Restore, Remake, Reference: Curating a History of Australian Video Art

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Abstract

When moving image technologies such as video became popular in Australia in the late 1960s and 1970s the challenges that confronted curators in presenting time-based artwork related to their temporal and spatial characteristics. In more recent times this very history has come under the microscope because the history is in danger of being lost due to older technologies becoming obsolete as well as there being a lack of collection and documentation of early video art. This is no more apparent than in Australia where a new generation of artists is largely unaware of the pioneers of the medium resulting in a cultural amnesia of video art history in this country. To challenge this problem this research project aimed to develop curatorial strategies that would help build a genealogy of Australian video art for exhibition purposes, asking the question: How can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history?

The research revealed that curating a history of Australian video art has presented new problems to curators relating to archiving (saving the work from extinction through restoration), the re-presentation of the work (remaking the work for exhibition because it needs to be played on new equipment in a different physical or virtual state) and establishing referential links to the past both spatially (in the gallery) and conceptually (through art history writing). In contrast to dealing primarily with spatial and temporal challenges curatorial strategies had to be developed that prioritised the journey of video art works out of the archive and into the gallery. In response, I developed restore, remake and reference curatorial strategies as a potential solution to the cultural amnesia that has plagued so much of Australia’s video art history.

These strategies explored ways of thinking about the relationship between video art, the archive, the gallery space and the role of the curator. Within this matrix the curator adopted the roles of archivist, exhibition maker and art historian in which the archivist enacted restore, the archivist/exhibition maker enacted restore, remake while the exhibition maker/art historian enacted a reference system to emphasise the historical narrative. By enacting these strategies, and the multiple roles, the curator challenged the amnesic effects that time has on Australia’s video art history.
Previously, this was a problem for video art, especially in Australia, because very few individuals and institutions had taken up the mantel to save historical Australian video art and present it for public scrutiny alongside contemporary works by Australian artists. As a result, this research represents two important contributions to scholarly knowledge: (1) the restore, remake, reference curatorial strategies for video art; and (2) the Australian video art works researched and documented in the exhibitions that use these strategies.

Key words: curatorial practice, exhibition, video art, art history, archive, remediation.
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Declaration

This research project contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome. To the best of the candidate’s knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

M. J. Perkins
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Introduction

Over the last decade there has been growing anxiety about the physical condition of video-based artworks that constitute an important part of Australia’s art history. While many art institutions overseas have been collecting and preserving video art since the early 1970s this has not been the case in Australia where many works are in danger of being lost forever. For curators of Australian art history this presents some serious challenges because often the artworks have disappeared due to the decay of the video material itself or that the playback equipment is now obsolete. Therefore, any exhibition that attempts to present a comprehensive history of Australian video art is filled with gaps speaking to the need to develop curatorial models that address this problem.

Since video art became popular in the late 1960s and 1970s the main problems that confronted curators in presenting time-based artwork related to the medium’s temporal and spatial characteristics. Up to that point galleries and museums were geared towards displaying static objects such as painting and sculpture, but video occurred over time, with duration, and space became an increasingly important experiential element of many works. Curators responded to these challenges and developed a range of exhibition design strategies for displaying video in relation to these characteristics. However, with the increased presence of exhibitions focusing on video art’s history over the last decade there is a need to develop curatorial strategies that challenge the amnesic effects that time has had on the medium’s history which have been accelerated by the obsolescence of technology, amongst other things. For the curator of video art histories this presents a range of new problems. At the forefront of these curatorial challenges are problems relating to preservation and archiving, the re-presentation of the work for public display, and establishing links between the present and the past. Given the historical importance of video to contemporary art practice new curatorial models are needed to address these problems to assist curators in tracing the legacy of the medium in Australia.
Research problem and hypotheses

This research emerged from the simple question, what is the history and legacy of video art in Australia? As mentioned, while other countries have undertaken projects to collect and preserve video art this has not occurred here in Australia. Recent historically-focused exhibitions of international videos presented within our own cultural institutions only serve to emphasise that similar projects with a focus on Australian work are difficult to fulfill because the recording of this history is negligible, archives are disparate and incomplete and concerted efforts to digitise works is only just starting to take place. Since the mid-2000s my research has focused predominantly on curatorial practices with a specialisation in electronic media. In my own tertiary education, I was fortunate enough to have a lecturer who had an excellent personal archive of Australian video art but as a curator I have always been struck by the difficulty in accessing historical Australian video art to include in exhibitions. The reasons for this condition is covered predominantly in chapter 1 in which the research problem is expanded but at the forefront is that institutions that collect art have overlooked Australian video art meaning that curators cannot simply loan video works for exhibition purposes. In addition, there is a lack of writing that focuses on the depth of this history. Consequently, curators must instigate extensive archival research to construct a fuller picture of this history before undertaking the often-difficult task of locating artists in order to find the video work itself. By this time the curator has collected a folder of documents and hopefully a video, which is possibly in an obsolete format. At this point in the research narrative, the simple question about histories and legacies takes on a curatorial perspective and a new question emerges: How can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history?

In this country there is limited knowledge about Australian video art history and curatorial models that counter the forgetting of this history have not been adequately investigated. Also, the small amount of literature that does exist does not attempt to make connections between the past and present, history being presented in isolation from contemporary art practices. This unresolved state of affairs in the field needs further investigation and developments in curatorial practice are required in order to
address this problem. The development of the curatorial strategies is addressed within this exegesis.

**Aims of the project**

The exhibitions produced through my research presented important Australian video artworks to an audience largely ignorant of the legacy of the medium in this country. If Australian video art continues to disappear then a new generation will continue to import their influence from other countries creating a substantial gap in local knowledge directly relevant to our community. My enquiry tackles these central problems head-on, aiming to develop historical exhibitions of Australian video art alongside art historical writing. While writing can, at one level, address the amnesic effects of time on Australian video art history, writing is essentially a static object which cannot embody the temporal and spatial characteristics that are so essential to video. Therefore, exhibitions become a very important vehicle for disseminating knowledge about this history because the audience can experience the work in its full breadth and depth.

This positions the overall project as having two aims, one relating to capturing a history of Australian video art, the other relating to curatorial practice. In order to create the exhibitions that were part of this research I needed to construct a historical narrative of the medium working from an art historical perspective but at the same time I am positioned as a practice-led researcher whose enquiry is located within the scholarly tradition of curatorial practice. Therefore, this exegesis focuses on the development of the curatorial strategies that challenge the amnesia of Australian video art history, unpacking the ‘curatorial voice’, while the artifacts themselves (the exhibitions) unpack the results of the art historical investigations; that is, a history of Australian video art. To show evidence of the art historical investigation I have included exhibition texts and the catalogue for *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art* as appendices.

While a significant role of the curator of video relates to spatial organisation, during this research project some thought-provoking connections were also made to both art history and archival practices that were extremely influential in the development of
the curatorial strategies. My initial approach considers expanding the role of the curator to borrow some of the approaches from art history and archival practices, so that the amnesic effects of time on Australian video art history could be challenged. For curators this presents an interesting dichotomy between the role of preserving and presenting, between the archive, the remediation of video and contemporary curatorial practices.

Methodology
My thesis comprises of a creative practice and writing that analyses and reflects on this practice. This writing documents a practice led methodology in which curatorial practice is a primary mode of investigation. The thesis is presented by artefact (in this case exhibitions) and exegesis (this text). Therefore, the chapter order within the exegesis maps the projects methodological approach. For example, once the research question was refined a literature review was undertaken to scope ‘best practice’ curatorial strategies within the field. Lead by these initial findings in curatorial practice a theoretical framework was developed for the project’s curatorial approach relating to the remediation of video, exhibition design and art historical writing. This framework was then tested through an initial artefact (the exhibition Resistance: Peter Kennedy) before being modified and applied to the research’s main artefact (the exhibition Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art). Therefore, the objective of the research methodologies was to help develop a theoretical and practical model for curating a history of Australian video art, contributing to the scholarly field of curatorial practice.

Curatorial Approach
Before undertaking this research, I considered several curatorial approaches to help overcome the amnesic effects that time has had on Australian video art histories. It should be noted that very little research has been done in the visual arts to fully excavate this history by either saving the work through archival procedures or curating it into an exhibition context. Two major on-line projects have been attempted nationally—Scanlines (University of New South Wales in Sydney) and Australian Video Art Archive (Monash University in Melbourne). While both these sites provide valuable information about an Australian history of video art they do not show the
videos in their full duration. This has been a major limitation of on-line archives of moving image works. I was personally involved in the Australian Video Art Archive and this limitation was initiated to alleviate artist’s concerns about copyright issues and anxieties related to them losing control of the dissemination of their work. This later apprehension was linked to the gallery-based context in which most artists wish to present their work where they have greater aesthetic and conceptual control; for example, the work might be shown on a high definition monitor with dimmed lighting within the context of a curated exhibition responding to a theme. There is also a historically based assumption that exhibiting within the gallery system increases the commodity value of the work itself. Therefore, the gallery or museum was the most feasible place to host my research project because artist and collections were willing to loan works for exhibition purposes and my curatorial strategies developed alongside this context.

Furthermore, in the 1970s curatorial models emerged that addressed videos temporal and spatial characteristics. This occurred because these characteristics presented new problems for the curator working within galleries that had usually worked with static objects. While these characteristics were important to my research my primary focus was on the need to contest the amnesic effects that time has had on the remembering of Australian video art. Therefore, curatorial strategies are needed that prioritises the journey of video art works out of the archive and into the gallery.

**Overview of the Thesis**

The exegetical component of this thesis represents a struggle between writing about curatorial strategies and writing about art histories. While the exhibitions that were developed as part of this research trace the development of Australian video art between the 1960s and now, my research priorities focused on developing curatorial strategies that would assist in the design and realisation of the exhibitions rather than this history. Therefore, the chapters in this exegesis unravel the narrative arc involved in the curatorial strategies as they emerged, remembering that the research question asked, how can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia that effects the history of Australian video art? Of course, an important part of the development of the

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1 In the case of Australian Video Art Archive 30 seconds of some works were shown.
exhibitions included art historical writing about video art, so I have included the catalogue essays that were published as part of the exhibitions Resistance: Peter Kennedy and Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art in the appendices of this exegesis as references.

Before I begin to discuss my strategies for curating a history of Australian video art it is important to acknowledge that there exist deficiencies in my attempts to do so. Therefore, in chapter 1, I evaluate some of the difficulties facing the curator of art histories, specifically those curating a history of video art. To conclude, I want to then propose a certain philosophical position regarding the curating of art histories, as a way of thinking about the impossibility of historical reconstruction.2

Following on from chapter 1 I begin to narrow my focus onto the development of my curatorial strategies. In chapter 2 I analyse a selection of recent curatorial projects that have explored the various legacies of video, film and the electronic art. My aim in this chapter is to identify ‘best practice’ strategies to apply to my own projects that focus on Australian video art. In this chapter I study three important exhibitions: Into the Light: TheProjected Image in American Art, 1964-1977 (2001), Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005 (2007) and Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet, 2016-1966 (2016). While my examination of these exhibitions was motivated by the connection between exhibition design and video’s temporal and spatial characteristics interesting correlations emerged between art historical, archivist and curatorial practices. In this chapter strategies relating to the restoration and remaking of video art come into focus, in addition to the idea of creating referencing systems as an important part of the exhibition.

In chapter 3 I analyse the theoretical implications of presenting a history of video art within the exhibition context, establishing links between the archive, video and my evolving remake, restore and reference strategies. This was important because a significant part of my research included archival research and I began to think about the exhibition as having archival characteristics and strategies. Therefore, I initially undertake an analysis of how the concept of ‘archive’ applies to video’s history with

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1 Some passages of this chapter are an extended version of ‘Australian Video Art: An Incomplete History’, in Matthew Perkins (ed), Video Void: Australian Video Art, Australian Scholarly Publishers, published during the candidature in 2014.
particular reference to Jacque Derrida and Michel Foucault. I then consider issues relating to the remediation of video from one format to another due to the obsolescence of technology, as an archivist strategy. Finally, I scrutinise the spatial relationship between the archive and the exhibition reflecting on Hal Fosters important article ‘An Archival Impulse’.

In chapter 4 I discuss the exhibition Resistance: Peter Kennedy which I curated for the Australian Experimental Arts Foundation in 2016. This project allowed me to test parts of my restore, remake and reference strategies as they emerged, as groundwork for my main project Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art.

In chapter 5 I outline how the restore, remake and reference strategies manifested themselves in the exhibition design of my primary curated exhibition Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art. While I have separated the discussion about these strategies into three distinct parts—restore, remake and reference—it should be noted that these are not mutually exclusive but overlap and intermingle.

Finally, in my conclusion, I summarise the key findings of the research project, positioning the role of the curator between that of an archivist, exhibition maker and art historian in which the archivist enacted restore, the archivist/exhibition maker enacted restore, remake while the exhibition maker/art historian enacted a reference system to emphasise the historical narrative.

In addition to these chapters, I have included, as appendices, the historically focused essays that were written as part of the two exhibitions that were undertaken during this research. Art historical writing was an important part of the exhibitions and formed one part of my curatorial strategies. It would be amiss not to include evidence of my research into Australian video art within the context of the exegesis. I have also included appendices that include documentation of the exhibitions, a USB with high quality photographic documentation and the catalogue from the exhibition Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art.
Delimitations of scope and important definitions

There are a number of influences that were both in the control of the researcher and others that were not. Firstly, my creative practice focuses on gallery-based projects therefore this research is embedded within that context. While there exist other methods to disseminate art histories to an audience the support for my projects emerged from galleries and museums—the Australian Experimental Art Foundation and the Griffith University Art Museum (GUAM). In the case of the GUAM my project utilised their extensive collection of Australian video art, in addition to artworks sourced from other collections and artists, which had some bearing on the overall selection of works. This was an important consideration because the exhibition’s purpose beyond this research was to highlight parts of the University’s collection. In addition, because artists are paid to exhibit, it was not financially viable to loan all the works outside of the University’s collection. This is not to underplay the importance of the University’s collection of video art and the support the University gave to the project but rather to state that this did influence the shape of the exhibition. These considerations are part of the dynamics of curating any exhibition and are always at play; that is, it is never an open field.

In relation to the nature of the medium of video art, this investigation was primarily interested in video art itself, that is to say, works of art that utilised video technology. Therefore, I was not interested in film history, computer art history or other histories of electronic media that are often associated within video art. Having said this, I consciously selected a number of works that were shot on film or were interactive in their nature in recognition of the limitations of such a narrow definition and also in acknowledgement that the legacy of video art bleeds beyond its own boundaries. As stated, video was interdisciplinary in its very nature, practitioners from a variety of fields such as fine art, performing arts, dance and filmmaking were utilising the medium in non-conventional ways. Because of this video art has always defied definition and this continues today as contemporary art embraces interdisciplinary practices with open arms.

Lastly, occasionally in the text I substitute the word ‘curator’ with ‘exhibition making’. I have done this purely for grammatical reasons to prevent such sentences as
“the curator adopted the roles of archivist, curator and art historian” and instead “the curator adopted the roles of archivist, exhibition maker and art historian.”
Chapter 1: Formulating the Research Question

Australian video art suffers from a lack of a coherent, documented history. As the developments of video art in Australia are largely undocumented, those who would have an interest in this history, and are perhaps a part of it, are largely unaware of their own heritage in the field. For video art finding historical moments is difficult irrespective of the country under analysis. Due to video’s multifaceted beginnings and rapidly changing technologies it has become difficult to build a clear picture of the history. Before discussing any attempt to unearth a history of Australian video art, it is important to acknowledge that there exist deficiencies in any attempts to capture such an art history. In *The Sociology of Art* Arnold Hauser recognises the complexities of the artwork’s journey into history. He says, “[the work of art’s] success, or lack of it, depends just as much on the external circumstances of the moment as upon its inner aesthetic quality.” He continues, “It is saved from transitoriness not because of its supposed timelessness but as a result of its repeated involvement in the course of history, and it survives the day of its birth and rebirth as it moves out of the darkness of oblivion and misunderstanding into the light of a more or less short-lived memory.”\(^3\) Hence, the simple question—What is the legacy of an artform?—quickly exposes the deficiencies of recollection because how art is inscribed into history is as much about the politics of the art world as it is about a psychoanalytical exercise in remembering and forgetting. In addition, video has its own complexities relating to how it was collected and written into art histories. Therefore, in this chapter, I want to outline some of the difficulties facing the curator of art histories, specifically those curating a history of video art. To conclude, I want to then propose a certain philosophical position regarding the curating of art histories, as a way of thinking about the impossibility of historical reconstruction. However, while there exists problems in recapturing forgotten art histories, ultimately any attempts to do so redresses the problem of the cultural amnesia that exists towards marginalised art forms such as Australian video art.

Defining the Field

Australian artist and academic John Conomos says that “when you speak to artists who began in the 1970s and 1980s—such as Jill Scott, Randelli [the name adopted by

collaborative duo Robert Randall and Frank Bendinelli], Leigh Hobba, Stephen Jones, David Perry, Peter Callas, Joan Brassil, John Gillies and David Chesworth—they all testify to the problem of negotiating with a cultural amnesia in regard to their practice”. The lack of a systematic approach to documenting this history in Australia has led to the situation where new generations of artists and scholars now go searching overseas to contextualise their contemporary work within a broader historical context. Thus, illuminating early experiments with video in this country is a forensic undertaking. Having said this, there have been a number of important articles that summarise the early stages of video art in Australia, such as Peter Callas’ ‘Australian Video Art and Australian Identity: A Personal View’, in Continuum ’83: The First Exhibition of Australian Contemporary Art in Japan (1983), Bernice Murphy’s ‘Towards a History of Australian Video’, in The First Australian Video Festival Catalogue (1986), and Stephen Jones’, ‘Some Notes on the Early History of the Independent Video Scene’ in the same publication. More recently, there has been Daniel Palmer’s 2004 article ‘Medium Without a Memory: Australian Video Art’; Jacqueline Millner’s 2007 article ‘Home Video: Australian Pioneers and Their Contemporary Legacy’; Conomos’s 2007 chapter ‘Framing Australian Video Art’, from his book Mutant Media: Essays on Cinema, Video Art and New Media; Stephen Jones’ book Synthetics: Aspects of Art and Technology in Australia, 1956–1975 (2012)—all of which contribute to the dialogue about the early stages of video art in Australia and the problems associated with the lack of an historical record and the appropriate procedures to organise this history. In addition, there have also been a number of recent internet-based projects that respond to this gap in knowledge, including the Australian Video Art Archive and Scanlines, while museums are beginning to respond to the issues relating to the preservation and exhibition of technology-based works. In the case of the Australian Video Art Archive (which I co-founded with Anne Marsh), some early video art works were discovered in archives

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4 John Conomos: His Work and Thoughts on Australian Video Practice’, interviewed by Brian Langer, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), online at <archive.fact.co.uk/tools/archive_download.php?id=58>, accessed 05.08.2013.
5 Daniel Palmer, ‘Medium Without a Memory: Australian Video Art’, Broadsheet (Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia), Vol. 33, No. 3 (September–November 2004), pp. 20–1.
8 The Australian Video Art Archive, <www.videoartarchive.org.au>, was founded in 2006; Scanlines, <www.scanlines.net.au>, was launched in 2012.
on analogue videotape formats then digitised and extracts are now available through
the website. Early video art works deposited in this archive include Bonita Ely’s
_Sunset Video_ (1975), Warren Burt’s _5 Moods_ (1979) and Gary Willis’s ‘… and the
Leopard Looked Like Me!’ – _Play for You_ (1979–81)(fig.1). Similarly, the Scanlines
website features photographic documentation of important early video art works, such
as Bush Video’s _Video MetaProgramming One_ (1974) and Jill Scott’s _Stick Around_
(1975). But this is just a beginning and Conomos states: ‘[A]nyone who has engaged
in writing a history of Australian video art will recognise (a) the scant nature of
existing relevant historical documents, manifestos, catalogues and the like, (b) the
lack of proper archival treatment of such documents, and (c) the sheer ephemeral
nature of such documents’.9

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_Figure 1: Gary Willis, ‘… and the Leopard Looked Like Me!’ – Play for You (1979–81) is unable to be reproduced online. Figure can be viewed at p.9 in Perkins, M (ed), Video Void: Australian Video Art, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2014._

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Internationally, Nam June Paik’s video recording of Pope Paul VI’s motorcade
through the streets of New York in 1965, which was then screened as an artwork
titled _Electronic Video Recorder_ (1965) at Café au Go Go, is often cited as the
defining moment in video art history.10 There were however, earlier examples of the
use of televisual technologies in art. For example, in 1963, both Paik and Wolf
Vostell used television sets in installation art works—Paik at Galerie Parnass in
Wuppertal, Germany, Vostell at the Smolin Gallery in New York. In the same year,
Vostell also made _Sun in Your Head_ (1963), working with cameraman Edo Jansen.

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They filmed images directly off a television during broadcast and then edited the images as a 16mm film which was eventually transferred to videotape in 1971. While *Sun in Your Head* used film, it is an early example of appropriation strategies that became synonymous with scratch style video art in the early 1980. Earlier still, on the 17th May 1952, Italian artist Lucio Fontana allegedly used a television monitor intermingling with his artwork *Concetti Spaziali*, which featured canvases with holes sliced into them, during a live to air broadcast on Italian public television, though no documentation exists of the event.\(^{11}\) Could this be the earliest example of video art? Identifying important historical moments for video art in Australia is equally difficult. Michael Glasheen’s *Teleological Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller* (1970) is often presented as the first Australian video art work but, in 1968, David Perry made *Mad Mesh* when a camera at the ABC, where he was working at the time, developed a technical issue producing abstract mesh-like coloured noise, Perry recording the images onto film. Earlier still, Joseph Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski made his *Electronic Drawing* (1964-1965)(fig. 2) by photographing the geometric patterns produced by an electronic oscillator. When we discuss the legacy of Australian video art surely these are important works even though they did not use video as a technology. An awareness of these works also begs the question—what other related activities were occurring at the time for which no record exists? Were these experiments happening in isolation? Sadly, as Michel Foucault suggests, the secret is the ashes of the archive.\(^{12}\) The point here is that historical claims are open to challenge and how does this affect the curator of histories when these histories are both contentious and incomplete? These types of gaps and deficiencies in the history of video art point to a reliance on an archival approach to curating its past.

