Melbourne

W. & L.T. , Antwerp fashion house

est. 1994

Walter VAN BEIRENDONCK designer

Belgium 1957–

Jacket, jumper, overall, t-shirt, bag

1995

polyamide nylon, polyvinyl chloride plastic, cotton,
wool, acrylic

Purchased, 1996

1996.201.a-e

Walter van Beirendonck's label W. & L.T. (Wild and Lethal Trash) promoted futuristic themes, and this outfit has a utopian, positive message for the pre-internet age. Van Beirendonck was responding to the mood and cultural climate of the 1990s and the fascination with new technologies. He says, 'I'm always reflecting the time and moment I'm living in while working on the collections. And that moment, the 1990s, was an incredible time regarding new technologies: first websites, first CD-ROMs, first video games, the boom in techno music, dressing up for raves, and "new" gender and beauty possibilities'.

Tom WESSELMANN

American 1931–2004

TV still life

from the *11 Pop artists III* portfolio 1965

1965

colour screenprint and photo-screenprint, ed. 63/200

Purchased, 1969

P58-1969

Tom Wesselmann was one of the leading figures of the Pop Art movement of the early 1960s in the United States. Televisions often featured in his works – several paintings used actual working TV sets within the composition, others used collages of television broadcasts. In this still life, Wesselmann incorporates the set within the kitchen scene as a new, but common, fixture of twentieth-century domestic life.

Eamon O'TOOLE

Australian 1957–

Wide World of Sport TV

1988

plastic, wood, steel, enamel, paint, colour fibre-tipped pens, aluminium leaf, electric light components

Private collection, Melbourne

'I decided, at some point, to turn the humble TV into a sculpture – a mood lamp featuring the Channel Nine *Wide World of Sports* logo – that sense of anticipation that comes from hearing the first bars of the famous theme music, signalling a major event was about to start ...

This sculpture is a reminder of the endless hours spent working on sculptures with the background noise of the TV keeping me company; or serving as a close friend, keeping me company and entertained with its myriad movies and late-night shows into the wee hours of the morning.'

ANT FARM, San Francisco

American 1968–78

Media burn

1975

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 25 min

Purchased, 1976

EA3-1976

Ant Farm functioned as an art collective with a self-declared utopian agenda. It comprised key members Chip Lord, Curtis Schreier and Doug Michels, with frequent collaborators Doug Hall and Hudson Marquez. On 4 July 1975, Ant Farm staged what they described as the ‘ultimate media event’ – a performance that saw a stack of television sets set ablaze. A customised 1959 Cadillac El Dorado Biarritz, with drivers guided by a video monitor within the car, smashed through the sets – a collision of two American icons, the automobile and the television.

ANT FARM, San Francisco

American 1968–78

“Off-air” Australia

1976

black and white video transferred to DVD, sound,
20 min 59 sec

Courtesy of the artists and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

In 1976 Ant Farm travelled to Australia for ten weeks at the invitation of Sydney architecture students Victor Allen and Bob Perry. This video was created from documentation of that visit, during which Ant Farm made numerous appearances on Australian television, as well as from commercials and footage of their various media events. The video concludes with imagery from a press conference regarding Ant Farm’s proposed Dolphin Embassy, a mobile laboratory that would use video technology to facilitate human–dolphin interaction and learning from dolphins in the wild.

Miranda JULY

American 1974–

The Amateurist

1998

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 14 min

Courtesy of the artist and Video Data Bank, Chicago

Miranda July's *The Amateurist* creates a complex presentation of virtual relationships, as a 'professional' woman monitors an 'amateur' woman over several years, both characters played by July herself. Making no actual contact in a physical sense, the monitoring occurs entirely through video surveillance, with the characters communicating via a technical strategy of knobs, dials and code. In a world of increasing social surveillance through CCTV footage in public spaces, and information surveillance through the tracking of online interactions, the video presents an increasingly paranoid vision of technological 'entrapment'.

Kalup LINZY

American 1977–

Conservations wit de Churen II: All My Churen

2003

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 29 min 14 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

The crossing over of the roles of performer, actor and performance artist, and the blurring of creative and commercial actions is at the heart of much of the video work of Kalup Linzy. Linzy has become renowned for his MTV-style videos in which he takes on the acting, production, direction and soundtrack composition. In *Conservations wit de Churen II: All my Churen*, the artist draws upon nostalgic experiences of watching seemingly endless episodes of TV soap operas, assimilating their 'formula' of recurring plotlines of intrigue, betrayal and heartache.

Pipilotti RIST

Swiss 1962–

You called me Jacky

1990

colour video transferred to DVD, sound, 4 min 6 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

‘Some music videos utilise interesting camera work. Maybe this is part of the connection people see between MTV and my work. Music videos are different from most video art pieces where the camera work is often very rigid and strict ... I would not want to distance myself from certain clips shown by MTV because I have a lot of respect for those colleagues. The only difference is I do not have to sell someone’s product with my video works ... I use the same media, but I’m privileged to convey purely poetical, philosophical and political content.’