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\(^{11}\) Elena Galimberti, Art Association of Australia and New Zealand Conference, Gallery of Modern Art, South Bank, Brisbane, 2008.

Defining Video Art

In Australia, like elsewhere, the process of constructing a historical narrative of video art from the 1960s and 1970s is complicated by two key factors. First, there was an enormous range of creative practitioners who adopted video as a medium. Artists, activists, community video-makers, experimental film-makers, performers and dancers all produced video for a variety of reasons. In addition, the medium emerged at a time when artists started using a range of tools in interdisciplinary practices that were becoming progressively difficult to define and the boundaries separating the fine arts, such as painting, sculpture and drawing, were becoming increasingly blurred. Johannes Birringer calls this an ‘ethos of borderness…its continual crossing of all kinds of cultural and political boundaries’. He adds, “the genealogy of the medium, including early experiments with the conceptual, formal image transmission and the closed-circuit feedback loop, can only be understood, however, if we recognise that the language, form, and function of video did not emerge independently from other object or process-oriented art forms (such as) visual art, film, dance, theatre and

A history of video art must therefore navigate through a range of approaches and attempt to define what constitutes ‘video art’ and how it has been historicised. In the 1960s and 1970s, artists were less concerned with the category of ‘art’ but this posed some difficulties for institutional galleries that collected work. Artist Steiner Vasulka recalls that in the 1960s, while people recognised the difference in these approaches, they did not see them in competition with each other. “We were all struggling together, and we were all using the same tools.” Second, the medium’s various technical manifestations dramatically affected both the artist and gallery’s ability to archive work effectively for future access. Therefore, assembling an accurate chronology of video art in Australia is inevitably filled with gaps, so it is important to thoroughly inspect these issues. In their essay ‘Flattening Australian Art History’, sociologist Bob Lingard and artist Peter Cripps note that in the capturing of art history ‘non-painting’, such as video, installation, performance and other three-dimensional work, suffer a distinct disadvantage in being captured as part of art history because of the lack of documentation meaning that historians, in their already selective writing about the past, do not have access to the work. Aptly, art historian Brian O’Doherty refers to this difficulty in recalling art history as a ‘radical forgetting’. So, to return to the question about legacies in relation to video art, the curator is faced with an astounding array of complications as the simple question ‘What is the legacy of Australian video art?’ multiplies into—What is to be considered video art? What was important to the evolution of the medium? Should film be considered? What about other electronic art forms? Should installation be included? Should political and social activist videos be included? Should the subjective style of video journalism that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s be included? And, where do we find the work? Summarising a history of Australian video art is a complex task and clearly all historical writing involves what Raymond Williams has called a ‘selective tradition’; that is, the way in which one particular account is presented as ‘the history’, abbreviated as it might be. In addition, Australia had issues relating to its own cultural development and sense of identity that further complicated the historisation of art in this country. Australian artist Mike Parr argues

14 Ibid., p. 61.
that the pattern of change or development in Australian art had been “in lock step with historically read and contextualised approaches pioneered and promoted by the major centers in Europe and America … affect[ing] cultural production and reception here, including the writing of art history.” This regional/international dichotomy has had an ongoing effect on Australian art, often referred to as the cultural cringe—the view that our own culture is inferior to the cultures of other countries. This further alienated artistic practices such as video that were not mainstreamed because their cultural importance was compromised by influences from abroad.

Expanding on the point: what was to be considered ‘video art’ in this milieu of video production? One can only imagine the dilemma that this posed to national and state-based art galleries whose charge was to collect art of the time and thus assign it cultural value. While smaller, grassroots organisations and galleries maintained their own alternative archives, these have largely disappeared or are not publicly accessible, and larger galleries collected only a small sample.18 This is a challenge for any historical project and it confounds any attempt to fully explicate the diversity of the field since an institutional historiography tends to privilege a homogenous history endorsed by the art/media museum. This ‘mainstreaming’ is especially misleading for a medium such as video. The medium is ephemeral, both physically and ideologically. Physically, the medium was unstable and changing formats confounded this. Simultaneously, the medium’s ephemerality was championed by early practitioners who saw video art as part of the ‘dematerialised’ art movement outlined by Lucy Lippard in the early 1970s.19 This meant that producers were not overly concerned with preserving their works for posterity and many rejected attempts to museumise their work.20 This means that some, but not all, video art works from the 1960s and early 1970s have been lost. These are the challenges for this historical overview of video art in Australia. A homogenous history of video art is neither desirable nor probable suggesting that a better strategy is to reveal the diversity of creative practice.

18 Brisbane-based Griffith Artworks, founded in 1973, is a notable exception. Their repository, based at Griffith University, has been collecting video art work since the mid-1970s and migrating these to formats that are accessible today.
The diversity of video practices also complicated the contextual reading of the work for art critics and historians. What videos came into writers’ purview that fitted their conception of what was worthy of art criticism of the day? In *Illuminating Video*, Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer suggest that since the history of video art has “traditionally been based on formal aesthetic criteria, it has been taxed by works of art that gained their meaning from the very thing that formalist art criticism strives to deny—the unruly social and political tangle that exists beyond the walls of art history”. They add that the obstacle for creating a coherent art history for video is that video was “anti-Establishment in its disregard for commodity value and it defied a depoliticised hierarchy because it was socially engaged”. Adding further to this discussion, well-known artist Martha Rosler claims that video art has had to position itself against broadcasting because of the common technology utilised by both—“yet the ‘museumisation’ of video has meant the consistent neglect by art critics and historians of the relation between video art and broadcasting in favour of a concentration on a distinctly modernist concern with the essentials of the medium.”

Complicating the situation further, American art critic Rosalind Krauss observed that video “occupied a kind discursive chaos, an heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorised as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core.” Therefore, beyond the physical qualities of video itself, it has also lacked the volume of art criticism that was being applied to more identifiable practices in the pioneering years of the medium.

The obsolescence of the material and equipment also presents problems in constructing an accurate account of video art in Australia. It is difficult to locate Australian works and, if found, they are often in a format that is no longer viable. Video as a technology has been through numerous iterations, from early reel-to-reel analogue videotapes in the 1970s to the more contemporary digital, tapeless systems. There were many other formats in-between and each posed its own set of archiving challenges. The various technologies became outmoded before they had a chance to become culturally embedded within the museum sector and this created issues for

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22 Ibid.
23 Martha Rosler, ‘Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment’, in Hall and Fifer (eds), *Illuminating Video*, p. 32.
conservationists. Referencing curator Paul Schimmel’s concerns, Melinda Barlow says that this “slow giving way of art to entropy transforms art and media history into something more like anthropology or forensics, because our experience of ephemeral or unrestored works is one less of intact objects than of documents, photographs, artifacts, and relics”. Both the Tate Gallery in London and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York have acquired a variety of material utilised by artists from the Fluxus group. Works, objects, texts and ephemera from events have all been collected by the museums, demonstrating how cultural institutions navigate ways to re-present a medium whose history is slowly disappearing. In 2011, the University of Queensland Art Museum (UQAM) purchased a version of Peter Kennedy’s *But the Fierce Blackman* — a work originally performed in Sydney at Inhibodress in March 1971, for which the artists also utilised a television. What the UQAM purchased was a series of objects encased in a shelf made by Kennedy for a previous exhibition. This is ironic, for media that emerged during the post-object era that are now being consumed back into a commodity-driven culture as objects. Conceptually, in instances such as these, Curator Robert Storr notes that viewers brings their own preconceptions to archival objects, saying that the viewer “re-creates for [them] a context that has been lost, and by some method performs a kind of mental alchemy that, in effect, ‘restores’ the work to a visual state that can exist only in the mind’s eye.”

These strategies present the curator of art histories with options to re-engage the audience, not only with artworks that are lost, but also with the context of the time that the surviving works were made through photographic documentation, interviews with artists and ephemera such as pamphlets, catalogues and objects. In an age where ultra-high definition images and desktop editing delegates historical video work into the distant past because of their material qualities, these can be important curatorial tactics to help enliven our conceptual and aesthetic engagement.

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A Genealogical Attitude to Curating

Historicising any period in time is not without its problems, for example, as discussed, methods of selection and contextualisation come under scrutiny. With this in mind, the curator needs to develop an epistemological approach that will help guide and define the conceptual parameters of their historical enquiry. Approaching Australian video art with a focus on the legacies and influence of Australia’s pioneering video artists on contemporary practice would provide a genealogy of the medium. Foucault’s ideas regarding ‘genealogy’ assist the curator in focusing away from the impossible accuracy of an historical account and towards the artist’s contribution to the artistic field at any given time.

Foucault’s account of ‘genealogy’ is closely linked to what he calls the ‘archaeological method’. As the term implies, this is a method of understanding history by revealing the layers of discourse, each layer corresponding to what he refers to as an ‘episteme’—referring to a mode of understanding knowledge that is never universal but rather historically situated, influenced by the institutions and practices of the time. For Foucault, “genealogy is not the construction of a linear development but seeks to demonstrate the plural and sometimes conflicting past that reveals traces of the influence that power has on the truth.”28 This genealogy comprises the writing of “histories of the present” that stress “the ensemble of historical contingencies, accidents, and illicit relations.” Such an account of history “is not an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies; rather, it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within and from underneath.”29 Film historian Wanda Strauven suggests, “Foucault’s genealogy is not concerned with the pure origin, but with multiple origins and contingencies. It is complimentary to his archaeological project in that it tries to understand or grasp the contingencies that made happen the shift from one way of thinking to another, from one episteme to the next.”30 Foucault goes on to say that the purpose of a genealogical approach “is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false

appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.”31 Influenced by a Foucauldian logic about genealogy, for example, in my own research project I could move away from the idea of a chronological representation of history on the one hand and towards a more interpretative approach on the other, foregrounding intergenerational practices by a range of artists including those that may not identify as ‘video artists’.

Video artist and historian Paul Ryan expands on Foucault’s ideas suggesting that “the term 'genealogy' indicates a particular sort of writing concerned with rediscovering struggles. Whereas a history is generally written as if a struggle had been resolved, a genealogy assumes that the present resolution is subject to change.”32 Firstly, conceptualising a history as a genealogy implies that the intent is to enter into an open-ended dialog with the past, one of many dialogs. Secondly, this ‘genealogy’ can account for the inefficiencies in the archives—they are often incomplete, their composition deficient because of the reasons discussed previously. Thirdly, the concept of a genealogy can assist in exhibition design. Freed from the idea of ‘chronology’, which inevitably aligns the video art works with issues of technological development and aesthetics, the conception of ‘genealogy’ can manifest itself, for example, in the placement of the works or the inclusion of ephemera. A Foucauldian genealogical attitude somewhat relinquished the curator from the constraints of absolute chronology and of the predictability of the already told story, allowing for a more flexible approach to selection which is still based on rigorous research. Inevitably, gallery spatial restrictions, equipment constraints and a myriad of other limiting practical elements enforces a selective tradition onto the curatorial project but also, subsequently, opens the project to a more propositional, interactive mode of curating. Therefore, ideas regarding ‘genealogy’ become important in my initial approach to the curatorial strategies.

31 Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,’ op. cit., p. 146.
Conclusion
It becomes evident that any project that claims to represent an historical account of an art history is problematic. A genealogy of the medium in Australia is difficult to pin down, the specifics of cultural identity are elusive. Curator David Ross adds, “It’s not that the history of artists’ video is difficult to track; rather it’s that the term video art refers to a set of tools, not a particular aesthetic orientation. In other words, since video art involves a remarkably wide range of artists, doing an equally broad range of things, its definition remains elusive, and its history will remain contentious.”

Regardless, it is important that curators create exhibitions that generate a dialogue about the larger history of Australian video for this very reason, to help resolve or connect to past debates that are in jeopardy of being forgotten.

Engaging with art history can be fraught but important work. For curators, the challenges presented by a history that is difficult to trace means that strategies need to be developed that can bring video art out from its hiding place and into public view. While there are clearly gaps in knowledge relating to Australian video art, given the relatively small amount of documentation available in comparison to artists active in the field, the challenge of filling these gaps is beyond the scope of a single research project. Having established the absence of a need for a comprehensive Australian video art history, the research question becomes ‘How can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia that affects the history of Australian video art?’ It is not enough simply to collect and document works but also to consider how they are presented and situated in a broader art history.

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Curatorial Strategies in Presenting Video Art Histories

To foster an understanding of the strategies needed for developing a genealogy of Australian video art, we must first examine recent curatorial projects that have explored the various legacies of video, film and the electronic arts. This will allow ‘best practice’ curatorial strategies to be identified that I may apply to my own projects that focus on Australian video art. In this chapter, I examine three exhibitions: *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005 and *Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet, 2016-1966*, each of which presented specific curatorial challenges for their respective curator.34 In ‘Curatorial Strategy as Critical Intervention: The Genesis of Facing East’, Liz Wells asserts that “research underpins the curatorial ‘voice’ through the process which is composed of a careful definition of the field, rigorous contextualisation of the work and consideration of the ‘theatre’ of the exhibition which is fundamental to rhetorical affects, and ways in which the project and the work of individual artists is contextualised in accompanying material.”35 In each of these exhibitions the curator enacted, through exhibition design, strategies that I forecast may be influential to the development of my own curatorial voice within the theatre of the exhibition.

While there were several curatorial projects that were of interest, the three exhibitions identified above exemplified specific approaches to exhibition design that, as case studies, highlighted specific and identifiable strategies that could be applied in the field. For example, for the exhibition *Into the Light*, curator Chrissie Illes focused on a particular time in art history, 1964-1977, when artists were becoming increasingly interested in the projected image via video and film technologies. Conceptually, many of these artists were interested in exploring the phenomenological affects that the projected image had on the audience and thus enhancing the viewing environment to maximise immersion became an important consideration. In relation to exhibition

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design, Illes articulates this evolution in creative practice as a struggle between the ‘white cube’ of the traditional gallery space and the ‘black box’ of the cinema. For Centre Pompidou Video Art curator Christine van Assche was challenged by the need to deduce one of the largest collections of video art in the world into an exhibition featuring 20 video works and thus took a thematic approach to help guide the audience through 40 years of video practice. Lastly, curators Omar Kholeif and Emily Butler organised Electronic Superhighway in chronological order, though interestingly ordered in reverse, starting with the most recently produced artworks then travelling back in time, to help guide the audience through the development of the technology-based tools artists have used over the last 50 years. Therefore, these three projects, as case studies, offered a concise way of dealing with the major methodological questions relevant to my own research project, relating to spatial interests (Into the Light), thematic interests (Centre Pompidou Video Art) and temporal interests (Electronic Superhighway).

In Australia, video as a creative medium has only been in circulation since the late 1960s and hence the idea of an overarching historical exhibition is relatively new. One of the first curatorial projects relating to early videotapes by Australian artists was Videotapes from Australia organised by Bernice Murphy and Stephen Jones. This exhibition featured a selection of video works from the 1970s and toured the USA and Canada in 1979, was exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1980 and then toured to a number of venues throughout Australia. In 1997 artist Leigh Hobba curated Pulse Fiction for the Plimsoll Gallery in Hobart, an exhibition that traced the development of technology in Australia from the late 1960s to 1997, and there have been a handful of such projects since 2000. For example, in 2008, Russell Storer curated Video Logic at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, and in 2010, I curated the screening program with Elena Galimberti, Video Void: Australian Video Art, which toured to several venues around Australia. Both these projects also included substantial publications that aided the exhibitions’ historical impetus.

In many ways, these projects, by and large, followed traditional single-screen modes of display that have been in circulation since the late 1960s. New York art critic Corinna Kirsch identified two pioneering exhibitions in the USA that established
these modes of viewing: *TV as a Creative Medium* (1969), recognised as the first video art exhibition, and *Video Art* (1975), the medium’s first retrospective. Kirsch says, “These pioneering exhibitions have accounted for the dominant strain—and now institutionalised form—in the presentation of video art, one that consists of single-channel videos shown on box monitors.”

Over the last decade or so as technological advances made flat screen and projection technology more accessible, presentational strategies have started to have a dramatic effect on exhibition design, challenging these traditional modes. The following exhibitions have, in one way or another, started to challenge these traditional modes by considering the relationship between exhibition design and technological advancement. While I attended a lecture given by the curator of *Into the Light* Chrissie Illes, I was able to visit and experience the other exhibitions; each case followed by research into the motivation and curatorial strategies via exhibition catalogues and related texts. In my reflection, I have used the same themes and concerns in my analysis of each exhibition to enable a comparative study and establish connections between each particular approach.


**Introduction**

For *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, curator Chrissie Illes offered an important rationale for her project relating to the phenomenology of the exhibition experience which connected with my own spatial interests in terms of exhibition design. The predominant conceptual impetus for *Into the Light* focused on how an experience of the film and video art exhibition was positioned between the black space of the cinema and the white cube of the traditional gallery. Artists increasing use of projection technologies was central to this reconsideration of the exhibition space and in her catalogue essay, ‘Between the Still and Moving Image,’ Illes highlights the link between projection and an increased interest in phenomenology. Important to her conceptualisation, the curator references phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s important text, *Phenomenology of Perception*, published in 1945, and artist Robert Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture, Part IV,” published in *Artforum* in 1969. Combined, these two pieces of writing form a

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powerful rationale for the evolution of video art exhibition design practices since the early 1970s. While these spatial concerns emerged early on in video practices, Illes’s project, shown in 2001, is interesting because it consolidated these artistic intentions, and the use of dark or dimmed lighting, into the exhibition concept itself. Using Into the Light as my first case study I will deconstruct Illes’ rationale, illustrated through a number of the artworks she included in the exhibition.

**Conceptual Focus**

*Into the Light* aimed to present an overview of the various ways in which artists used technology to produce projected images in installation formats from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Featuring work by 19 artists, the exhibition presented a period of American art in which artists began to challenge the status of the gallery space whereby post-Minimalist sculpture, film and video practices began to combine into new spatial forms. Including works by artists such as Michael Snow, Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, Peter Campus, Dennis Oppenheim and Yoko Ono, to name a few, the exhibition represented a commanding reflection on the effects that emerging artistic practices, at that time, had on exhibition design, especially in relation to the presentation of time-based works.

During the 1960s and 1970s mediums such as film and video played an increasingly important role in art practices that aimed to challenge the limitations of physical space. According to Illes, since the Renaissance, representations of pictorial space, obeying the singular viewing position of the audience, had been virtually unchallenged.37 This position was questioned by Minimalism in the 1960s, which engaged audiences in a phenomenological experience of art objects and the ways they interacted with the structural elements of the gallery changing real space into a perceptual field. Illes said, “artists working with the projected images shifted the coordinates of this perceptual field from the brightly lit architecture of the gallery to the dark, reverie-laden space of the cinema. In this hybrid of white cube and black box, each model of space informed and modified the characteristic of the other.”38 Video was an important medium in these developments because it was capable of

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38 Ibid.
relaying live images of performances and other events directly into the gallery as they took place. This phenomenon dramatically altered the audience’s experience of time because “suddenly there was parallel time—simultaneity of a present and an electronically mediated present.”39 Therefore, video extended the perceptual and temporal interests of Minimalism, as time itself became the subject matter. Art critic Charlie Mills suggested, “The challenge presented to art was to suspend itself above its affiliation with its own objecthood, and in this sense, question and demand an ontology of its own existence.”40 It is here we see the overlapping philosophies of phenomenology, principally by Merleau-Ponty, and Minimalism, in which the experience of the artwork was transformed from one of contemplation to a temporal and perceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty referred to this as our embodied “relationship with the world in which the body is no longer conceived as an object of the world, but as our means of communication with it.”41 Video and film were important in this dynamic relationship between object and space because these mediums offered a window to another space via moving images.

In the context of art, this re-conceptualisation of the relationship between the image/object and viewer/subject unlocked a linear understanding of the viewing experience and allowed artists, and curators, to consider subjectivity and intersubjectivity’s significant role in the interpretation of art—one which engaged the perceptual awareness of viewer’s own physical and mental selves. Within this dynamic the relationship between the gallery architecture and environmental conditions, the artwork itself and the viewer, were to be considered as integral to the creative rationale rather than incidental. Illes also refers to artist Robert Morris’s article ‘Notes on Sculpture,’ to expand her thoughts. Morris was well known for creating sculptural works that disrupted the gallery space in order to heighten the perceptual awareness of the viewer, the body/subject. Motivated by developments in his own practice Morris contended, “a shift was occurring in perception, towards a more inclusive viewing experience, in which the viewer no longer focused on a gestalt reading of an object in perspective within an otherwise unimportant space.

39 Ibid. p. 58.
Instead, that space was included in a kind of environmental viewing."\(^{42}\) Therefore, at the same time that we witnessed the rise in status of video within postmodern art in the late 1960s and 1970s, the gallery space itself became an integral part of the perceptual experience of the work.

**Exhibition Design**

The effects of Minimalism invigorated many curators to reconsider exhibition design. Building on Minimalism’s phenomenological approach, Illes designed the gallery as a dimly light space in order to position the viewing experience between the cinema and the gallery. Illes argument about such a simple decision is well-founded. She states,

\[\text{“The darkened gallery’s space invites participation, movement, the sharing of multiple viewpoints, the dismantling of the single frontal screen, and an analytical, distanced form of viewing. The spectator’s attention turns from the illusion on the screen to the surrounding space, into the physical mechanisms and properties of the moving image: the projector beam as a sculptural form, the transparency and illusionism of the cinema screen, the internal structure of the film frame, the camera as an extension of the body’s own mental and ocular recording system, the seriality of the slide sequence, and the interlocking structure of multiple video images.”}\(^{43}\)

The curator also observes that the relationship between the viewer and this darkened gallery space alters their perceptual understanding of the artwork,

\[\text{“In contrast to the hypnosis induced by the pitch-blackness of the cinema, within which the single bright screen seizes our minds in its distracting grip, the dimly lit gallery engages the viewer in a wakeful state of perception. In this dimly lit space, we are invited to look not merely at the screen, but beyond it, to the walls onto which it is projected, and to the relationships set up between one image and the next.”}\(^{44}\)

\[^{42}\text{Chrissie Iles, op. cit., p. 64.}\]
\[^{43}\text{Chrissie Iles, op. cit., p. 33.}\]
\[^{44}\text{Chrissie Iles, op. cit., pp. 34-35.}\]
Illes picks up on a key concern for artists that engaged with film and video in the late 1960s and early 1970s and adopts it as her curatorial premise, one in which the artwork, the surrounding space and the viewer’s movements are considered critical to the reception and interpretation of the work. In this, the curator is highlighting the phenomena of constructing the fullness of an artwork in its breadth, depth and height in our mind’s eye regardless of where the viewer stands at any one time. In her catalogue essay Illes quotes Merleau-Ponty who “asserted that the infinite number of angles contained in a viewer’s circumnavigation of an object renders that object transparent.” While Illes adopts Merleau-Ponty’s concept in relation to the art object she is, by default, talking about the gallery proper because this perceptual transparency of the object slowly reveals the space around it as an integral part of the art experience. Merleau-Ponty recognises that it is the fact that we are mobile subjects, able to move in space, around objects, that enables us to construct the fullness of the object’s physical presence within our mind. He says, “if there is, for me, a cube with six equal sides, and if I can link up with the object, this is not because I constitute it from the inside: it is because I delve into the thickness of the world by perceptual experience.” This account of an object and the space around it, rather than something concrete and objective, moves it into the perceptual field in which subjectivity and intersubjectivity are important parts of our interaction with the physical world—“the thing, and the world, are given to me along with the parts of my body, not by any ‘natural geometry’, but in a living connection comparable, or rather identical, with that existing between the parts of my body itself.” These ideas were important to Minimalism, Post-Minimalism sculpture and emerging video art practices in the 1970s and Illes restates them through her exhibition rationale and design.

Illes position in relation to exhibition design built on late 1960s and early 1970s practices in which the gallery was no longer considered a neutral space and curators began to embed meaning or ‘intention’ into their exhibitions in an overt fashion, expanding beyond the traditional role of organising the position of objects within the gallery. In his book Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space Brian

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45 Chrissie Illes, op. cit., p. 35.
46 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 236.
47 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 236.
O’Doherty discusses the idea of the ‘gallery as a gesture’ in which art begins to push back against the confines of its display space. Referring to the 1960s and 1970s, he says, “gradually, the gallery was infiltrated with consciousness…its walls became ground, its floor a pedestal, its corners vortices, its ceiling a frozen sky. The white cube became art-in-potency, its enclosed space an alchemical medium.” Building on this evolution in art and exhibition making Illes planned a whole gallery gesture in which the active space is not limited to the position of the artwork but pushes back against the traditional confines of the restraining gallery rectangle, positioning the viewing experience between the white cube of the gallery and black box of the cinema.

Illes examined her central thesis relating to presence through a number of internationally recognised artworks that utilised projection as a fundamental technology to the works conceptual reading. A number of installation works within the exhibition utilised multiple projections in order to emphasis the phenomenological aspect of perception and experience. For example, in Michael Snow’s *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974) an aluminum screen hung in the middle of the gallery onto which two films were projected, one on each side of the screen. Both films, shot simultaneously, show a woman making a series of gestures as she moves between the two cameras that filmed her moving body. To fully comprehend the relationship between these two different perspectives of the woman’s performance the viewer must move back and forth between the two sides of the screen. Likewise, Dan Graham deconstructs the single viewpoint of the cinematic camera in his work *Helix/Spiral (Simone Forti)* (1973)(fig. 3). In this work, a collaboration with choreographer Simone Forti, the two performers film each other as they slowly negotiate space and each other’s body. While Forti rotates the camera around her body in a helix pattern, feet firmly positioned on the ground, Graham circles her in a spiral configuration. Translated into the gallery these two films are shown on opposing walls. Like Snow’s installation the viewer’s gaze is once again fragmented. Morris contends that spatial immersion such as this animate “a mode of vision [variously termed as] scanning, syncretistic or dedifferentiated in which the perceptual mode seeks significant clues out of which wholeness is sensed, rather than

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perceived as an image.”49 The unfolding of the artwork itself is, in a sense, completed by the viewer’s performance as they navigate the space, rendering the object transparent, delving into the thickness of the world in its fullness. As Illes states, “the projection installation continues to make visible a model of consciousness in which we recognise that we exist within a continuous projection of our own event.”50

Figure 3: Dan Graham, Helix/Spiral (Simone Forti) (1973) is unable to be reproduced online. Figure can be viewed on The Museum of Modern Art website: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/143196

While phenomenological issues were the primary focus of Illes’s curation, another interesting concern that arose from Into the Light related to the complications in re-presenting art works that originally used now obsolete equipment or utilise a live performance component. The curator uses artist Joan Jonas’s Mirage to illustrate her point. For Into the Light, the artist re-presented many of the central moving image elements that were part of the original performance in 1976 but as ‘re-edited fragments and outtakes in what the artist refers to as ‘repressed material,’ which could have easily been included in the original performance, and appears in its installation version as a marker of the work’s open-ended, process-based form.”51 Art Historian Pamela M. Lee calls this the ‘double time’ of the artwork, the ‘double’ being—“the temporality of its own internal structure and the changing perceptions of it across a historical trajectory.”52 Rather than be restricted by the unfeasibility of authentic representation of the original, Jonas worked with trace elements of the live performance to convey the energy and meaning of the original work. Jonas is not alone in this strategy for re-working art from the past. Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovic and Carolee Schneeman have all reinterpreted performances into object-based installations. Art critic Daryl Chin also highlighted issues relating to the

50 Chrissie Illes, op. cit., p. 65.
51 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
52 Ibid., p. 52.
reconstruction of some of the works in this exhibition and its implications to museum practices. Chin describes Dennis Oppenheim’s *Echo* (1973) which, for this exhibition, utilised four video projections onto four separate walls, each displaying a hand slapping a surface. Chin says, “After I saw this piece, I suddenly realised something: I had seen it in the early 1970s, but how had I seen it? Video projection was not really in existence in the early 1970s. Had it been a video piece, in which case I would have seen it on successive monitors placed in a room? Or had I seen it as film projections, in which case there would have been four projectors aimed at the gallery walls?”

With time-based artworks such as *Echo* Curator Lynne Cooke says, “consultation with the artist should be a precondition of the transfer of a work from one medium to another, [but the] resulting minimal visual changes are more than compensated for by the increased logistical ease and reliability in presentation, an enhanced facility in maintenance, and reduced production costs.” These issues highlight the need to reassess historical works in light of new technology through both restorative processes and, in some cases, reconsidering its very presentation as a type of remaking, as was the case with Jonas’s *Mirage* and Oppenheim’s *Echo*.

The collection of video and film works exhibited in *Into the Light* allowed Illes to test her thesis relating to expanding the viewer’s perceptual field via the dimmed light in the gallery space. Here the sum (the exhibition) of the parts (the individual videos and films) worked in synergy to explore space as an active expressive entity. Echoing Merleau-Ponty, media theorist Vivian Sobchack discusses the nature of the film experience in her book *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, arguing that “a description of the film experience as an experience of signification and communication calls for a reflexive turn away from the film as object and towards the act of viewing and its existential implication of a body-subject: the viewer.” Cooke reinforces this notion, applying it to the gallery context of video art, observing that many artists that employed “moving images as live feed or recorded footage…remapped the gallery space by fusing the cinematic ‘black box’ with the ‘white cube’ of the art museum, and in so doing transformed traditionally

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static viewing sites into active participatory fields.” This allowed the artist to investigate themes relating to vision and its relationship to the spatial and temporal components of experience. While many exhibitions from the 1970s began to address these objectives Illes gave a contemporary context to this work giving a revisionist eye to the importance of this period of art production. In addition, the curator needed to address the complex tasks relating to how these projection works would be exhibited, especially if the original equipment was no longer available. Thus, Into the Light dealt with issues relating to video arts journey from the archive into the gallery in addition to the temporal and spatial challenges that have confronted curators for a number of decades.

Into the Light illuminated a number of productive curatorial strategies that would be useful to an exhibition that traced a genealogy of Australian video art. First and foremost was the way Illes placed the experience of her exhibition between the ‘black box’ of the cinema and the ‘white cube’ of the gallery using darkened lighting. This phenomenological experience of space, while highlighting the spatial and temporal features of the artworks also placed them more overtly within the pictorial space of the gallery in which the viewer looks at, and beyond, the artwork itself thus establishing visual and conceptual links with other artworks as a type of reference. Secondly, the strategies used in restoring or remaking some of the video installations emphasised their archival nature while also allowing for a degree of interpretation. This ‘disruption’ of the original, while potentially compromising authenticity, gave the videos new life beyond now obsolete equipment. Both these curatorial strategies offered potential approaches for my own project that traces video art histories through the exhibition format.

Case Study No.2: Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne (2007)

Introduction
The exhibition Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005 was presented at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, in 2007. Since the 1970s, the

57 This exhibition toured to a number of international locations. In Melbourne it was titled Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005 while elsewhere it came under the guise Video Art, an Art, a History, 1965-2005 noting that the end date in the title

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Centre Pompidou in Paris has been collecting time-based works and, by the early 2000s, had over 90 international multimedia installations and more than 1100 video tapes, soundtracks and CD-ROMs. The collection includes work by artists who have significantly influenced the development of video art, including Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman, and Bill Viola, as well as work by a younger generation of artists. The aim of the exhibition was to present an historical overview of video art tracing the evolution of video in contemporary art over this time through a selection of works from the collection. To confront the challenge of selection from such a vast archive of video art, Christine van Assche, Centre Pompidou media curator, selected a thematic analysis of the collection in order to guide the choice of artworks and exhibition design. As a result of these strategies the curator selected 20 works by international artists divided into four thematic sections. Using *Centre Pompidou Video Art* as my second case study I will deconstruct van Assche’s approach to exhibition design.

**Conceptual Focus**

Van Assche’s exhibition focused on capturing a sense of the history of international video art and how it evolved conceptually and aesthetically. Her conceptual focus centred around a series of themes including ‘Imaginary Television’, ‘Identity Issues’, ‘From Videotape to Installation’, and finally, ‘Post-Cinema’. These themes, and the video works she selected to represent these, became the conduit through which to generate a dialogue about the larger histories of the medium. This is the challenge for every curator of histories—what artwork to select to champion a broader discussion about that history? It is neither possible, nor desirable, to present ‘everything’. Firstly, at a very base level of organisation, space itself presents hurdles to exhibition design—only so many pieces of art can fit into a given gallery space. Secondly, while it might be practically challenging to present everything, how does a curator illuminate questions about the history and medium of video art in doing so? Can the curator view the history under investigation as a type of open source archive—open to variations and sharing? In addition, the video camera image itself has such a strong relationship to archival practices that any historical exhibition of video art has this changed at times as the exhibition toured. For example, a more recent version that toured to Singapore was titled *Video Art, an Art, a History, 1965-2010* and featured 12 works from the Singapore Art Museum in addition to those from the Centre Pompidou collection. Regardless, the curatorial approach was consistent.
dual identity of being art and archive. Therefore, reflecting on discussions about the archive helps illuminate issues about van Assche’s curatorial strategies.

Like archives, art collections do not accumulate endlessly but go through complex processes of selection and non-selection, governed by curators and collection managers who apply specific classifications. Discussing the taxonomies involved in archival material Michel Foucault states that, “[documents] are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities.”58 Similarly, the historical exhibition of art requires the curator to make decisions regarding artwork selection and grouping to illustrate their perspective about the history under investigation. For exhibitions like Centre Pompidou Video Art developing a taxonomy is important to help make sense of the archive, to challenge the potential of formlessness and lack of meaning. In the context of the archive (or collection), the curator must, as Foucault suggests, “deploy a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities.”59 Building on Foucault’s ideas Okwui Enwezor, curator of the exhibition Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art, states, “the archive is a compensation of the unwieldy…a representation of the taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge and information [that] could also be understood as a representative historical form.”60 It is clear that while van Assche’s exhibition is a small selection of videos from such a large art collection, the curator needed to develop strategies as compensation against the unwieldy, giving the exhibition direction. Therefore, organisation of the gallery space guided by themes—identifying reoccurring patterns in the archive/collection—became an important strategy for the curator. An archival sensibility was also important because it developed, as a conceptual tool, deeper links with the history under investigation, suggesting a broader dialogue about that history. Enwezor says that an increase interest in archival practices in contemporary art has been partly motivated by the desire to create “another archival structure as a means of establishing an archaeological relationship to history, evidence, information, and data

59 Ibid., p. 126.
that will give rise to its own interpretive categories.” Developing an archival sensibility for historical exhibitions such as *Centre Pompidou Video Art* helps connect the exhibition to the rigor of archaeological strategies, but also, the possibilities of a history still to be fully recovered. For these reasons, an abbreviation of the archive/collection can still successfully engage in the stories of a history.

**Exhibition Design**

There is, of course, a long tradition of a thematic approach to writing about art and exhibition design. In the context of video art three recent important contributions to the field include Catherine Elwes, *Video Art: A Guided Tour* (2005), Michael Rush, *Video Art* (2003) and Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (2006). An analysis of the structural elements of these books shows that common themes under which the authors have categorised videos include gender, the relationship between video and performance, film, installation art and a critique of television. The Video Data Bank, an archive of video art based in Chicago, released a comprehensive anthology of the history of experimental and independent video titled *Surveying the First Decade* in 1995, the featured work selected from over 6000 titles. This anthology was divided into eight thematically curated programs, exploring conceptual, performance-based, image-processed, feminist, documentary and grassroots community-based genres. Program titles included ‘Explorations of Presence’, ‘Performance, and Audience’, ‘Investigations of the Phenomenal World: Space, Sound, and Light’, ‘Gendered Confrontations’, and ‘Performance of Video-Imaging Tools’, to name a few. In Australia, curator of *Australian Videotapes* Bernice Murphy noted in her important essay ‘Towards a History of Australian Video’ (1986) that the range of Australian videotapes filled a wide thematic spectrum including socially and politically oriented tapes, documentations of performance art and related activities, tapes made in the more electronically preoccupied area of image processing and synthesising, and others that explored the pure uses of the medium’s reflexiveness and real-time. What becomes evident in this brief outline of themes in video art, from different perspectives, is that there exists a great deal of cross over and van Assche’s thematic

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61 Ibid., p. 18.
breakdown follows existing strategies very closely in the ways she categorises video works from the Pompidou collection.

While historical developments in video art can be traced through the exhibition themes, the combinations of the videos also reflected intergenerational dialogues, connections, and patterns of influence between the artists. While the first three themes predominantly include videos produced before the mid-1990s, the last theme titled ‘Post Cinema,’ featured post-2000 art by a newer generation of artists, this representation of epochs giving the viewer an entrenched art historical experience.

Figure 4: Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005, exhibition floor plan.
Like the exhibition *Into the Light, Centre Pompidou Video Art* offered a number of helpful curatorial strategies in Assche’s retracing of a genealogy of international video art. Firstly, the thematic ordering of *Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2005* permitted the curator the flexibility to select a small number of video works from the Centre’s collection to test her thesis about the history of video art. Importantly, her exhibition, while only featuring 20 video works, still created a dialogue about the larger history of video art. This was a very important observation regarding the strategic use of selection as a curatorial approach, as an interpretative mode of curating less concerned with pure origins, in a Foucaultian sense, but with multiple origins and contingencies. In addition, Assche’s thematic analysis of the collection and the videos shown under these themes retraced some of the dominant and reoccurring themes evident in the medium over the last 50 years, giving the viewer an art historical perspective of the medium. Further, the journey through the gallery, from the first theme through to the last, was organised into a loose chronology and thus the groupings allowed the audience to reflect on the intergenerational dialogues between some of the forerunners of video and a new generation of artists. This combination of themes and chronological organisation established a conceptual and spatial reference system that was important to the exhibition’s archival and historical impulses while also helping to anchor the audience’s reception of the historical narrative via a well-defined story. This project offered multiple curatorial strategies that I could potentially adapt and mold for my own genealogical summary of Australian video art.

**Case Study No.3: Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2016)**

**Introduction**

In 2016 the Whitechapel Gallery presented *Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet*, an innovative exhibition that brought together over 100 artworks to show the impact of computer and Internet technologies on artists from the mid-1960s to the present day. The exhibition, curated by Omar Kholeif, featured both new and historical multimedia works, alongside a selection of film, painting, sculpture, photography and drawing by over 70 artists such as Nam June Paik, Cory Arcangel, Constant Dullaart, Ryan Trecartin and Amalia
The exhibition title *Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966)* was taken from a term coined in 1974 by South Korean video art pioneer Nam June Paik, who predicted the potential of global networks through technology in the 1970s. Arranged in reverse chronological order, the exhibition begins with works made between 2000-2016, and ends with documents from *Experiments in Art and Technology* (E.A.T), a groundbreaking collective of artists and engineers, that staged their most important event in New York in 1966. Spanning 50 years, from 2016 to 1966, key moments in the history of art and technology emerge as the exhibition travels back in time. The approach taken by the curator presents an interesting contrast to the Pompidou exhibition. While similar issues relating to selection are present the chronological ordering allows for a more didactic retelling of the history of technology-based art via a timeline of events. Having said this, the approach taken by Kholeif was in no way unimaginative. The reverse chronology recalls philosopher Jacques Derrida’s suggestion in *Archive Fever* that the archive represents a “quest for beginnings” because in *Electronic Superhighway* the audience literally traces the history back to the start, the origin. This journey was divided into four loose zones of historical contact; that is, firstly, works produced between 2000-2016, then, Internet artworks, then, works produced between 1960-1970, and finally, works from E.A.T. produced in the 1960s. Rather than focus on the archival impetus, which for this exhibition is also strong, I will focus on the chronological strategy in addition to presentational issues, considering the connection between Paik’s ideas about the ‘electronic superhighway’ and Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*.

**Conceptual Focus**

In contrast to *Centre Pompidou Video Art*, *Electronic Superhighway* presents the artwork under the banner of several related technologies rather than just video art. Evident in the curatorial approach was two competing taxonomies, one driven by a chronological logic, the other by the individual artwork’s physical state as a technology. The initial concept for the exhibition was inspired by Nam June Paik’s paper, *Media Planning for the Postindustrial Society: The 21st Century is now only 26 years away* (1974), in which he forecast the potential for technology to connect
people over vast distances via television, using the term ‘Electronic Superhighway.’ Curator Kholeif says, “this project connects post-millennial artists who have been dubbed ‘post-Internet’ figures back to pioneers who were tinkering with early domestic and industrial computer technologies…the exhibition moving back through decades, in order to retrospectively consider the trajectories from which these contemporary practices emerged.” While the first historical zone focuses on more recent work, the final zone presents a collection of documents and ephemera from E.A.T. Kholeif suggested that the exhibition is “like the hyperlinked milieu of a digital cloud,” thus linking the experience of the exhibition to our contemporary media-oriented human condition. The curator reinforces ideas about our mediated lives in the catalogue via an extended discussion about Guy Debord and his book *Society of the Spectacle*; a book he notes was published in the same year the concept of the Internet was born. Kholeif states, “Debord argued that all of humanity would become a form of representation; we would no longer exist as our former selves, but instead ‘decline’ from real experience to ‘merely appearing’ as performing phantasms in the era of late capitalism.” The exhibition’s conceptual parameters are thus constructed around these dual bookends. Firstly, linking 1960s artistic practices to current ones, and secondly, by linking Paik’s early euphoria associated with connectivity and creating (in pioneering media theorist Marshall McLuhan’s words) a ‘global village’, with Debord’s claim that, in contemporary society, we only experience life as representations, and that we cannot exist separate from the spectacle of the screen. Spanning 50 years, key moments are examined, as viewers are invited to consider: “How is the Internet changing art?”

**Exhibition Design**

As a curatorial device, the reverse chronology is fascinating, but this premise cloaks a more complex approach to exhibition design. The curators have arranged the selection of works and artifacts into four historical zones, each treated quite differently in terms of exhibition design. The title of the exhibition, *Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet*, is shrewd because an

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64 Ibid., p. 28.
65 Ibid., p. 33.
66 Ibid., p. 25.
68 Exhibition wall text.
The exhibition’s main room (fig. 5), and first to be experienced, featured a variety of artworks made between 2000-2016. This zone is the most compelling because, in contrast to the traditional white cube minimal approach to exhibition design, artworks were placed closely together in a layered overlapping fashion, one acting as a reference point to the other. The result is that the exhibition form represents a physical manifestation of a global village and the viewer cannot escape the spectacle of the screen. Included here were art works that responded to the many incarnations of the Internet, including photographs, apps, video and hardware-based works. This room operated almost as a symbol for the Internet itself—many windows open, information layering, one artwork overlapping the next with appropriation and re-imagining constantly being explored. For example, Douglas Coupland’s *Deep Face* (2015), a commentary on Facebook’s involuntary facial recognition technology, is next to Olaf Breuning’s *Text Butt* (2015), a large circular photograph featuring semi-coherent text messages coming out of a naked female’s bottom—“ok”, “Bananas”, “Wow, thank u so much!!!!!”, “did you have fun last night” and “whatever you think”. Not far away is James Bridle’s *Homo Sacer* (2014) in which a holographic woman projected to lifelike scale issues decrees taken from United Nation charters and other government documents. Curator Kholeif concludes that “Debord’s dystopic view of a media-induced world is one where experience is so mediated that existence feels wholly
simulated and impoverished." As an experience, Debord’s idea that everything that was once lived is now experienced as a simulation, as a representation, via the spectacle of the screen, is felt in equal measures of oppression and celebration through the curator’s exhibition design in this room. Like surfing the Internet, the subject matter on display jumps from the irreverent to the political, works that use the Internet as their medium, to those that use the vernacular language of the Internet and computer graphics as a visual metaphor.

The 1960s and 1970s featured numerous boundary-testing artists that experimented widely with the available technology. Featured in this zone were a number of monitors showing single channel videos by some of the most important pioneering artists such as Steina and Woody Vasulka’s *Studies* (1970), Richard Serra and Nancy Holt’s *Boomerang* (1974) and Gary Hill’s *Electronic Linguistics* (1978). A focal point in the exhibition, featured in this zone, was a works by Nam June Paik, *Internet Dream* (1994), a video-wall of 52 monitors displaying electronically-processed images—blurred, layered, over-saturated colours—showing Paik’s early awareness of society’s move towards information saturation. Given the exhibition’s title, the inclusion of such an ambitious large-scale work by one of the medium’s most important artists was both logical and acted as a pivot point between the new and the old. This zone also featured Lynn Hershman Leeson’s *Lorna* (1979-82); one of the first artworks to employ the interactive potential of the now redundant laser-disc technology, here migrated to DVD as a preservation strategy. The installation of *Lorna* also shows how flexible the artist is in relation to installation, using present-day popular magazines rather than those used in its original presentation.

While the inclusion of ephemera from the Experiments in Art and Technology events was highlighted in the exhibition media releases the final room also included documents from the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity*, another pioneering exhibition by artists, scientists and technologists held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1968. The artifacts from these events were presented in protective display cases or as framed images, reinforcing the curators’ archival intentions through traditional museological display strategies.

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69 Omar Kholeif, op. cit., p. 25.
Electronically reinforced the value of a number of curatorial strategies for tracing video art histories already touched on. Like Illes and Assche, Kholeif aimed to generate a discussion about the broader histories of art and technology, in this case establishing links to net art, video art, installation art, computer art, virtual art, to name a few, the curator saying, “In recent years, there's been a lot of discussion that places artists in a post-Internet context: I wanted to link that back to a broader historical genealogy.” In this way the curator strongly linked the featured art to technological advancement but also to its social and cultural contexts in which the artworks were originally situated, both these elements being reinforced through the catalogue essays. The reverse chronology, which was very loosely adhered to, emphasised, once again, the exhibitions archival intensions. The organisation of the first gallery was especially interesting in the way it used layering to develop, in a pictorial sense, a spatial reference system. Bolstered by Debord’s concerns about reality giving way to a world experienced via digital simulation Kholeif observed that particular concerns kept resurfacing for artists, such as an over-reliance on technology or consciousness becoming merged into the machine. These ideas are manifested through the exhibition design itself, especially in the first zone, as a whole gallery experience in which the audience could view multiple works simultaneously in relation to one another. This strategy was interesting in itself because one could trace a genealogy of the medium within a single point of view. Finally, through archival research the curator uncovered ephemera that provided important contextual


information about the creative uses of technology over time. While this material used conventional museological approaches to presentation they helped anchor the exhibition in an historical narrative and thus emphasised the potential use of archival material for my own project.

**Conclusion**

These three projects, as case studies, offered a concise way of dealing with the some of the major methodological questions relevant to my own research projects, relating to spatial interests (*Into the Light*), thematic interests (*Centre Pompidou Video Art*) and temporal interests (*Electronic Superhighway*). What I expected from these case studies was for them to highlight issues relating to video’s temporal and spatial conditions within the gallery. Having said this, a variety of patterns emerged from these exhibitions that lead me to readdress my initial priorities for my research project. Primarily, the curatorial strategies of *restore* and *remake* were identified. These strategies were exemplified by examples in which the restoration of videos or the reconsideration (or remaking) of historical works was prioritised because the video’s original support material was now obsolete. Of equal important was the identification of a *reference* strategy. This approach was exemplified by curatorial strategies such as the development of themes and the use of ephemera to aid exhibition narrative and reinforce art historical references. The *reference* strategy was also embodied in the visual dynamics of the exhibitions themselves, as pictorial spaces in which individual art works functioned collectively, playing off one another to produce meaning, as a type of spatial/visual reference system. Therefore, while the temporal and spatial concerns were important it was identified that these largely built on existing curatorial strategies that emerged during the 1970s, as identified by Illes, and that newer curatorial strategies needed to be identified that prioritised a genealogical investigation of Australian video art. What emerged from this study was a range of curatorial strategies—*restore*, *remake* and *reference*—a theoretical approach that needs to be tested in practice.

These three exhibitions highlighted new challenges for curators relating to the restoration and remaking of video work and the development of referencing systems to highlight connections between the past and the present, helping to counter the amnesic effect time passing has had on video art’s history. Curator Catherine Ross
say, “Many of these concepts have been proposed to disclose contemporary art’s increased attention to the historical narrative, namely to methods of archaeology and archival research as well as the role of memory, oblivion, utopia, progress, difference and fiction in the construction of the récit historique.” 72 What has become evident during the development of the curatorial strategies of restore, remake and reference is that the role of the curator of historical video art exhibitions is more divergent than ever before, combining the functions of archivist and art historian with that of the exhibition maker.

To address the challenges highlighted by the research, I developed a two-pronged research approach. Firstly, the study scoped a range of curatorial projects that focused on video art’s history to identify emerging practices in exhibition design, as discussed in this chapter. Then, in the next chapter, I examine an array of literature that helped illuminate these practices. Secondly, I curated two historical video art exhibitions through which I could explore and develop my own curatorial model. The first of these exhibitions was Resistance: Peter Kennedy, exhibited at the Australian Experimental Foundation in Adelaide in 2016. This exhibition gave me the opportunity to test parts of my emerging curatorial model in the lead up to my main research project Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art which was hosted by the Griffith University Art Museum in Brisbane in 2017. This exhibition is the most extensive presentation of Australian video art since it emerged as a creative medium in the late 1960s representing a significant contribution to art history and curatorial practice.

The scale of this project was unprecedented with over 60 Australian video artists presented through the exhibition format, spanning from the early 1960s to the present. The project is significant because it will help generate an ongoing dialogue about this history and thus help work against the forgetting that so often plagues ephemeral and time-based art forms like video. The following chapters outline the development of my restore, remake and reference strategies and its evolution through curatorial practice.

Chapter 3: Developing the Curatorial Strategies: Restore, Remake, Reference

Historical exhibitions of art radiate a certain degree of archival sensibility. Reflecting back, looking forward, changes in aesthetic approaches, developments in materials—each artwork contributes to a narrative that speaks to the past but also to the present, to the conditions of advancement, and an art world continually engaged in reinvention and a search for newness. Within this archival matrix video has its own relationship to art history because, as a tool, it exists within multiple contexts. Beyond its art context video is the contemporary medium by which we experience a great deal of the world in its political, cultural and geographic dimensions. But it is also a personal recording device of private moments. Alongside these various contexts, video has developed technically in leaps and bounds from the original low-resolution analogue tapes to new ultra-high definition digital formats. The speed of technological advancement means that video archivists are required to frequently revisit the material and migrate, or remediate, it to more sustainable playing format in a continuous struggle against obsolesce. This presents two important intersecting issues for the curator of video art histories—one relating to the archive as a repository of video, the other to the video’s journey from the archive and into the gallery and the need to consider remediation and spatial issues. This is important for the historically based exhibition because developing a theoretical understanding of both the archive and the journey will help in the development of curatorial strategies that aim to build a genealogy of Australian video art.

In my research, I spent many months searching through gallery, library and personal archives and came to conceptualise the exhibition itself as an important part of an archival strategy, the end point if you like. An understanding of the archive is important for this research because the archive and the gallery bookend my curatorial strategies. Further, archives contain a virtually untapped body of knowledge relating to this history that has been locked away and it is only through extensive archival searches (on-line, off-line, personal and institutional) that an extensive genealogy of Australian video art can move out from the shadows and into public consciousness as an act of remembering. Video art offers an interesting case study in this ‘remembering’ of art history because, by its very nature, video is an archival instrument developed to preserve images. In this chapter I will analyse the theoretical
and practical implications of presenting a ‘history’ of video art within the exhibition context by establishing links between the archive and the remake, restore and reference strategies that have emerged through the initial part of this research. Firstly, I will undertake an analysis of how the concept of ‘archive’ applies to video’s history. Secondly, I will examine issues relating to the remediation of video, through restoration or remaking, due to the obsolescence of the original technology. Migrating historical video art to a digital format appears to be uncomplicated in practice but for the curator what are the implications of this process? Finally, I will articulate the ways in which the archive extends into the gallery, linking the old with the new, as a type of referencing system.

**Video Art: Australia’s Cultural Amnesia**

In Australia, the relationship between video art and the archive is a fractured one thus providing a comprehensive picture of its history is fraught with anxiety and incompleteness. In 1986 Australian curator Bernice Murphy observed, “video art in Australia can now claim a 16-year history, but new work seems often innocent of any genealogical relationship to that history. As works emerge from younger artists, often unaware that they are following in the erased tracks of their predecessors, I am struck afresh by the continual amnesia that bedevils contemporary art developments in Australia.”

Despite Murphy’s comments being nearly thirty years old they still hold a surprising currency in 2018. When art historian Daniel Palmer referred to video as a ‘medium without a memory’ he was referring to the difficulty in tracing the history of Australian video art due to a lack of documentation and the fact that there has been no diligence in applying archival procedures to ensure the history’s longevity. While the myth of the origins of video art internationally is well recorded when Nam June Paik played *Electronic Video Recorder* at the Café Au Go-Go in New York in 1965, in Australia tracing such moments is a forensic undertaking destined for failure. Australian artist John Conomos says, “The problem of cultural amnesia for Australian video artists is the sense that they are always constantly re-inventing the wheel with video.”

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Undoubtedly, any historical undertaking, be it in writing or a curated exhibition, engages in a selection process whereby the author offers a particular version of events under the guise of ‘a history’. Art historian Sven Lütticken observes that history is firstly communicated via writing, which is consequently written about by historians, “both the historical record of the res gestae (things done) and the historia rerum gestarum (history of things done) are put down in writing. Thus historical memory is produced; history [being] inscribed into the present, but presumably with the critical checks and balances rather than purely as myth.”\textsuperscript{76} For art history, such things as museum acquisition policies and the nature of the art market, where the first level of ‘selectivity’ takes place, compromise these checks and balances but who chooses what is collected, written about and why? Mediums such as video have traditionally suffered in this dynamic arena because of its ephemeral nature and the lack of archival procedures, reinforcing the ‘radical forgetting’ of this type of art practice previously mentioned.\textsuperscript{77} Because of these factors curating can best be described as an informed subjective activity whereby a complex network of influences that are personal, social and political intersect to shape the form of the exhibition. While an archival approach, including extensive research through institutional and personal archives, cannot overcome many of the limitations imposed by the processes of historical documentation it can challenge them.

An archival approach to my use of genealogy as a framework was important because, for the first time, I presented works from Australia’s 50-year-old video art history alongside a range of historical material such as posters, pamphlets, photographs, books and journals. Archival investigation was critical because it helped to unearth previously unknown or long forgotten artworks that could be presented, in some cases for the first time since they were created. In many cases, these works needed to be digitised for exhibition purposes thus preserving the work for future presentations. An important part of this research was to scan documents relevant to my research, as they were unearthed. Once again, this has preserved them in a state that can be easily disseminated in future publications and exhibitions. Within this curatorial approach I was interested in the conceptual links between the archive, video, memory,


recollection and how exhibition design, enacted through my emerging restore, remake and reference strategies, can play with these ideas. Regenerating histories, through restoration and remaking, becomes an unavoidable part of the curatorial process. Also critical to this project was the juxtaposition of old and new video art works within the gallery as a spatial investigation. Creating historical or intergenerational connections in this way established a type of visual reference system within the pictorial space of the gallery. This was important because it recognised the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, strengthening the archival ambiance.

The Exhibition as Archive

Historically focused exhibitions are imbrued with a sense of the archive that is transferred from the curatorial research methodology into the exhibition space via the culmination of various artifacts that include the artworks themselves but also the exhibition didactics, printed documents and even the labels. In this dynamic the exhibition is an integral part of the archival narrative in which the curator expresses the research through various archival gestures that manifest themselves through exhibition design. An important part of this research project was to search various archives to unearth historical video art, photographs and printed documents that could be curated into exhibitions. As mentioned, historically focused exhibitions of video art offer interesting case studies in the ‘remembering’ of art history because video was initially invented as a memory device to record and archive television. Further, the materiality of the video image itself places it in specific time confounding the relationship between the exhibition, the archive, memory and video as a medium. In this section of writing I will discuss the relationship between video, the archive and designing an exhibition that traces a history of video art.

“Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word "archive". The meaning of ‘archive,’ comes to it from the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognised authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house, or
employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives.”


Derrida discusses the historical meaning of the word ‘archive’ as if its contemporary version lacks explanation of its defining purpose. He goes on to suggest “that the archive is motivated by a need to discover the seminal historical moment, as a way of owning those initial times in history. So, while the archive can be seen as an institution dedicated to issues of preservation, storage and retrieval, it is also motivated by a desire to capture and own early moments in history.” Historical exhibitions of art are imbrued with the concerns outlined by Derrida. The curator—the citizen, the archon—is inevitably affected by the politics of the art world that came both before them, and that they find themselves in presently, as if directed by a covert legislation that is both conscious and unconsciously known but also not documented in writing. Echoing Derrida’s concerns Cosetta Saba observes, “the construction of the archive this is not a neutral cultural epistemological process [but is], in fact, in both its literal and metaphorical definition, a selective [process that] define itself in the ‘power’ dimension.” Here Saba is referring to the relationship between power and how the collection of knowledge into the archive is privileged through the social order. Interpretations of the archive are never impartial, so the question arises: does an attempt to represent a ‘history’ need to be defined by apprehension?

Derrida’s assertions about the archive extend the earlier writing by another French philosopher Michel Foucault. In his book The Archeology of Knowledge (1972) Foucault stated, “The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass…but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed

together in accordance with multiple relations." Both Derrida and Foucault outline the onus of translation and the need to make sense of the accumulation of objects and documents held within the archive. This is the paradox of the archive—itself a mass of objects and documents while any public viewing is but a sample, a subjective interpretation challenged to avoid a senseless amorphous mass. Foucault expands on his definition, saying that the archive is “far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse [but] it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration”. Recognising the mutability of knowledge through contextualisation and selection Foucault also says that the archive “reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification.” As a guide these ideas help define the archival project. As derivatives of the archive, exhibited artifacts are never definitive but rather clues to a greater narrative, the archival gesture establishing a relationship between the object and its past.

For the curator of art histories Derrida and Foucault offer important concepts about the archive that aid the validation of curatorial selection processes and exhibition design. Curator and media archaeologist Erkki Huhtamo highlights these notions claiming, “Historians have begun to acknowledge that they cannot ignore the web of ideological discourses constantly surrounding and affecting them. In this sense, history belongs to the present as much as it belongs to the past. It cannot claim an objective status; it can only become conscious of its ambiguous role as a mediator and ‘meaning processor’ operating between the present and the past.” In the context of exhibitions the director of Museum Australia Andrew Sayers states that such presentations both “embody art history” while also leading to “new shapes for art history.” What is important to recognise is that while historical recollection is not objective, new incarnations of history are not necessarily negative but rather open to new discoveries. In the art exhibition context this has implications on exhibition design—how can the curator make sense of any given history, revealing the

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82 Ibid., p. 129.
83 Ibid., p. 130.
complexities of the subject matter, but also recognise that limitations such as space and resources compromise the presentation of that history?

But what is the ontology of the archive and how can it influence exhibition design? An inspection of some provocative exhibition design strategies that focus on video art’s history is beneficial in this context. *The Early Show: Video from 1969–1979* (2006), curated by artist Constance De Jong, traced some of the creative developments in video art during its formative years in the USA. The campus-based gallery hosting the exhibition had very limited space, so De Jong needed to carefully consider how to exhibit 24 videos in addition to a variety of archival documents. Within the exhibition videos could be viewed via three methods: as a compilation of three-minute clips projected within a darkened room, in their full version on either of two cathode ray tube monitors, or via a database of the videos on a computer. Historical ephemera, such as flyers and newsprint, were displayed both on the wall and in display cases in addition to an early video camera presented on a shelf as an historical artifact. The exhibition catalogue that accompanied the exhibition included essays, interviews with many of the artists from the exhibition and a timeline of important moments. De Jong utilised a number of archival gestures within the exhibition design, which helped to foreground its historical focus, foremost, the inclusion of artifacts and documents adopting a museum-style method of display. Further, De Jong’s decision to include a database of the digitised videos on a computer extended the exhibition’s archival imperative, an archive from which the viewer could effectively curate their own version of the archive. In the exhibition *Vidéo Vintage 1963-1983* (2012) curator Christine van Assche included some similar design features; for example, the use of archival ephemera, and the inclusion of vintage equipment and a timeline. But while De Jong worked within the ‘white cube’ of the gallery space van Assche’s design featured 1970s wallpaper and an array of televisions—from the utilitarian design (often preferred by artists) to designer orb-shapes. While De Jong’s design contextualised the videos within the space of the gallery, in contrast, van Assche emphasised the historical position of the television within the domestic context of the home. Regardless of these differences, similar archival gestures maintained the exhibitions’ historical rigor. Curatorial devices such as these gave the exhibitions their reflexive qualities; that is, the way curators
investigate not only the exhibition as a medium with real-time qualities but also the way in which the exhibition itself foregrounds its own physical and conceptual state with archival intentions. For the viewer, this is essentially a performative activity as they move from the past (artifact or artwork) to the present (their being within the gallery) as they unravel historical legacies for themselves. Both De Jong and van Assche recognise the mutability of cultural history and that re-presenting video art with the relevant archival material would lead the audience to “understand culture as a multi-layered dynamic construction [that] shows how artifacts are embedded in the complex discursive fabrics and patterns reigning in culture.”

Reflecting on his own curatorial project *Archive Fever: Photography between History and the Monument* (2008) Okwui Enwezor observes that “a contemporary interest in the archive is part of a broader interest in the culture of sampling, sharing, and the combining of visual data in infinite calibrations of users and receivers…concerned with the overlay of the iconographic, taxonomic, indexical, typological, and archaeological means…to generate new historical as well as analytical readings of the archive.” He continues, suggesting “the archive, as a representation of the taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge and information, could also be understood as a representative historical form…defined as a field of archaeological inquiry, a journey through time and space.” Through archival gestures the exhibition comes to represent an historical form in itself, its very being explicitly stating methods of taxonomy, classification, and annotation of knowledge.

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86 Erkki Huhtamo, op. cit., p. 299.
88 Okwui Enwezor, op. cit., p. 16.
But does the archive solve the dilemma of forgetting? Family archives of digital images attests to this questioning. Constantly growing folders of images from mobile phones and cameras are embedded deep within computer hard drives never to be seen again. In his often quoted essay ‘Postmodern and Consumer Society’ (1983) Fredric Jameson claims, “Our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose the capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in the perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve”.89 Ironically, Jameson says that it is electronic media like video that erase the past because it is caught in the never-ending stream of representing the present. Exhibiting an historical linage of video can offer a counterbalance to Jameson’s observations—rather than ‘obliterating’ the past the exhibition represents past videos reinvigorating their historical weight in the context of the present. Sven Lütticken concurs with this position stating, “Technology [has] a way of letting appear and thus (re)generating history, creating rhythms that

synchronize past time and present time, with all the distortions this may engender.90

To exhibit a video from an archive requires the work to undertake a form of time travel. In effect, the video is transposed into a contemporary condition ‘wearing the same clothes’ but within an alien environment in which it is impossible to hide their material effects. In relation to technologies such as video, Lütticken examines the complex phenomena of bringing forth past events into the present thus confounding the relationship between original artistic intention and present-day translation. Up until the 1950s the television signal was completely ephemeral with no means to record the electronic signal. The invention of video afforded television the ability to record the moving image for later replay and ‘permanent’ archival storage; that is, the ability to record memories. Ironically, unlike film, the video medium was characterised by the instability of the format that undermined its very ability to maintain these memories. Having said this video marked a dramatic departure from film and photography in what was recorded as social memory, from the birth of a child to live television images, and the technical condition by which this was undertaken. Ina Bloom suggests “by actively foregrounding the technicity of memory video presents us with a definition of memory that does not locate memory in this or that monument, representation, or practice [but] is simply a force of retention at work in all perception and sensation.”91 Historical surveys of video art metaphorically position the exhibition (as a medium) as a memory device not just because of the juxtaposition of the old and the new but because video signifies a particular relationship to both private and collective memory, through personal devices and broadcast modes such as television. These intersecting issues place historical video art surveys between the archive and memory, between the ephemerality of the video signal and the fleetingness of memory itself. By re-presenting video art in this context, the exhibition form memorialises each artwork as an historical artefact giving the exhibition agency as remembering, countering the amnesic effects of time.

As mentioned, video was developed to record and archive images streamed from a video camera. We now consider the camera and its recording device as inseparable,

but this was not always the case. The first portable video cameras had two components—the camera itself and the video recording deck. Because of the sheer size of the camera it was designed to sit on the user’s shoulder while a hand stabilised its position and operated the zoom lens. The video recording deck was carried at the operator’s side via a shoulder strap. The separation of the video image signal and recording storage was important because it emphasised the relationship between video and its archival nature and this perspective continues today. Enwezor says, “Because the camera is literally an archiving machine, every photograph, every film is a priori an archival object. The infinitely reproducible, duplicable image, whether a still picture or a moving image, derived from a negative or digital camera, becomes, in the realm of its mechanical reproduction or digital distribution or multiple projection, a truly archival image.”92 Painting and sculpture enter the archive via documentation processes such as photography but we rarely refer to the gallery collection storage as an archive while video cassettes and hard drives sit neatly on a shelf within the gallery’s archival material and collection documentation. I personally have witnessed this on numerous occasions. Importantly, video’s history as an ethnographic tool means it sits naturally within the archive. In its ethnographic dimension video, art or documentary, has an indexical relationship to the world which situates its images in real events. Thus, on multiple levels, the archival form gives authority to the historical video art exhibition’s statement as an historical document.

**Curatorial Strategies: Restore, Remake, Reference**

To address the complex issues that come with a genealogy of video art my curatorial approach is constructed around three main concepts: restore, remake and reference. **Restore** means to restore the artwork for both preservation and exhibition purposes through a process of digitally remastering videos onto a more stable contemporary format. **Remake** refers to a process in which videos or art installations must be reconstructed for exhibition purposes possibly altering their original condition or presentation due to the obsolescence of the original technology. Lastly, the archive is then enacted both spatially and conceptually within the gallery as a reference tool—creating links between the past and present in a phenomenological way but also in an

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92 Okwui Enwezor, op. cit., p. 12.
art historical fashion. These three strategies are central to the journey of video from
the archive into the gallery and need further explanation.

**Restore**

This aspect of the approach primarily draws upon the strategy of remediation.
Remediation is the process of migrating one medium’s content into another; for
example, film into television, or video into a digital form. On the opening page of
*Understanding Media* (1964) Marshall McLuhan famously said that the content of
any medium is always another medium. His examples included “the content of
writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the
content of the telegraph”.93 Resonating with McLuhan, in *Remediation:*
*Understanding New Media* Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin refer to remediation
as the “formal logic by which new media refashions prior media forms [claiming that]
remediation is a defining characteristic of new digital media because digital media is
constantly remediating its predecessors (television, radio, print journalism and other
forms of old media).”94 This has substantial implications for curatorial practices in
which video art is the focus because designing exhibitions necessitates forms of
restoration due to technological advancement and the obsolescence of equipment.

A major goal in my curatorial practice is to make visible videos that have been
trapped in archives. Emergent curatorial strategies include the need to remediate
videos onto another format; that is, *restore* videos that are in a format that is no longer
viable for exhibition and design new ways of presenting them through contemporary
technology. The enduring life of a video work is contingent on two technical factors:
the preservation of the video material itself and consideration of the technical support
system used for display. But this is not just a technical exercise for curators.
Exhibiting historical video art presents the viewer with a sense of a ‘double absence’
because not only is the original display device absent but the contexts and
environments in which the works were presented have disappeared over time.95 We
should not let the anxieties around this ‘double absence’ prevent the exhibiting of

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95 Barry Bergdoll used the term ‘double absence’ when referring to the presentation of artefacts relating to architecture in
on behalf of the Society of Architectural Historians, p. 257.
important video works but develop strategies that enable their continued viewing into
the future. Archival processes have been particularly important for the remembering
of video art. Its material support has evolved through many technical iterations hence
for video work to maintain its visibility in the public arena it must be constantly
migrated, or restored, to newer formats in order to be displayed. The importance of
this strategy was continually highlighted through the curatorial case studies I
examined. For example, for De Jong’s exhibition *The Early Show: Video from 1969–
1979*, all the videos had to be digitally remastered to be incorporated into a digital
database on a computer. Here, restoration acts as both an archival act aimed to
preserve the work for the future but also give the work new life through its ability to
be displayed within the gallery.

Alessandro Bordina identifies two main approaches when presenting historical works
within the exhibition context. The first method demonstrates what he calls “the
original technology approach, in which storage [of the equipment] is the key
preservation strategy, and the second case is an example of the updated technology
approach, where emulation is the principal strategy.”96 The first approach highly
values the use of original technology and wants to preserve the work as it originally
appeared. With this approach, the storage of old equipment and spare parts is key, and
the lifecycle of the work is related and limited to the lifecycle of the equipment.97
Because there has been no consistent engagement with issues relating to the
conservation of video art in Australia the current focus for collections is emulation (or
digitisation) in what amounts to emergency archeology—the need to save artworks
from oblivion before it is too late. Bordina continues: “the second approach highly
values the use of new technologies and is known for the dynamic appearance of the
work. With this approach, migration and emulation are essential, and the eventual loss
of authenticity and historicity in relation to functionality and concept is part of the
discussion about the possible strategies.”98 Derrida offers a philosophical approach to
this paradoxical situation through the idea of the ‘pharmakon’, a Greek term which
means both a ‘remedy’ and a ‘poison’. Thus, for video, the effect of remediation,
through restoration, of video onto newer technologies both cures the image of

Noordegraaf, Cosetta G. Saba, Barbara Le Maître, and Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges
97 Ibid., p. 236.
98 Ibid., p. 236.
obsolescence but is also potentially harmful to artistic intention and authenticity. Because digitisation helps video to become reproducible and to circulate freely media theorist Boris Groys refers to the process as the “medicine that cures the image of its inherent immovability.”\textsuperscript{99} For curators of technology-based historical survey exhibitions, there is an interesting phenomenological difference between the original and updated approaches in terms of exhibition design—one in which the evolution of the machine is an essential part of the encounter. The questions arise: How to we anchor artworks in the time of their creation? Where is the balance between these modalities? Bolter and Grusin offer a thoughtful interjection into this dilemma saying, “What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.”\textsuperscript{100} Restore as a strategy plays with this tension between the past, the present and the future—each having an equal stake in how the curator deals with the artefacts at hand, eyes looking forward but always glancing in the rear-view mirror at the path behind.

**Remake**

The remake strategy also draws on remediation, but while the restore strategy offers minimal implications to the visual aspects of the work, exhibiting some works may need a more dramatic remaking for exhibiting to be possible. A primary example of this would lie in the presentation of early video installations that included multiple videos in addition to objects. In Australia there is no shared effort to develop systems in relation to the conservation of video art while internationally there is growing support for the idea of variability in relation to video and new media art. The Variable Media Initiative at the Guggenheim Museum, coordinated by curator Jon Ippolito, has developed a set of protocols around a flexible approach to the preservation of new media art. In relation to a variable media approach Ippolito “encourages creators to define a work in medium-independent terms so that it can be translated into a new medium once its original format is obsolete.”\textsuperscript{101} Ippolito goes on to say that the “philosophy is not rigid; while it augments storage with less traditional rescue techniques like emulation, migration, and reinterpretation, it nevertheless recognises

\textsuperscript{99} Boris Groys, ‘From the image to the image file – and back’, in Rudolf Freiling and Wulf Herzogenrath (ed), 40 Years Video Art de Digital Heritage: Video Art in Germany from 1963 to the present, Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, p. 57.  
\textsuperscript{101} Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito, op. cit., p. 11.
that some artworks cannot change without ruining what made them compelling in the first place.” 102 What is clear about video art is that the technology used by the artist contextualises the work in a specific time in history. In some cases, artists used equipment overtly as part of the work for conceptual reasons. The Tate Gallery is London uses the term ‘future’s past’ to identify “what will be important to a work in the future and what historical links should be maintained” noting that the “stronger the link between the meaning of a work and a particular technology, the greater the degree of loss if that technology becomes obsolete.”103 Both these institutions recognise that conservators must manage changes to the work as technology evolves. Contemporary artists can help cultural institutions navigate these issues at the point of acquisitions but for videos already in collections this is more complex because locating artists can be difficult and some may have passed on. Resources, both financial and in terms of labour, are also limited. Consequently, many of these pressing decisions are left to the curator in remaking and reinterpreting the work thus the idea of the curator/archivist emerges. Protocols such as those developed by The Variable Media Initiative offer an approach for preserving video art that is inherent with flexibility, the remaking strategy aiming to free complex video works from archival incarceration.

In Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory authors Richard Rinehart and Jon Ippolito discuss the contrasting life of the artworks Enduring Expansion (1969) by Eva Hesse and Wall Drawing 146 (1972) by Sol LeWitt. Hesse’s work was made of materials such as fiberglass, polyester resin, latex and cheesecloth that have slowly degenerated over time whereas Sol LeWitt’s wax crayon wall drawing is recreated anew in each instance. LeWitt left careful instruction for his work’s re-creation and it has thus been re-exhibited numerous times whereas Hesse’s work is “terminally ill” and trapped in the Guggenheim archive. The authors argue that in cases like these “fixity equals death” and “that it is only through “variability” that the work will survive to be experienced by future generations.”104

102 Ibid. p. 11.
There are numerous examples of historical moving image works being refashioned for contemporary presentations that illustrate the *remake* strategy. For example, for the exhibition *Andy Warhol—Other Voices, Other Rooms* (2008), curated by Eva Meyer-Hermann for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the curator developed the idea of a ‘filmscape’ room in which several of Warhol’s iconic films were shown simultaneously as a spatial experience rather than in the black box of the cinema. For the original work Warhol used a combination of 16mm film and video. For Meyer-Hermann’s exhibition these were migrated to a digital format to allow them to be played continuously in a looped format and to mitigate the noise of film projectors.\(^{105}\)

In this case remediation, through digital restoration and then remaking the work into an installation, was important for both practical and design purposes, immersion within the filmscape being central to curatorial intention. Warhol died in 1987 so these decisions were left to the curator to negotiate but there are some intriguing cases where living artists having reconsidered the presentation of older works. American artist Paul McCarthy has used video throughout his creative career with many of his iconic early works shot on analogue videotape. These videos explored the collapse of the boundaries between the inside and outside of the body, famously using substances such as sauce, mayonnaise and raw meat smeared over his body as a divisive action witnessed by the video camera. Initially these were shown as individual works on 4:3 monitors but in 2006 McCarthy revisited these early video works and created *Projection Room 1971-2006* (1971-2006)(fig. 8) which combined many of these videos with slides, light boxes and sound in a unified artwork. In the 1970s immersive experiences through video was not readily available but the *remaking* of McCarthy’s early works marks a dramatic change in the experience of the work. This example shows a growing willingness by artists to re-install (or remake) video work using new technologies and the spatial engagement it makes possible.

As mentioned, while single channel videos are relatively easy to preserve and exhibit installations pose complex problems for curators because the equipment originally used was often very visible. Therefore, presenting video installations that originally highlighted the physical presence of the ‘television’ within the gallery are considerably affected by new equipment that is often flat and miniaturised minimising their visibility as part of the work. Having said this, denying these works new life in exhibitions will only skew the historical retelling of Australian video art. Therefore the strategy of remake is important in challenging the amnesic effects of time on this history by letting these works emerge through careful interpretation.

Reference

This aspect of the curatorial approach primarily draws upon spatial practices and strategies relating to the archive and historical documents. Here, the spatial dimensions of the exhibition itself serve as a visual reference system but also the inclusion of archival material and writing, such as wall text or essays, function as more traditional art historical reference tools. These two elements unite to consolidate the historical weight of the exhibitions.

For the exhibition Into the Light, curator Christine Illes designed the gallery as a dimly lit space to position the viewing experience between that of the cinema and the gallery. In her catalogue essay Illes extended her debate about the experiential aspect of viewing by constructing a link to the experience of Marcel Duchamp’s works on
glass such as *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23) (fig. 9), in which the artist used paint and other materials to create geometric abstract forms on glass panels. Because the artist left large sections of the glass unpainted the viewer can see through and beyond the work itself, into other parts of the gallery. As the viewer moved through space Duchamp’s work dramatically changed as the relationship between his work in the foreground and the gallery in the background shifted. Illes notes that this “multidimensional viewing suggests a transparency of vision” which eludes to “projection as well as the fourth dimension in time.” This observation built on the curator’s interest in phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty’s discussion about how we, the mobile subject, can construct the fullness of our physical environment by moving through space and around objects. It is through this consciousness of foreground background relations within the pictorial space of the gallery that the viewer constructs a *visual reference system* between the various visible elements. Here, transparency becomes a conceptual device that is a principal factor in the physical dimension of exhibition design—a phenomenological experience of an archive, of a history.

Figure 9: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, mixed media on glass (1915-23) is unable to reproduced online.

![Figure 9: Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, mixed media on glass (1915-23).](image_url)

Art historian Hal Foster also attempts to unravel the spatial relationship between gallery and the archive in his article ‘*An Archival Impulse*’ in 2004. In this piece of
writing he discusses the work of several artists who engage in a spatial practice in which they install multiple elements sourced through archival research, the artists aiming to create a dialogue relating the nature of social memory. In his unraveling of the phenomenon of the archive Foster examined the installation work of Sam Durant who employs a range of materials such as photography, sound and video. Foster says that in Durant’s installations the artist “stages his archive as a spatial unconscious where repressed contents return disruptively, and different practices mix entropically…framing a historical period as a discursive episteme…with interrelated elements placed together in a field.”106 If we apply these concepts to exhibition design itself and the spatial arrangement of artworks and historical documents we can begin to think about the exhibition’s ability to have a historical function, the various artworks and ephemera working collectively to produce meaning about the historical story. Many of the exhibitions referred to in this exegesis created historical or intergenerational connections through a similar spatial arrangement of artworks within the pictorial space of the gallery reinforcing the display as a visual reference system. This was important because it recognised the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, strengthening the archival ambiance of the exhibitions. Foster also points out that art practices with archival tendencies “assume anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through and proposes new orders of affective association.” Expanding on Foster’s ‘archival impulse’ in artistic practice Cosetta Saba notes, “The modes of translation of the matter and the concepts from one form to another involve the archive as a “device” and as a “display.”107 This points to a phenomenological experience of space where the experiential dimension of viewing meets the spatial practice of exhibition design. It is here that the spatial considerations of my emerging reference strategy engage most obviously in the ongoing challenges for curators relating to video’s temporal and spatial characteristics.

Foster also discusses the work of artist Tacita Dean to explore the abilities of archival material to connect the past with the present. Like Durant, Dean uses a range of materials such as photography, drawing, film and video. In the case of her work Foster states that the use of archival objects, “serve as found arks of lost moments in

107 Cosetta G. Saba, op. cit., p. 106.
which the here-and-now of the work functions as a possible portal between an unfinished past and a reopened future. In this article, Foster continually reinforces the affective nature of Dean’s installation in phenomenological terms—that is, bringing into account the contingencies of our multiple experiences onto subjectivity—and how this interacts with ideas relating to social memory and archival material. The relationship between spatial organisation and art historical reflection is an important consideration for the curators of exhibitions with an archival impetus.

Both the exhibitions *Electronic Superhighway* and *Centre Pompidou Video Art* were organised into a loose chronological ordering. This organisation opened a double experience of time or temporal endurance through the video itself, at 25 frames per second, and the video’s relation to other artworks around it as the viewer moved through a chronological ordering, either moving back or forward in time. But Foster is also focused on the ability of the archival objects themselves to function as historical anchor points, or historical references, that help frame a larger dialogue about the archive and its relationship to history. Alongside a chronological ordering several of the exhibitions mentioned also utilised archival documents to function as conventional *art historical reference sources*. Van Assche, the curator of *Centre Pompidou Video Art*, also developed themes to reinforce the art historical connections she was constructing. These visual and conceptual reference systems, enacted through the pictorial space of the gallery and through writing, were important in confirming the exhibition as both a historical journey and art historical investigation.

The strategy of *reference* is essential in my curatorial practice when working with researching and presenting a video art history, using the exhibition space to activate and construct meaning from the archive. This extends beyond the works themselves to include related materials that provide context and meaning that positions them within this history.

**Conclusion**

During this research the idea of the *exhibition as an archive* developed as a potential strategy for helping recapture the authenticity that was lost through the unavoidable

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108 Hal Foster, op. cit., p. 15.
process of remediation. As stated, remediating video art through restoration and remaking processes does not necessarily strip the artwork of its historical weight because its inherent reflexive nature guarantees an historical reading. In fact, and borrowing an observation from Derrida, Saba notes that through these transformative practices of making use of ‘temporary displays’ for video, in remarkable ways, the notion of the archive acts. In this way, remediation does not compromise the impression of the exhibition as an archive but, rather, confirms the phenomenological experience for the audience as an historical journey directed by the curator’s archival gestures which include restoration, remaking and the development of reference systems. Presentational strategies such as the reproduction of photographs or digitally remastering analogue videos is seen as the only practical way of preserving the work for the archive but also for exhibition purposes and this establishes an important link between the curator and the archivist. In addition, the development of historical zones within exhibitions and creating visible links between the past and present also offer potential strategies for reinforcing the exhibition’s function of providing art historical references through spatial experiences. Finally, it should be noted that these three strategies are intrinsically linked and interact with one another. For example, a video must be restored or remade in order to become part of my reference strategy or a multi-channel video must have the entire components restored before it can be remade. These strategies have emerged because they offer an approach that prioritise the development of a genealogy of Australian video art that help counter the amnesic effects of time. Having identified these curatorial strategies, I will now test and evolve them further through the development of the exhibition Resistance: Peter Kennedy, hosted by the Australian Experimental Art Foundation.

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109 Cosetta G. Saba, op. cit., p. 105.
Chapter 4: Testing the Curatorial Strategies: *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*

I curated the exhibition *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* for the Australian Experimental Foundation (AEAF) in Adelaide, 2016. The exhibition was the first survey of the artist’s work, focusing on a selection from his video and performance practice since the 1970s to now. Kennedy was involved in the renowned artists collective Inhibodress in Sydney during the early 1970s and produced some of the first examples of artists using video in creative ways. His performance *But a Fierce Blackman* (1971) is one of the earliest examples of an Australian artist using a television within a creative work. Kennedy continued to use video over the next 45 years making him an interesting example of an artist whose practices bookend the history of the medium in Australia. The historical nature of the exhibition gave me the opportunity to test parts of my emerging restore, remake and reference curatorial strategies and the gallery itself, being founded in 1974, encompassed an archival atmosphere that helped reinforce my archival gestures.

There were a number of reasons why the AEAF was chosen as an appropriate exhibition space for Kennedy’s work. Firstly, the artist exhibited some of his video works at the Foundation in the mid-1970s and returning to the site of earlier creative work was an engaging historical narrative arc. Kennedy exhibited two works at the AEAF in November 1976, *Other Than Art’ Sake* (1973-74) and *Introductions* (1974-76) and these would be shown again in their digitally restored state alongside newer videos. The gallery also included a bookstore that could become an active exhibiting space for historical works and the presentation of ephemera giving archival material the ‘research’ context of the library. Lastly, the gallery’s archive included an array of material that could be included in the exhibition as original or reproduced documents helping to position the artwork as part of an historical continuum.

**Exhibition Design**

The exhibition was designed so that the audience’s first encounter was with the archival material positioned within the bookstore. This historical ‘zone’ also featured photographic reproductions of installations that could not be included because of spatial limitation or their remaking was not financially viable, scripts for actions and manifesto type documents. On entering the gallery proper the audience followed a
chronological ordering of the work, from the physicality of the initial analogue videos to the digital clarity of new video technology (fig. 10-11). This combination of chronological ordering and archival material, as archival gestures, consolidated the exhibition’s historical and archival form. Testing these curatorial strategies within the exhibition confirmed the importance of the ‘archival form’ because it produced what Foucault refers to as the “condition of validity of judgments”\footnote{Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, p. 143.}; that is, that the archival form itself constituted an authentic connection to the past. The archival form of the exhibition was important because it gave authority to the historical video art exhibition’s statement as an historical document. These are important concepts for historical surveys of video art because it demonstrated that they exhibit archival behaviours in a number of ways—the material level (it looks historical because of image quality) and on the practical level (it captured historical events). To reinforce once again, this is the exhibition’s reflexive ability—a consciousness of its own material function. As curator, I was aware of this function in the exhibition design stage of *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*. For example, Kennedy’s decision to dramatically reconfigure historical work which were then shown using contemporary equipment, as video installations rather than in their original single channel state, had this very effect due to the juxtaposition of grainy historical analogue images and modern digital equipment. Strategies such as these strengthen the historical exhibition’s archival impulses and authenticate its journey into the past. Also, socially engaged practices such as Kennedy’s “have returned to the contemporary art agenda with great force in recent years, encouraging a critical reflection of avant-garde practices that emerged from the counter-culture period of the late 1960s.”\footnote{Matthew Perkins, *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*, exhibition catalogue, Adelaide: Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 2016, unpaginated.} An archival approach towards *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* was important in setting up this comparison within the exhibition narrative, something that was also restated in the exhibition essay.
Restoring Peter Kennedy’s Videos

In exploring how others have dealt with these curatorial challenges, it became evident that re-presenting historical video works in a present-day exhibition poses interesting questions for curators. For my own curatorial projects this research influenced a range of considerations regarding remediation, both restoring and remaking videos, rather than a single approach, contingent on the nature of the original artwork, conversations with artists, the current condition of the work, equipment availability, and so on. For *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*, the exhibition began with documentation of his performance *But a Fierce Blackman* (1971), which had been scanned from the
original negatives, and concluded with his most recent video installation *The Photographs’ Story* (2016), which used Brightsign digital media players to synchronise three videos and high definition projectors. In between, the artist used several, now redundant, video formats to make his art. This presented some noteworthy curatorial challenges. Along this journey artist and curator had many discussions about the relationship between video made with older formats that are then displayed on newer technology. Some of the decisions made by the artist follow emerging archival practices for moving image works while other decisions marked a radical departure from these. For example, historical work originally recorded on an Akai ¼” black and white videotape were digitally re-mastered to preserve and exhibit the work.¹¹² This represented common museum practices for the preservation of moving image works. Works such as *Other Than Art’s Sake* (1973-74), *Introductions* (1974-76), *November Eleven* (1979) and *On Sacred Ground* (1983-84), shot on a variety of analogue video formats, were now shown in a restored digital format. These works carried the subtext ‘archival videos’ on the title card and were played on two 4 x 3 ratio Sony Trinitron monitors dated from the 1980s. Sony Trinitron monitors were often used in galleries in the 1980s and 1990s not only because they were high quality but also because they were black, rectangular without curves and utilitarian rather than styled for the domestic market. As utilitarian monitors they were read as ‘institutional’, imbuing their images with specialised meaning beyond the mass distribution of those from the television or broadcast industry. These videos were restored and exhibited close to their original state emulating an *original technology* approach. Also, in the preceding 18 months I searched archives around Australia and scanned and restored a series of posters, pamphlets, negatives, photographs, performance instructions and personal manifestoes relating to Kennedy’s artistic career. These were printed on thick off-white A3 paper and displayed on the wall next to these videos as ‘archival material’ for the audience to undertake their own research (fig. 12-13). Importantly, both *Introductions* and *November Eleven* were originally exhibited alongside other art objects; *Introductions* was screened with a series of watercolour paintings while *November Eleven* was presented together with two large union style banners. Displaying these works in this state was nether financially viable or spatially practical so photographic documentation was reprinted from original

¹¹² Stephen Jones transferred the original videos to a digital format.
negatives and displayed as part of the grid of documents, somewhat restoring the original context of these videos. This strategy was also taken with Kennedy’s *Chorus: From the Breath of Wings* (1993) in which the artist explored video’s sculptural potential. The original work, comprising of a number of large-scale sculptures combined with video screens, was exhibited at the Heidi Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne as part of the *Fifth Australian Sculpture Triennial*. Once again, because and the scale and cost involved in representing the original works negatives were scanned and the documentation shown instead. Because the audience encountered this printed material first, in addition to the archival videos, it immediately established the exhibitions archival credentials and set a historical tone.

Figure 13: *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*, Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 2016. Exhibition view: bookstore, archival material.
Figure 14: *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*, Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 2016. Exhibition view: bookstore, archival material.

**Remaking Peter Kennedy’s Videos**

While these single channel works were relatively uncomplicated in their restoration and display the same cannot be said about *Video Tapes* that was first screened in 1971. Originally a single-channel reel-to-reel video featuring a number of separate but related performances, Kennedy redesigned the work as an installation with eight discrete performances shown on separate monitors simultaneously entitled *Fugue* (1971-2015) (fig. 14-15). Also, some of the original 4:3 ratio images were cropped to fit onto a 16:9 ratio monitor without the black banding that usually demarcates historical video. This represented a radical action by the artist in relation to the remaking of historical works. At the forefront of this ‘reinvention’ of a historical work was its reconceptualisation as an installation which fundamentally altered the artist’s original aesthetic intentions. This new installation of the videos included a continuous black shelf with speakers that was installed at ear height. The shelf served two functions. Firstly, the original work, created in 1971, prioritised sound as the primary focus of the experiments and the new installation continued that focus, being at ear height. The title, *Fugue*, is a musical term referring to a compositional style in which several ‘voices’ perform in counterpoint to each other slowly building up harmonic relationships between the different sections to create a polyphony. The title
itself emphasised the artist’s focus on sound but it also indicated the intention to integrate these parts into a whole that could be physically experienced by the audience via participation as they moved around the space. Secondly, in a pictorial sense, the shelf formed a horizon which unified the monitors that were various in scale, into a unified singular form—the installation. Artist Vito Accounci suggests that single channel works, as a material, are ‘placeless’ because we cannot determine the exact viewing experience whereas video installation places the work in a specific site, in fact, placing placelessness.  

Rather than laying witness through the window of the screen onto the various performances, Kennedy’s new installation began to operate on phenomenological terms. While the original performative video created a level of physical and emotional empathy Fugue required a more active bodily response from the viewer to help create the work for themselves. This radical remaking of the video showed Kennedy was willing to reconsider older works in light of new technology. In fact, the artist said, “I had always felt that my intentions, at the time, were not completely fulfilled, so there has existed a nagging frustration over the past 45-46 years that these works had not quite hit the mark. It always seemed that if there was an opportunity to realise the work in the way I’d originally intended, I should grasp it.” He continued. “I have always regarded my work as material open to revisiting and reworking.” Kennedy also made a second reinterpretation of Video Tapes entitled Body Concert Part 2: Extended (1971-2015) in which the artist used a single video repeated five times, each slightly out of synchronisation with the next creating a type of visual echo (fig. 17). Regardless of this dramatic reworking, the artwork still maintained very strong historical links because of the graininess of the original video image. Media theorist Chris Wakl who observes, “Media art is highly self-reflexive in that it frequently displays the conditions of its own production and reflects on the ‘apparatus’ in which its production and reception are inextricably tied together”, reinforces this notion.  

Interestingly, the National Gallery of Australia acquired Fugue shortly after this exhibition closed, the videos returning to the archive in an altered state, memory once again conceding to the effects of time. While Kennedy’s strategy to remake the work complicated its provenance and the shape of original


memories, it opened new ways to think about history as it re-emerges from archival hibernation. Curator Lynne Cooke writes that the archive places the artifact “between the promise of taxonomic order…and the total devastation of that promise”115 or in Foucault’s words, between “tradition and oblivion.”116 The curator of historically focused art exhibitions work creatively with this dichotomy as works of art are positioned within a canon of art or lost in the cracks of mass accumulation as they engage with a variety of revisionist strategies. This is the essential friction at play in an exhibition with archival sensibilities.

Figure 15: Fugue, 1971–2015 [Australia Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 2016]. Eight-channel digital video and sound, monitors, speakers – dimensions variable.

Figure 16: Fugue, 1971–2015 [Australia Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 2016]. Eight-channel digital video and sound, monitors, speakers – dimensions variable. Detail.

Reference Schema: *Resistance: Peter Kennedy*

As mentioned, both the exhibitions *Electronic Superhighway* and *Centre Pompidou Video Art* were organised into a loose chronological ordering allowing the viewer to physically move back and forth in time. I utilised this same strategy for *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* which included four historical zones. While the installation *Fugue* was exhibited in a space with white walls and minimal lighting, the rest of the gallery was painted black with no lighting. As mentioned, the viewer first encountered some of Kennedy’s early videos and historical ephemera in the bookstore before entering the gallery itself, thus experiencing the evolution of the artist’s creative practice since the beginning. Following on from *Fugue* and *Body Concert Part 2: Extended* were two of the artist’s most recent works, *Small Tales and True: A Short Story in Four Parts (2005-2011)* (fig. 18) and *The Photographs’ Story (2004-2016)* (fig. 19-20). The overall spatial organisation was important to an archival reading of the exhibition as a history which may not have been emphasised by a non-chronological ordering of the work. These visual reference systems were important in confirming the exhibition as both an historical journey and an art historical investigation. Displayed in the darkened space of the gallery screens hovered in space emulating a visual database of moving images enhancing the galleries characteristic of a pictorial space within which visual references were consciously and unconsciously established through exhibition design for the viewer. For example, the audience could see videos made in 1971 alongside those made more recently as a conceptual and visual reference or anchor point. In addition, the use of reproduced ephemera provided art historical reference material through which the viewer could contextualise more recent work. The overall theme of the exhibition was ‘resistance’ in consideration of Kennedy’s continuing commitment to a political critique of western culture over the duration of his artistic career. This was evident in the work itself but also through the presentation of some of his early writing via the displayed ephemera.

Figure 18: *Body Concert Part 2: Extended* (1971-2015). Image Credit: Sam Roberts.
Figure 19: Small Tales and True: A Short Story in Four Parts, (2005-2011) Four-channel digital video and sound, total duration 20:23, dimensions variable (Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 2016). Image Credit: Sam Roberts.

Figure 20: The Photographs’ Story, (2004-2016) Three channel digital video, sound, 6:20 per part – total duration 38:00, dimensions variable (Australian Experimental Art Foundation, 2016). Image Credit: Sam Roberts.
Summary and Review

Resistance: Peter Kennedy allowed me to test parts of the restore, remake and reference strategies through curatorial practice as groundwork for the main project Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art which was starting to take form in the background. These strategies successfully took videos and ephemera out of the archive and into the gallery space helping cultivate an understanding of a variety of strategies for developing a genealogy of Australian video art.

Firstly, the project demonstrated the value of digital restoration in breathing new life into historical video works. By restoring these works in a format that was easily played within a contemporary gallery meant that they were now available for viewing and evaluation for art historical purposes such as critical writing. While a number of reviews were written about the exhibition itself an article by Chris Reid, written for RealTime Arts magazine titled ‘Activist Art: Origin and Resurgence’, compared Kennedy’s work to those by a newer generation of artists.\(^\text{117}\) In addition to the public display itself, writing such as this demonstrated that historical exhibitions such as

Resistance could work against the amnesic effects that time has had on Australian video art because these articles become a primary source document that future generations can access as evidence of the history.

In addition, the fact that the artist demonstrated a willingness to redress not just issues relating to the need to restore decaying video works but also to radically remake them through new presentational strategies was unexpected at the beginning of the project. While many artists would object to such dramatic measures Kennedy provided a model as an exemplar of remaking historical video art works in light of technological advancement. This initiated new ways of thinking about presenting historical works through new technology such as projection and high definition screens and consolidated my ideas around the ‘remake’ strategy. The ‘remaking’ of photographic documentation and ephemera through scanning and enlargement was also confirmed as a very positive approach. This proved to be a viable way, both economically and spatially, of re-presenting artworks that no longer exist or are complex in their nature. This strategy allowed me to display evidence of all of Kennedy’s video works in one way or another and this approach would be duplicated for my main research project. Having said this, in reflection, a number of original documents or ephemera (rather than reproduced) may have further enhanced the archival status of the exhibition and this is one part of the overall approach I will modify for Red Green Blue.

Lastly, the spatial organisation of the exhibition in chronological order established a visual reference system that helped the audience build a more complete picture of Kennedy’s practice as it developed over time. Having said this, being an exhibition that focuses on a single artist meant that I could not test the full potential of such a schema and for Red Green Blue I need to develop systems of reference that more radically emphasise this strategy. This is important because this strategy specifically targets developing links between the past and the present while restore and remake focus more re-presentational issues. Also, for this exhibition I limited the reprinted material to that directly related to Peter Kennedy’s video practices but there exists a whole range of writing about the relationship between video art of the 1970s and political change that could have equally helped contextualise the artist’s work. Once again, this is a modification I will make in the next phase of the research through the
inclusion of some important Australian writing that traces the relationship between cultural production and the themes I develop for the exhibition.

*Resistance: Peter Kennedy* demonstrated that through the curatorial strategies of restore, remake, reference it was possible to challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art, in this case by re-engaging on audience with the important work of artist Peter Kennedy. This exhibition allowed me to test and modify my approach ready for my main project *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art.*
Chapter 5: Testing Final Curatorial Strategies: Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art

Griffith University Art Museum, Brisbane, 30th March – 8th July 2017.

As an important part of my research I visited gallery and museum archives around Australia in order to scan documents, negatives and photographs relating to the history of Australian video art. From this research I created an extensive index of Australian video art from which I could select artwork for inclusion in exhibitions and use some of the scanned documents themselves as exhibitable artifacts. During this time, I visited Griffith University in Brisbane which has one of the most extensive collections of Australian video art. During this visit, I met with the Director of the Griffith University Art Museum (GUAM), Angela Goddard, and we discussed the idea of a historically focused exhibition of Australian video art that utilised, but expanded beyond, the University’s collection. From this discussion I then drafted a proposal and the exhibition developed from that point. In this chapter I will focus the research discussion onto my curated exhibition Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art, hosted by GUAM in 2017. This exhibition allowed me to test the full potential of my curatorial strategies. Therefore, after a brief discussion about the conceptual development of the exhibition I will discuss how the curatorial strategies of restore, remake and reference were applied to the exhibition Red Green Blue.

Figure 22: Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art, Griffith University Art Museum (2017)
Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art brought together more than sixty works from the 1960s through to the present day, highlighting the many possibilities offered by the medium in terms of form, content and interaction with other disciplines. Drawn from archives, gallery and museum collections, artist holdings and the Griffith University Art Collection, this three-part exhibition took the viewer on an historical journey that was also a celebration of the ongoing dynamism and depth of Australian video art practice. From its earliest days, artists embraced video’s radical potential—as a medium for artistic expression, a tool for political agitation, and a means with which to question the status quo. Red Green Blue explored these intersections across three themed chapters, Chapter 1: ‘Red: Everything is Political’ (30 March-29 April, 2017); Chapter 2: ‘Green: Body, Technology, Action’ (2 May-3 June, 2017); and Chapter 3: ‘Blue: Perception and Encounter’ (6 June-8 July, 2017), each running for one month, tracing connections from early experimental origins through to the multiple and proliferating modes of today. When viewed together, the exhibition reasserted the importance of video to Australian art history, while at the same time embracing the complexities of this pluralistic medium.118

The physical aspect of exhibition design developed so that changes in infrastructure between the chapters would be minimal requiring, in most cases, a simple change of the video file rather than a re-organisation of the screens. The main exception to this rule was that the furthest space in the gallery was reserved as a more flexible space for a recent work that required scale or had a spatial dimension. The archival ephemera also changed but its placement within the gallery remained the same meaning the change of material was completed in a very efficient manner. Overall, this approach permitted minimal disruption to public access because the time needed to alter the exhibition between chapters was only a few days.

Early in the projects development I started to think of the exhibition as having an ecosystem identifiable with an archival aesthetic—the relationship between restorative processes and archival impulses seen as inseparable. On a cognitive level I wanted the audience to experience the condition of the archive as a phenomenon by carefully considering the selection of artwork and contextualising information,

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118 This paragraph is included in the curator’s introduction in the exhibition catalogue.
placement of the work within the gallery, use of various technologies and spatial design. Importantly, all the temporary walls were designed as an open structure with wooden beams exposed, allowing the audience to see ‘through’ the exhibition as layers of history—archival ephemera presented alongside historical and contemporary videos (see fig. 22 & 23). Renée Green describes such an approach as “a self-reflexive archival praxis that takes the record-making and generative aspects of archiving as its subject, and makes the past once again useful and open to the present.”119 Significantly, Red Green Blue provided a platform through which the audience could consider not just past works within the context of the present but also the ontological nature of the video’s journey through the archive and into the exhibition (via the restore, remake, reference strategies) involving a necessary level of curatorial translation.


The title of the exhibition, *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art*, was chosen to be deliberately provocative, to initiate an immediate response about what might constitute ‘a history’. In fact, in the catalogue I suggest that the questions that will linger are: “What is the legacy of video art? And, what chapters are still to come to help build a comprehensive picture of the history of Australian video art?”

Therefore, this exhibition presented one particular account of Australian video art history and claimed nothing more. Selection of work was very important to my critical strategy. *Red Green Blue* presented a certain version of events. There were of course notable absences, primarily in the area of recent practices, due to space restrictions and capacity. A few artists had also recently been included in highly visible exhibitions and the decision was made to dedicate space to other works. Notwithstanding these limitations, the aim of the exhibition was to readdress the forgetting that so much dematerialised art has fallen victim to. The restore, remake and reference strategies are in many ways an ordered sequence—restoration needs to be undertaken before remaking the work can be considered, and so on. Therefore, my discussion begins with restore as a foundation strategy.
**Restore**

For the curator of historical video art, an archival approach to exhibition making is very important because the work needs to be digitised in order to be exhibited, thus an archival approach to curation encapsulated the archival strategy of *restore*. Simply put, *restore* means digitally remastering a video from an older, now obsolete, format. This process is enacted not only for exhibition purposes but, especially in the case of *Red Green Blue*, as a strategy for preserving the work before it is lost forever.

Another important part of the *restore* strategy for curators is the need to understand the implications of digitally remastering; for example, what happens to a 4:3 pixel ratio video when it is migrated to a digital format and then presented on a 16:9 high definition monitor? What decisions need to be made if the original work has been damaged because of tape decay (as was the case with Jill Orr’s *She Had Long Golden Hair* (1980))? For curators, the *restore* strategy encompasses both the practicalities of migration but also the implication that this has for exhibiting the work.

For *Red Green Blue* video works that were originally recorded onto an analogue tape-based format or DVD needed to be restored through a process of digital remastering. This was important for the reasons stated above but I also needed to factor in the gallery’s equipment inventory which included computers and digital media players rather than tape or DVD players, therefore, on a practical level, work needs to be digitised so that they could be displayed. Also, as pointed out by curator Lynne Cooke in Chapter 4, digital playback is also more stable than older tape-based machines, presenting a much more seamless experience for viewers with less interruptions due to equipment failure.

The restoration of Australian video art work has occurred in stops and starts. For a younger generation this is just part of their practice but for older artists the technical expertise needed often presents some major hurdles and the cost associated with the preservation of video can be prohibitive. This is where the exhibition as a tool can become valuable as an archival instrument because it requires both a team of people with the required expertise to prepare the files for digital presentation and the required funding to cover the associated costs. In recognition of the need to preserve their collection of video works, Griffith University Art Museum had already made the
decision to undertake a major digitisation of their video collection. For *Red Green Blue*, the selection of work prioritised the order in which to digitally restore the collection. For example, David Perry’s *Interior with Views* (1976), Geoffrey Weary’s *Failure to Materialise* (1988) and Derek Kreckler’s *Blind Ned* (1997-98) needed to be migrated to a digital format from their original tape-based support structure. When the University started collecting video in the 1970s they had the foresight to build future migration into the acquisition contract making this a relatively unproblematic process but many of the works exhibited were not from the collection. Luckily, several works were recently digitised, such as Michael Glasheen’s seminal work *Teleologic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On board with Buckminster Fuller* (1970). But for many video works, approaching the artists to include works in this exhibition initiated a process of restoring their work through digitisation, as was the case with videos such as *Bloody Minded (Five Performances)* (1980) by Dale Frank and *Prediction Pieces 1, 2 and 4* (1981) by Lyndal Jones. Frank’s video documented five performance art works enacted at the Experimental Art Foundation’s ‘Performance Week’ in Adelaide in 1980 while Jones’s document early performances at the George Paton Gallery in Melbourne from her well-known nine-part series *Prediction Pieces* that were presented between 1981 and 1991. Interestingly, part 3 of this series could not be located (or was never made) highlighting the importance of the restorative strategy in safeguarding video art for the future. The inclusion of Frank’s work also presented some philosophical pondering. While Jones is well associated with video art practice Frank less so, regularly identified as a painter. Having said this, my archival research unearthed several interesting performative works that were recorded to video or included the television set as a device, produced in the late 1970 and early 1980s. Because these works have not been preserved and exhibited they have fallen victim to the radical forgetting previously mentioned. Therefore, I made the decision to bring these works to public attention via exhibition. American artists Vito Accounci produced a number of important videos early in his career but then went on to focus on other creative endeavours. Several of Accounci’s videos—such as *Centers* (1971) and *The Red Tapes* (1976)—were collected by both Electronic Arts Intermix and the Video Data Bank, USA-based organisations dedicated to the continual preservation and loaning of videos for exhibition. Because of this, Accounci’s videos have maintained a presence within public consciousness as seminal examples of early
video art. This continues to be a challenge for Australian video art, and once again, illustrates the potential of exhibition making as an archival instrument because restorative processes become an important part of the curatorial approach. Such a revisionist approach to the medium has the potential to initiate a re-evaluation of the role video played in Australian art history and emphasise the importance of restoration to challenging the cultural amnesia that plagues much Australian video art.

To return to issues relating to videos that have been damaged because of tape decay. Both Jill Orr’s *She Had Long Golden Hair* and Sam Schoenbaum’s *Still Life: Breakfast Piece* (1976)(see fig. 24) had been migrated to a digital format but unluckily storage conditions had affected the original tape so there was now visible disintegration of the video image. In the case of Orr’s performance documentation the image ‘rolls’ and noise interrupts the flow of images, noise dropping out momentarily. In parts of *Still Life: Breakfast Piece* visible noise also punctuates the image sometimes affecting the sound. In cases like these where there is no other version of the works in existence restoration is extremely important, saved before environmental conditions cause further damage or complete failure. For *Red Green Blue* the visible decay of the image in videos such as these added an atrophic air to the exhibition, emphasising the exhibition as a tool for remembering. Importantly, rescuing historical works and presenting them in this way demonstrates the real value of the restore strategy in rectifying the cultural amnesia that permeates Australian video art.
In relation to the display of restored work several cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors were unearthed for *Red Green Blue* but I also designed several covers for 16:9 aspect ratio monitors to convert them to the 4:3 pixel ratio that was still in use well into the 2000s (fig. 25) Projection was used for both aspect ratios because we could simply paint the appropriate screen size onto the walls of the gallery. Exhibiting historical video art in this way presented the viewer with a sense of a ‘double absence’ because not only was the original display device absent but the contexts and environments in which the works were presented has disappeared over time.120 In a sense all the video works’ reflexive qualities were emphasised because their material virtues were there for us to compare and experience as historical artefacts and, like photography, the video image recedes into the past from the moment the record button is pressed. Art theorist Dario Marchiori states, “modernism placed speculative and historical awareness at the very heart of the artwork, so that the artists themselves reflexively

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120 Barry Bergdoll used the term ‘double absence’ when referring to the presentation of artefacts relating to architecture in ‘Curating History’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (September 1998), (University of California Press on behalf of the Society of Architectural Historians), 257.
inscribe aesthetic concerns into the artwork and within its margins." Digital restoration changes the physical state of the work, but it does not completely re-inscribe or erase the aesthetic intentions of the artist. Methods of presentation may have this effect but not the restorative process itself. In the end, the need to save the work through restoration outweighs the possibility of losing the work via technical obsolescence.

Remake

Migrating historical video art to a contemporary digital format appears to be practically uncomplicated but for the curator what are the implications of such acts when presenting these works in the gallery? The key issue here refers to upholding the integrity of the work in light of technological changes—the challenge, a balancing act between the pressing need to exhibit the work versus an acceptance that this will essentially change the work because of advancements in technology. Because of the nature of video preservation—migrating the work from one format to another and then viewing it on equipment that is dramatically different to its original support structure—there is an element of remaking in all efforts to preserve video. Having said this, the focus of the remake strategy lies in a more dramatic reconsideration or re-interpretation of artworks such as video installation or interactive electronic art which may require modification for them to emerge from archival invisibility.

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Remaking an artwork such as installation or performance art can be a contentious issue and in the absence of detailed documentation reliant on faded memories. Curator Lynne Cooke juxtaposes the experience of historical performance works by American artists Robert Whitman and Joan Jonas. While Whitman has imposed a number of restrictions on how his work is represented Cooke says that Jonas “has devised ingenious and compelling ways to revivify her classic performances from the early 1970s into what are, essentially, multi-media installations that are sometimes divested of the original props and, always, of her live presence as artist-performer.”

Cooke says, “Jonas's willingness to reconceive her pioneering performance/video work contributes to the pre-eminent place that it currently occupies in revisionist readings of that 'golden age', as much as it does to the high regard that her work now commands from younger generations. The contrary positions these two artists have assumed vis-a-vis their signature work both shapes their very different reputations today and contributes to skewing retrospective reinterpretation of that historical period.”

Cooke offers these examples to highlight the provocation associated with the remaking of works that use outmoded technologies and what this means to the authenticity of the artwork and how it is positioned historically within the future, an important consideration for curators.

For the exhibition Red Green Blue two works that illustrate the complexities identified by Cooke include Arthur Wicks’s Sand Memories at Broome Street NYC and Durras Beach (1974-78), a two-channel video, and Joan Brassil’s Kimberley Stranger Gazing (1988), a video combined with sculptural elements. Wicks’s video installation was originally shown as a stack of two CRT monitors, one showing the burial and recovery of photographs at the New South Wales beach, the other a ritualised performance at Broome Street in New York. I had exhibited Sand Memories previously, the artist providing a single channel version utilising a split screen to show the original two tapes within the single frame. Leading up to Red Green Blue I unearthed several 4:3 ratio screens with the aim of remaking some historical works in light of their original installation. Two of these monitors were older style flat-screen computer monitors which we used to display Wicks’s work in its original dual-channel format. While the original work was displayed on larger CRT monitors as a

stack the opportunity to display the work in its original 4:3 ratio, the video image filling the whole frame without black banding afforded by 16:9 ratio monitors, was seen has an exciting opportunity, one which the artist embraced (fig. 26). While this discussion could be had with the artist the same could not be said about Joan Brassil who passed away in 2005. Brassil had an important period of creative production in the 1980s. During this time, she utilised video in combination with curved Perspex screens, used for their ability to reflect and distort the image. For *Kimberley Stranger Gazing* Brassil represented the European ‘gaze’ through an edited sequence of images that symbolised their incursions into the landscape, such as windmills, water pumps, wire fencing, and farm buildings. Displayed on a CRT monitor, these images were distorted by the curved Perspex, giving them a metaphysical quality because the images floated in space rather than fixed to the screen. *Kimberley Stranger Gazing* was purchased by the collection in 1997. While the video was in the collection the Perspex and metal support structure were nowhere to be found and while the collection didactics describe the use of “irregularly curved Perspex” it was only when I highlighted these components of the original installation did we discuss how we might remake the work. Without the Perspex Brassil’s phenomenological concerns would be wholly absent, the video image taking on a solidity that was not intended, so we considered remaking the curved Perspex. To complicate the situation, like much of video’s history, there is a severe lack of documentation of Brassil’s work which clearly documents its physical state. Luckily, the Campbelltown Art Centre in New South Wales had recently presented a retrospective of her work and the catalogue included some excellent images. The gallery then contacted the artist’s estate who had possession of the original Perspex and metal supports and these were loaned to the gallery enabling the presentation of the work in its original state, complete with a CRT monitor, meaning our intervention into *remaking* the work was minimized (fig. 27). These examples illustrate the importance of remaking video art installations in the context of historical exhibitions. While single channel videos are relatively easy to present in exhibitions the same cannot be said about video installations because of the increased demand on equipment and space. This fact in itself could skew historically focused exhibitions purely because of convenience.
Also included in *Red Green Blue* was a handful of early computer-based works. The legacy of early pioneers of video art in Australia is difficult to trace but for me the
euphoria surrounding the emergence of the Internet and powerful personal computers in the 1990s was an important part of a wider electronic arts movement at the time that needed to be acknowledged in the exhibition. This posed a few challenges because of the obsolescence of computers from that time. An interesting example of enacting the remake strategy within *Red Green Blue* occurred with Jon McCormack’s interactive work *Turbulence: an interactive museum of unnatural history* (1992)(fig. 28), a self-propagating natural environment that was produced entirely from computer code. The original interactive work used a Macintosh computer running system 8.6 or 9.2 with a 14-inch touch screen (640 x 480 pixel resolution) and a video projector. To recreate this work in its original state would have been difficult technically because of the redundant operating system and the small resolution meant that the image would float within the frame of more modern high-resolution screens. To overcome these difficulties, the artist agreed to provide an edited sequence as a single channel video. Another interactive work that presented some curatorial difficulties was Linda Dement’s *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* (1995). This work explored the relationship between technologies and socially positioned gendered bodies, the user interacting with various abstract body parts to navigate their way through a labyrinth of visceral images and sounds. Like McCormack’s work, *Cyberflesh Girlmonster* was made for an old Macintosh operating system but unlike *Turbulence* used the more accessible Shockwave Player software that supported many interactive projects made with Macromedia Director at the time. The University bought the original work in the 1990s and that file no longer functioned. In this instance the artist was able to provide an updated file remade for a Macintosh computer running on system X, meaning we could run the interactive work on a Macintosh computer using an older version of Shockwave found on the internet. We were also able to set the monitor to a lower screen resolution meaning the images themselves would fill most of the screen. These two interactive works presented interesting case studies for ‘remaking’; one in which the work was remade for a different format (video) while for the other we used an emulation approach to exhibit the work close to its original state. Examples such as these illustrate what Ippolito terms ‘strategies for slippage.’ He says that the “medium independent behaviours [of an artwork describe it] in its ideal state, but in the real world any new incarnation of an artwork inevitably involves some deviation from this
ideal”. Even artists such as Nam June Paik envisioned that changes in technology were inevitable; recognising that these changes would affect the future presentations of his work, Paik said, “I don’t like to have complete control. What I learnt off John Cage was to enjoy every second of decontrol. Surprises and disappointments are built into the machine.” As mentioned, in Australia remediation is a necessary part of the strategies involved in an ‘emergency’ approach to media archaeology in which restoring and remaking become important actions. Curators play a significant role in this because exhibitions create the need to confront these issues thus expanding their role to include that of the archivist.

![Image of exhibition installation](image-url)


An important part of the exhibition included the *remaking* of historical ephemera via scanning and enlarging. By scanning negatives, photographs, pamphlets and catalogue exerts found in gallery and library archives I was able to reprint historical material either as large posters that could be presented as a gridded wall display or as small reprinted photographs placed in display cases. Several original documents such as catalogues, manuscripts or pamphlets were also loaned from gallery collections.

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125 ibid., p. 75.
displayed in these same cases. From the hundreds of documents, I originally scanned I used the themes to determine my selection of material to present in this way.

Presenting this range of ephemera was important for several reasons. Firstly, it enabled the presentation of photographic documentation of several pioneering videos for which photographs were the only surviving document or because gallery space was restrictive. For example, in chapter 1, photographic reproductions of Bonita Ely’s installation *Mythological Beasts: at Home with the Locust People* (1976) and Peter Kennedy’s installation *November 11* (1979-81)(fig. 29-30), complete with banners and video, were shown in a display case amongst other documents. In chapter 2, a reproduction of a photographic contact sheet of Stelarc’s performance at the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF) in Adelaide in 1975 was shown depicting “an event of sung and chanted poetry with amplified brainwaves and ‘laser eyes’”126 A few days after this event one of Stelarc’s first suspension works was cancelled due to safety concerns and a copy of the gallery’s press release explaining their decision was enlarged and displayed. For chapter 3, reprinted photographs from Joseph Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski’s exhibition at Sydney’s Gallery A in 1964 were displayed showing a sample of his telematic work produced using an oscillator, in addition to an image of the artist in his studio. An interesting image included in chapter 3 showed a captive audience watching a monitor at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, in 1976. This image carried the hand-written note on the front “video art screening”. I also unearthed a poster advertising this event to present alongside the photograph. This image highlighted the importance of such ephemera to historical curatorial projects because it proved not only that there was early interest in video art, but that this was also occurring in places outside of the metropolitan centers of Melbourne and Sydney. Secondly, another important strategy was the reproduction of catalogue excerpts including essays and interviews. In chapter 1, artist and EAF director Noel Sheridan’s introduction to the ambitious Post-Object exhibition presented (1976) was shown. Video was part of the dematerialised strategies adopted by Australian artists in the postmodern era and Sheridan’s essay helped contextualise video as part of this wider movement. A short essay by artist Peter Kennedy was also presented that discussed his work *November 11*, placing the work’s conceptual intent within the

broader Australian economic, political and cultural context of the 1970s. Within the context of the political theme of this chapter these articles helped build a complex picture of the society which artists were responding to in earlier decades.

Figure 29: Bonita Ely, *Mythological Beasts: at Home with the Locust People* (1976), installation, Experimental Arts Foundation, Adelaide, is unable to be reproduced online.

Figure 30: Bonita Ely, *Mythological Beasts: at Home with the Locust People* (1976), installation, Experimental Arts Foundation, Adelaide.

Figure 30: Peter Kennedy, *November 11* (1979-81), video and banners, is unable to be reproduced online.

Figure 31: Peter Kennedy, *November 11* (1979-81), video and banners.

Several original documents were also shown that extended my remake strategy in relation to exhibiting authentic ephemera. For example, Tim Burns’ exhibition catalogue, ‘Against the Grain’ (2012), was displayed open to an essay by Huw Hallum titled ‘Exploding the Archive’ which discusses Burns’ early works that utilised video such as *A Change of Plans* (1973) and *For Art Sake* (1974). Also, the
catalogue for *Inhibodress 1970-1972*, curated by Sue Cramer for the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane in 1989, was open to the page showing documentation of Peter Kennedy’s *But a Fierce Blackman* (1971), one of the first Australian examples of the use of a television in an art context. In chapter 2, Australia magazine Artlink’s 1987 special edition on art and technology was displayed open to Jill Scott’s essay ‘A Video Festival’, that discussed the Australian Video Festival of that year. This festival was important in the 1980s and early 1990s because it put Australian video on a world stage while also bringing a vast amount of international work to our shores. The same chapter also included an original copy of *Cats Video Training Manual* (1974) which John Kirk, John ‘Hoppy’ Hopkins and Cliff Evans developed especially for artists to learn how to use video. Also, many posters were reproduced that evidenced early Australian video art. While, once again, providing images of historical video works, the graphical elements added an interesting historical aesthetic contextualisation that reinforced my archival impulses.

Several books were also shown such as the 2014 book *Video Void: Australian Video Art* (edited by the author), open to a page featuring important Australian curator
Bernice Murphy’s thematically organised list of Australian videos from the 1970s and early 1980s, and Gary Willis book, *Diary of a Dead Beat Modern Art Type* (2000), open to the page that discusses his work *Strategies for Goodbye* (1981), a work he produced in collaboration with artist Eva Schramm. Once again, this enabled me to acknowledge the depth of Australian video art beyond what was possible within the spatial limits of the gallery. The presentation of this range of archival ephemera, while providing valuable evidence of the history of Australian video art also functioned as an art historical reference tool by deepening the audience’s understanding of the historical roots of the medium and the possible legacy this has left for a new generation of artists.

**Reference**

For *Red Green Blue* there were both conceptual and aesthetic considerations relating to the idea of a ‘reference’ strategy. Firstly, conceptually I developed three themed one-month exhibitions (or chapters) in which I presented historical videos alongside the contemporary, this lineage operating as an art historical reference scheme. Writing was an important part of my thematic reasoning, this being published in a 174-page catalogue that included three essays (one for each chapter), and several transcribed interviews with artists. Because of this it is important to consider the exhibition and the essays in parallel because the essays express my conceptual concerns which then manifest themselves in the visual aspects of exhibition design. Secondly, spatial considerations were extremely important to my exhibition design. An open walled physical structure was developed to create an experience for the audience that would emphasise both my archival gestures and the visual aspect of my ideas concerning ‘reference’ because from any perspective within the gallery the viewer could see and compare multiple video works. I will expand on these two aspects of my ‘reference’ strategy here.

(a) **Themed chapters**

Inspired by curators, such as Christine van Assche, and a wide range of historical writing, I developed three discrete but interconnected themed exhibitions, each chapter being organised into three loose time zones (1970-80s, 1990-2010 and 2010-present (fig. 32). The development of themes was important because a simple
chronology of video would provide limited critical context. The themes emerged through a process of constructing a comprehensive list of Australian video art works and an extensive literature review that focused on both Australian and international video art to explore what existing thematic commentary had already been developed. From this research I developed three themes: ‘Everything is Political’; ‘Body, Technology, Action’; and ‘Perception and Encounter’. Each theme was developed to capture a wide range of artistic practice while also forming an initial selection criterion through which to develop a coherent narrative about Australian video art. In curatorial practice writing forms an important statement that helps divulge the exhibition intention while also giving the project a deeper art historical perspective. In the context of *Red Green Blue*, the three essays utilised art historical references while also emphasising the links (references) between individual artworks. Importantly, the themes were strategically developed to include sub-themes under the broader conceptual umbrellas. For example, ‘Everything is Political’ included the sub-themes ‘Resistance and the Avant-Garde’, ‘Activism and Protest’, ‘Gender and Identity Politics’, these being expanded upon in the catalogue essay. This approach was important because it helped develop a clear historical narrative in both the exhibition and catalogue (see full essay in appendices 2-4).

Figure 33: *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art*, exhibition design model illustrating the chronologically order time zones.
The separate chapters followed a loose chronology, arranged into zones of historical interaction, not dissimilar to the curatorial approach taken by both van Assche, for the exhibition *Centre Pompidou Video Art*, and Omar Kholeif, for the exhibition *Electronic Superhighway*. There was some leakage in this chronological scheme, for example, placing a work within another zone to emphasise intergenerational comparisons or to create contrast. For example, Jess MacNeil’s *Disruption Continuum* (2013) featured in the zone mostly populated by videos produced in the 1970s and 1980s because aesthetically the work was highly influenced by experimental film from that time, such as the filmic work by Australian Paul Winkler, also featured in this zone. Alongside the video works I presented ephemera such as posters, catalogues and photographs unearthed through extensive archival research. These documents permitted me to further anchor each theme within historical writing, such as reproduced essays, and a range of video and installation art (that were not screened in the exhibition) via photographic documentation.

Figure 34: *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art*, catalogue, page 11.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the exhibition and the essay was important because the writing expressed my thematic justifications and the types of
references I was exploring within the exhibition itself. The writing was used to
explore the narrative arc of each theme, from the 1960s to the present. Using ‘Chapter
1: Red: Everything is Political’ as an exemplar, I will deconstruct this essay to
demonstrate my reasoning for the theme and how ‘reference’ was used within
exhibition design, recognising that writing was an integral part of exhibition design.127
For each chapter, I introduced a broad theme. For example, Chapter 1, ‘Everything is
Political’, I responded to the political nature of early video art and how this continue
today. In the catalogue I wrote:

In Australia there was widespread feeling that the time was right for a
social revolution and artists felt that their actions could influence real
political and cultural change. The civil unrest that had taken place overseas
in 1968 had a ripple effect here in Australia and social agitators started to
question the political authority of the day. With the release of the Sony
Portapak video camera in 1967, video became a relatively inexpensive and
portable offering, democratising a medium which, to that point, was
monopolised by the commercial interests of broadcast television. It
subsequently became an important tool for artists with a radical agenda to
challenge the existing conditions of society. While the belief that artistic
agency can lead to social change has lost some of the euphoric edge of the
counter-culture era, video remains a valuable tool for artists dealing with
political issues as we move deeper into the twenty-first century.

Thematically, I was interested in ‘political’ as a broad category, inclusive of artists
that used video as a tool to act against the status quo of the art world, as an activist
tool or to deal with issues relating to gender or identity such as feminism or racial
identity. To trace the legacy of politically motivated work I included videos from each
decade so that the audience could follow the development of the theme over time. The
catalogue essay followed art historical writing conventions, referencing existing
writing to assist with contextualisation followed by visual analysis of the artworks
themselves. For example, contextual information included:

127 The full essays can be found in the appendix.
Artist Peter Kennedy said, “political or socially engaged art was produced in the belief that there was a possible transformational outcome…at the time anything seemed possible. The left was very influential at that point, leftist ideas were ubiquitous, believable and socially attractive.”  

Similar changes were occurring overseas and, according to British curator Maggie Warwick, within this atmosphere, artists thought “a Socialist revolution still seemed possible and Marx was compulsory reading for anyone who aspired to be left wing.” Video, being technically aligned to television, was seen for its potential to reach the masses and was thus identified as an important instrument for initiating social change.

My visual analysis then explored the theme by comparing historical and contemporary videos, helping to establish the intergenerational links I was exploring in the exhibition. For example:

In Australia, artists such as Jeune Pritchard and Luce Pelissier documented the political unrest that was emerging in Queensland under the Joh Bjelke-Petersen state government in their video *Queensland Dossier* (1979). This video not only created a dialogue relating to specific political events but also the artist’s low-budget approach with long takes questioned the objective reportage propagated by commercial television. In contrast, Peter Callas’s work *Night’s High Noon: An Anti-Terrain* (1988), used technological intervention to explore Australia’s history of occupation by juxtaposing symbols representing indigenous and colonial lives. The video was completed in the same year Australia celebrated its bicentennial of European occupation.

The late 2010s have heralded a new era of political uncertainty, and video continues to be an important tool for artistic agency. A new generation of artists is becoming increasingly educated about media, both technically and theoretically, and continues to extend the role of early video artists. Artists such as Soda_Jerk (*Astro Black*, 2007–ongoing) and Hannah Brontë (*Still I*

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Rise, 2016) continue to undermine the codes of contemporary commercial media through mash-ups of ‘borrowed’ footage or by embracing the style of music videos to offer different political realities. While Soda_Jerk’s work critiques African-American social politics through a collage of appropriated videos, Brontë questions male dominated politics at a time of global unrest with a proposal for a matriarchal, Indigenous-majority government. Alternatively, artist Susan Norrie utilised the codes of documentary film making to highlight the effects of natural and man-made disasters on humanity in works such as Transit (2011). While the news has become just another part of the media entertainment landscape, the voices of McLuhan and Youngblood still echo through the hallways and ripple through contemporary media theory.

Each sub-theme within the chapters included their own contextual information. For example, in the sub-section of the political chapter titled ‘Gender and Identity Politics’, reference was made to theorists Anne Marsh, Stuart Marshall and Judith Butler:

Beginning in the 1970s, the slogan “the personal is political” became an important feminist statement in recognition that “the personal was no longer relegated to the private world of domesticity, but was raised to the level of ‘objective significance’”. Video was appealing to feminist artists at the time because it offered an intimacy that could be linked to the personal and it could present the body in real time with a great deal of physicality. Australian theorist Anne Marsh noted that such subjective responses were characteristic of the counter-culture era and that this position was later challenged by Left-wing thinkers and superseded by “an analysis of the ‘subject’ constructed through cultural structures and institutions”. Moreover, men had not occupied video in the same way as traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture, making it an ideal medium for disrupting a patriarchally driven ideology of gender. Artist and writer Stuart Marshall states that “the questions that women had been asking for several years tended to concentrate upon issues of representation and the ideological effects upon women's consciousness of
dominant media representations of femininity”. Gender theorist Judith Butler advocated that with this evolution in thinking, many artists began to question an essentialist analysis of the body, which exposed a stereotypical delineation of the body as problematic. While such ideas were directed towards correcting gender inequalities, they had wider social implications, influencing debates relating to other social prejudice, such as racism and homophobia.

The intergenerational connections were then reinforced in the conclusion:

In the 1970s, video allowed artists the opportunity to take art out of the gallery and into the world in their pursuit to be socially and politically relevant. Video maintains its persuasive force as a medium through which artists can engage in the relationship between agency and change. Through satellite transmission, video guaranteed to connect art with the world, a notion finally fulfilled by the Internet. When Nam June Paik broadcast his video art around the globe in 1984, visibility itself was radical. But is there a correlation between visibility and political agency in today’s context? Everything is of course political, but in the age of the Internet what methodologies can artists engage in to truly give them the agency that challenge the way we think and behave? Will social media offer artists input into the political debate that many crave or will the commercial realities of the art world compromise these aims, as they largely did in the late 1970s?

The exhibition itself and the essay operated as either textual or visual reference systems, both mirroring the logic of the other. This way I was able to develop a clear understanding of the theme by linking the thematic concerns of artists from the 1970s to the present day, thus developing a digestible narrative arc of the medium relating to a political theme.

The final two essays, ‘Green: Body, Technology, Action’ and ‘Blue: Perception and Encounter’ followed a similar structural approach by referencing contextual information then establishing intergenerational connections relating to that theme;
‘Green’ exploring the relationship between performance and technology, ‘Blue’ exploring artists’ interested in challenging the audience’s perceptual encounters with the world. For example, in chapter 2, references were made to essays by noted performance art theorists Peggy Phelan and Amelia Jones after which intergenerational links were made between Australian artists Jill Scott (1970s), Shaun Gladwell (2000s) and Gabrielle de Vietri (2010s). In chapter 3, reference was made to French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, after which I discuss the work of Joan Brassil (1980s), Daniel von Sturmer (2000s), Masato Takasaka (2010s), and Michaela Gleave (2010s), once again exploring the intergenerational links and developing a narrative arc of that particular theme.

The thematic schemes I developed within the exhibition, that are then expanded and clarified in the essays, form an important part of my reference strategies. The catalogue also allowed me to consolidate art historical references as a central strategy of linking the past and present. Importantly, an exhibition design was developed that would reinforce a visual reference system for the viewer through spatial considerations.

**(b) Spatial Considerations**

Spatial design of the gallery was influenced by a number of key factors relating to both my own personal experience of the world and exhibitions.

![Figure 35: (left) Flinders Street, Melbourne, curved electronic screen, (right) Swanston Street, Melbourne, transparent electronic screen (2018).](image)

Firstly, I cycle through the city of Melbourne every day and observe that increasingly, the way technology is embedded within architectural structures comes closer and
closer to an experience of larger cities around the world. An interesting evolution of these digital screens is the way in which they disobey the rectangle convention of the frame but, rather, designed to blend around and within the buildings themselves, some with a percentage of transparency allowing people to see through the image to the supporting structures (fig. 34). City bound screen-based images offer an intriguing experience for the passer-by, emerged in a kind of cybernetic experience of digital simulation. This fascinating evolution of the viewing context of moving images out of the home and cinema into the public sphere transforms private ‘seeing’ into public spectacle, blending images with our surrounds in what Guy Debord refers to as the spectacle of the screen in which all our experiences are now mediated. In his book *The Lost Dimension*, Paul Virilio builds on Debord’s observations describing our rapidly changing experience of urban spaces in which screen-based images have become a primary element rather than the physical; “deprived of objective boundaries, the architectonic elements begin to drift and float in an electronic ether, devoid of spatial dimensions.” This experience extends from our body-based mobile devices to electronic billboards, moving images becoming the default experience of the world as if they were augmented into our perceptual vision. For exhibition design this evolution in the experience of mediated images presents an interesting challenge to explore gallery-based encounters that mimic this phenomenon. But rather than highlighting the commercial nature of the urban environment could this experience be duplicated within the gallery to build an historical perspective of the medium?

Secondly, in 2015, I viewed the exhibition *Art as a Verb*, curated by Charlotte Day, Patrice Sharkey and Francis E. Parker, at Artspace in Sydney (fig. 35). Here, I saw first-hand the use of several small walls in which part the structure of the wall itself was visible behind the wall’s cladding. This was a pivotal moment in my thinking because I connected my experience of electronic screens within the city to a gallery-based exhibition design. This also presented an opportunity to explore the phenomenological interests that Christine Illes had investigated in her exhibition *Into the Light* through a whole gallery gesture in which the viewer becomes immersed.

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within an overt visible structure that would emphasise the architectonic elements of exhibition design.

Figure 35: *Art as a Verb*, curated by Charlotte Day, Patrice Sharkey and Francis E. Parker, Artspace, Sydney (installation view) is unable to be reproduced online. Figure can be viewed on Artspace’s website: https://www.artspace.org.au/program/exhibitions/2015/art-as-a-verb/

Figure 36: *Art as a Verb*, curated by Charlotte Day, Patrice Sharkey and Francis E. Parker, Artspace, Sydney (installation view).

Based on these two experiences I began to develop the gallery layout based on all temporary walls being open structures with internal wooden beams exposed, screens hung directly onto the structure. The use of open wall structures within the exhibition space would enable visitors to see ‘through’ the display, tracing developments from seminal early examples of video through to more recent work (fig. 36 & 37). Illes’s discussion that focused on Marcel Duchamp’s works on glass *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23) was also influential because of the way the viewer could see through the glass and into the gallery beyond. Like Duchamp, for *Red Green Blue* transparency became a conceptual device that was an important factor in the physical dimension of my exhibition design—a phenomenological experience of an archive, of a history. Through the open structure of the gallery history would unfold as layers in time, there for the audience to experience as a temporal and spatial encounter. The notion of ‘floating screens’ was also significant for my design, representing an extension of our mediatised experience of a contemporary urbanised world—from an electronic billboard, to a mobile device, to the gallery screen. This non-conventional open walled structure aimed to enhance the intergenerational connections, because videos could be easily compared. Importantly,
the open walled structure emphasised the characteristic of a floating database visualisation akin to an archival database. Alongside the ephemera, this highlighted, for the audience, an archival encounter in which the archive operated as a kind of index of the medium. Sound was also an important device in this conceptualisation of the viewer’s experience of space. While headphones were allocated to monitor-based videos, projected works utilised speakers to allow sound to infiltrate the space. While this meant some audio leakage it allowed for a more immersive experience of the gallery, emphasised by the darkened ‘black box’ with minimal lighting and dark grey walls.

Figure 37: Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art, Chapter 1: Red: Everything Is Political, Griffith University Art Museum (2017), installation view. Image credit: Matthew Perkins.
Summary

*Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art* allowed me to successfully test and critique the curatorial strategies of restore, remake and reference and its success in exposing a genealogy of Australian video art in an exhibition format and thus challenge the amnesic effects that time has had on this history. What equates to emergency media archaeology this approach relates to the need to *restore* the work through digitisation, *remake* it in consideration of new technology, and establish *referencing* systems through the exhibition experience in order to acknowledge the legacy of the practice while also encouraging a deeper understanding of the medium. While I have separated the discussion about my strategies into three distinct parts—restore, remake and reference—it became clear that these strategies were not mutually exclusive but overlap and intermingle. For curatorial practice this has a range of implications because the task of curating historical exhibitions takes place at the nexus of archival practices, exhibition making and art history research. I will expand on these implications in the next concluding chapter.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research explored the connections between forgotten Australian video art histories and the types of curatorial practice needed to address this situation. As discussed throughout this exegesis, there have clearly been gaps in knowledge relating to Australian video art history, given the relatively small amount of documentation available in comparison to artists active in the field. Curator Bernice Murphy made her comment about the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history in 1986, artist John Conomos in 1993 and art historian Daniel Palmer in 2004, meaning that this problem had not been fully addressed regardless of it being identified over 30 years ago. For this curatorially focused project the challenge presented by a history that is difficult to trace meant that strategies had to be developed that could transport Australian video art out from its archival hiding place and into the gallery. The enquiry responded to the research question: How can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history? In response the curatorial strategies of restore, remake and reference were identified and developed further as a viable process through which to develop a genealogy of Australian video art for exhibition purposes. Throughout this exegesis these strategies have predominantly been treated as exclusive to each other but, in reality, they were always intermingling, sometimes being enacted simultaneously. In this concluding text I will summarise the success of these strategies in addressing the research question.

As identified in this exegesis only a handful of curatorial projects had been attempted previously that aimed to explore the legacy of Australian video art by connecting historical video art to contemporary practices in the medium. Due to the lack of readily available documentation extensive archival research needed to be undertaken to unearth the depth of this history. Parallel to this activity curatorial strategies were developed by examining ‘best practice’ strategies within the field and reconceptualising these into a curatorial approach that would help build a narrative of Australian video art for an audience that was largely unaware of its cultural heritage in the field. French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault were important in defining the physical and conceptual state of the archive—as an institution simultaneously driven to capture history but also by its very nature, fragmented and
incomplete. This helped consolidate a curatorial position in relation to the selection of works that was at once extensive, incomplete but ethically driven. To build an extensive chronology of Australian video art gallery archives (such as the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, the Australian Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, the Perth Institute for Contemporary art in Perth, The George Paton Gallery archive at Melbourne University and the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney) were excavated. This nation-wide research was necessary in order to build a genealogy of Australian video art that expanded beyond the knowledge available in the relatively few documents available through standard library and database searches. Importantly, ephemera, negatives and photographs were scanned as part of the curatorial strategies because they could be restored, remade, printed and enlarged for use in the research’s exhibitions. These documents provided important contextual texts (such as past essays) and photographs of video that no longer existed or installations that were too large to exhibit. In many cases this was the first time these texts and images had been seen since they were initially created. With the words of Derrida and Foucault echoing throughout the project the placement of these artifacts within the exhibition manifested themselves as archival gestures, as wall-based posters or printed documents in display cases. American writer and filmmaker Renée Green describes such an approach as “a self-reflexive archival praxis that takes the record-making and generative aspects of archiving as its subject, and makes the past once again useful and open to the present.”132 These curatorial strategies challenged the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history because they helped build an extensive index of artists and their work, in addition to restoring and remaking historical material that could be exhibited alongside videos helping to locate them within the time in which they were created.

Archival investigation was also critical to the project because it helped unearth previously unknown or long forgotten video’s that could be presented within the exhibition. To assist the artwork’s journey from the archive into the gallery I developed the restore and remake strategies. In many cases, videos were restored, via digital remastering, enabling them to be exhibited while also preserving the work for future presentations. Media archeologists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s

theories about the effects of remediation on historical artworks as they were migrated from one media type onto another aided the development of an ethical position in relation to preservation and exhibiting. In some cases an artwork’s installation within the gallery needed to be reconsidered, or remade, because its original display strategy was no longer viable or the original equipment was now obsolete. Curator Jon Ippolito, and others, provided international examples of artist’s work that had to undergo a certain amount of translation in order to be successfully exhibited, termed as a ‘flexible approach’ to preservation, or risk being forgotten. Combined, these theories and the curatorial strategies developed as a consequence were extremely important in resurrecting historical works from archival hibernation into public view, the exhibition imposing its agency as an act of remembering. From personal experience artists have historically been anxious about strategies such as restore and remake but this research demonstrated that they are now willing to engage in these curatorial strategies that counter the cultural amnesia so often associated with Australian video art histories.

Of equal important to this research was the identification of reference strategies. A key curatorial strategy to this project was the juxtaposition of old and new video art works within the gallery as a spatial investigation. Creating historical or intergenerational connections in this way established a type of visual reference system within the pictorial space of the gallery. This was important because it recognised the dynamic relationship between the past and the present, strengthening the archival ambiance. For example, in the exhibition Red Green Blue the open walled structure enabled the viewer to experience history as layered, being able to see video works from different time periods as references to each other. The visual representation of a database in this way allowed the audience to experience a legacy as a bodily phenomenon (in the gallery) in addition to cognitive rationalisation. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty provided significant theoretical foundations for an exhibition design that prioritised spatial experience while art historian Hal Foster linked this to our experience of history via archives. In this way, the reference strategies defied the amnesic effects that time has had on Australian video art history because the audience experienced the legacy of the medium spatially, acknowledging the existence of a long history. Reference was also exemplified by strategies such as the development of
themes through essay writing and the use of ephemera to aid exhibition narrative and reinforce art historical references. Returning to the research question (How can curatorial strategies challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history?) it is evident that the reference schemes were important in addressing issues of cultural amnesia because it was the final enactment of the curatorial strategies, placing the artwork within an historical linage of Australian video art through writing and the spatial dimension of the gallery.

While writing still forms the main role in capturing video art history, exhibitions have an important function in the process of ‘remembering’ because viewers can experience the temporal and spatial characteristics of the videos themselves. Curators play a critical role here because through their curatorial ‘voice’ they can compose a thorough definition of the field, provide rigorous contextualisation of the work and carefully consideration of the ‘theatre’ of the exhibition.133 In this research my role as curator was to investigate deeper links between the given material through curatorial strategies such as restore, remake and reference which aided in the development of exhibition design, exhibition narrative and through texts (such as a catalogue essay and wall-based posters). Curatorial strategies included both the spatial design of the exhibition within the gallery and the production of a substantial catalogue that included essays, interviews with artists and a database of images. For the purpose of ‘remembering’ Australian video art history this research gave an audience an opportunity to engage with the work itself while also producing a book that will become a valuable resource for recalling Australian video art. Therefore, the exhibition format is important because it allowed the audience to experience historical video art alongside the more contemporary and thus going someway to responding to questions relating the legacy of the medium in this country. Media theorist Charlie Gere suggests, “The gallery has an important role to play in making this art visible, not just now but also in the future, when such work will be part of art history. How our culture archives our past is not a question of our relationship just with that past, but with the future as well. What we choose to archive and thus to preserve for future

generations will help determine the future."\textsuperscript{134} Indeed, it is through both writing and exhibitions that a history of Australian video art will be disseminated more widely. Importantly, exhibitions such as Resistance: Peter Kennedy and Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art provided a platform through which the audience could consider not just past works within the context of the present but also the ontological nature of the video’s journey from the archive and into the exhibition involving a necessary level of curatorial translation; via restoration, remaking and a variety of referencing systems. The friction between the curatorial imagination and the artifactual was fundamental to my archival compulsions in this research project.

What became evident through the implementation of the \textit{restore}, \textit{remake} and \textit{reference} strategies was that the role of the curator of historical video art exhibitions is more divergent than ever, adopting the roles of archivist, exhibition maker and art historian in which the archivist enacts \textit{restore}, the archivist/exhibition maker enact \textit{restore, remake} while the exhibition maker/art historian enacts a \textit{reference} system to emphasise the historical narrative (fig.38). In many ways the gallery in this instance becomes the emergency room for media archeologists obsessed with saving obsolete videos. This multifaceted role of the curator is important because it reflects the point at which the technical, the historical and the spatial merge to challenge the cultural amnesia of Australian video art history.

![Figure 39: Art history curator matrix.](image)

As touched on in this exegesis, revisionist approaches to curating are becoming more common as historical artworks fade from memory. Ephemeral art such as video. In the future the restore, remake and reference strategies could be adopted to a range of art mediums that need archival methods to be exhibited. For video though this research has opened a Pandora’s box. Predominantly, the project dealt with single channel videos but the greater challenge lies in the complex task of engaging with a history of Australian video installation because they are often reliant on specific technology as well as site specificity. The restore, remake and reference strategies offer a number of methods to re-present complex artworks. Also, this research has created the opportunity for other curators to access these works for exhibition because they have already been digitally remastered. Having said this there is still ample work to be undertaken to champion historical Australian video art on the national and international stages.

In addition, as referenced in this exegesis, while there is research being conducted overseas that relates to the remediation of video for the purpose of preservation little is being done here in Australia. It is important that local examples are given to help lead other artists to consider the future of their own historical artworks. Hence, further writing can be produced that theorises the restore, remake and reference strategies into practice through the presentation of case studies drawn from this research.

Another important aspect of the exhibition Red Green Blue, not to be overlooked, is the production of the exhibition catalogue which is a substantial contribution to Australian video art history, this art historical research constituting an important part of the overall research project. The catalogue is included as part of exegesis as appendix 8. Finally, while some documentation of this exhibition is included within chapter 5 and appendix 2, high quality digital files have been included as appendix 9 on a USB stick.
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**Webpages:**


**Conference Presentation:**
Appendix 1: Resistance: Peter Kennedy: Catalogue Essay

Experimental artist Peter Kennedy is celebrated as a pioneer of Australian video and performance art and a creative force nationally for over 40 years. Throughout this period, his practice has presented insightful commentary about the relationship between art, politics and society and still remains committed to offering radical political critiques of western culture. Marking four decades since he exhibited groundbreaking, socially engaged moving-image works at Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Resistance: Peter Kennedy is the first survey of the artist’s work, focusing on a selection from his video and performance practice since the 1970s to now.

The use of video and performance as creative mediums emerged in the late 1960s as practices of resistance – to the status quo of the art market and to the political and social paradigms of the day. In the early 1970s Kennedy exhibited some of the first examples of installation, performance, sound and video art in Australia identifying himself as an “experimentalist that worked outside the normal range of art practice of the day.” He embraced the ephemeral qualities of video and performance that were championed by early practitioners who saw these mediums as part of the post-object art movement outlined by Australian theorist Donald Brook most famously in his John Power Memorial Lecture Flight from the Object in 1969. In one of Kennedy’s earliest performances But The Fierce Blackman (1971) the artist incorporated a television tuned to ‘white noise’, a tape player playing the repeated phrase “but the fierce blackman”, and a microphone that both the artist and audience could use. Designed to be confrontational, this work demonstrated his early at traction to radical actions that challenged conformist values at a time when artists strongly believed they were participating in a social revolution.

The 1970s signalled the arrival of affordable and portable video technology in Australia. Internationally, artists were exploring their own televsual presence by documenting their actions in the studio and in Australia this became a natural progression. The body was presented as a medium in itself and was afforded a political dimension by such effects as the rising fatalities from the Vietnam War and early feminist analysis of male dominant society, while the personal also became political. Kennedy and Mike Parr, through the important Sydney-based artist cooperative space Inhibodress (1970-72), were some of the first artists to gain access to this new technology. Alongside Parr, Kennedy produced a series of provocative works for exhibitions such as Video Tapes (1971) and Idea Demonstrations (1972). For Kennedy and several of his contemporaries, recording their own image at that time was a political action in itself.

After Inhibodress closed in 1972 Kennedy traveled overseas to interview a select group of like-minded artists – including Adrian Piper, Hans Haake, Judy Chicago and Ian Breakwell – for his film Other than Art’s Sake (1973-74). What was common amongst these artists, and reflecting Kennedy’s own interests, was their affiliation with leftist ideologies that informed the production of a socially engaged art practice. The experience of making Other than Art’s Sake confirmed his commitment to politically and socially focused video. For early Australian video artists accessibility to video was an important part of the utopian spirit of the time. It was Marshall McLuhan who pointed out in his influential book Understanding Media (1964) that it
was the development of communication technologies, rather than economics, that was critical to social change.

Between 1974-76 Kennedy made *Introductions* for which he filmed the actions of four Sydney recreational groups: a Hot Rod Club, a Bushwalking Club, a Marching Girls Club and an Embroiderers Guild. Throughout the course of this work he arranged meetings between each of the groups so that they might learn from one another through the shared experience. This interventionist work saw the role of the artist extend to social scientist with the art being produced as a consequence of direct community engagement.

During the next decade, he made two politically charged videos in collaboration with John Hughes: *November Eleven* (1979), which provided an analysis of the Whitlam Labour Government dismissal; and *On Sacred Ground* (1983-84) that addressed issues relating to colonisation, Aboriginal Land Rights and self-determination. A decade later he explored video’s sculptural potential while still maintaining his political edge in *Chorus: From the Breath of Wings* (1993) exhibited as part of the Fifth Australian Sculpture Triennial, 1993. Conceptually the work dealt with the collapse of socialism towards the end of the 1980s and the subsequent consolidation of capitalism – presented as a gentle lament by an artist driven by an ideology with fading presence in the world.

Kennedy’s current engagement with video encapsulates many of his long-standing interests. *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* premieres four major new video installations. Originally a single-channel reel-to-reel now digitally remastered by Stephen Jones, *Video Tapes* (1971) has been reinterpreted into two works: *Body Concert Part 2: Extended* (1971-2015); and the multi-channel *Fugue* (1971-2015). Coming full circle, *Small Tales and True: A Short Story in Four Parts* (2005-11) represents an insightful return to the reflexive textual qualities of his early analogue video work where he deploys the non-linear narrative possibilities of multi-channel video – and explores the aesthetic spaces between cinema, video art, performance, music/sound and writing. *The Photographs’ Story* reflects on the infamous moment in 2000 when Palestinian boy Muhammad al-Dura was shot dead by Israeli soldiers, followed by speculation concerning the authenticity of the original footage. This is the crux of Kennedy’s thesis, as he interweaves the story of the photographs as they travel through the media into the lives of those who experienced the report via the media, thus echoing preoccupations expressed in *November Eleven* (1979).

Socially engaged practices have returned to the contemporary art agenda with great force in recent years, encouraging a critical reflection of avant-garde practices that emerged from the counter-culture period of the late 1960s. From the physicality of the initial analogue videos to new video technology, *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* offers insight to an artist’s practice whose work bookends these periods and spans the history of video as a creative medium in Australia – remaining faithful to his political agenda throughout. In today’s era when dematerialised art practices are consumed into capitalism as a commodity, Kennedy’s videos open a thought-provoking comparison to a time when video and performance art had little economic value but high subversive agency. This body of work reminds us of the importance of employing resistance to question art, society and politics. [Published 2016]
Appendix 2: Curator’s Prologue, *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art*

*Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art* brings together more than sixty works from the 1960s through to the present day, highlighting the many possibilities offered by the medium in terms of form, content and interaction with other disciplines. Drawn from archives, artist holdings and the Griffith University Art Collection, this three-part exhibition takes the viewer on a historical journey that is also a celebration of the ongoing dynamism and depth of Australian video art practice.

Emerging as an art form during the late 1960s and 1970s, video has continued into the twenty-first century as a prominent mode of artistic endeavor, with artists embracing and responding to the new possibilities opened up by recent advances in technology. While existing literature around the history of video art in the Euro-American context is substantial, establishing sightlines to Australian moving image heritage has proved more challenging. Due to the scarcity of documentation and the fragility of early technologies, there is a substantial gap in local knowledge, a situation *Red Green Blue* seeks to address.

From its earliest days, artists have embraced video’s radical potential—as a medium for artistic expression, a tool for political agitation, and a means with which to question the status quo. *Red Green Blue* explores these intersections across three themed chapters, tracing connections from early experimental origins through to the multiple and proliferating modes of today. When viewed together, this exhibition reasserts the importance of video to Australian art history, while at the same time embracing the complexities of this pluralistic medium.

The separate chapters ‘Everything is Political’; ‘Body, Technology, Action’; and ‘Perception and Encounter’ follow a loose chronology, arranged into zones of historical interaction. There is some leakage in this chronological scheme, for example, placing a work within another zone to emphasise intergenerational comparisons or to create contrast. The use of open wall structures within the exhibition space enables visitors to see ‘through’ the display, tracing developments from seminal early examples through to more recent works by some of the most exciting artists working in the genre today. Alongside historical ephemera, such as photographic documentation, posters, journals, catalogues and books, this component of spatial design enhances the exhibition’s archival sensibility.

A majority of the historical videos exhibited in *Red Green Blue* required migration from tape-based technologies such as open reel video, U-matic or VHS to a digital format in order to preserve the work and be able to display it for exhibition. Griffith University’s important collection of video art was recently digitized—an accomplishment that will be recognised in the future as an important contribution to preserving a significant part of Australian art history. While migrating video from tape-based technology to a digital format saves the work at the base level of storage, maintaining the technical support system, the display, is more challenging. As technologies have become obsolete there is a need to consider presentational strategies that contest the effects of time on equipment. While several cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors were unearthed for *Red Green Blue* we also created several
covers for 16:9 aspect ratio monitors to convert them to the 4:3 ratio that was still in use well into the 2000s. Projection was used for both aspect ratios because we could simply paint the appropriate screen size on the walls of the gallery. Decisions regarding the presentation of the work was not taken lightly. When discussing the complexities of exhibiting videos outside their original contexts curator Jon Ippolito talks about ‘strategies for slippage’. He says that the “medium-independent behaviors [of an artwork describe it] in its ideal state, but in the real world any new incarnation of an artwork inevitably involves some deviation from this ideal.” Even artists such as Nam June Paik envisioned that changes in technology were inevitable; recognising that these changes would affect the future presentations of his work, Paik said, “I don’t like to have complete control. What I learnt off John Cage was to enjoy every second of decontrol. Surprises and disappointments are built into the machine.”

Exhibiting historical video art presents the viewer with a sense of a ‘double absence’ because not only is the original display device absent but the contexts and environments in which the works were presented has disappeared over time. In a sense all video works’ reflexive qualities are emphasised in an historical survey because their material virtues are there for us to compare and experience as historical artefacts. Like photography, the video image recedes into the past from the moment the record button is pressed.

For Red Green Blue the gallery was prepared as a darkened ‘black box’ with minimal lighting and dark grey walls. In comparison to a traditional ‘white cube’ approach to lighting and presentation, this allowed for greater image density for projected videos and accentuated the comparisons between works because of the sense that they were floating in space rather than hinged to a wall. The notion of ‘floating screens’ was significant, representing an extension of our mediatised experience of a contemporary urbanised world—from an electronic billboard to a mobile device to the gallery screen—echoing author William Gibson’s vision of future cities in his book Neuromancer (1984) and French theorist Guy Debord’s claims that all society is now mediated, that we only experience life as representations and cannot exist separate from the spectacle of the screen.

Sound was also an important device in this conceptualisation of the viewer’s experience of space. While headphones were allocated to screen-based videos, projected works utilised speakers to allow sound to infiltrate the space. While this meant some audio leakage it allowed for a more immersive experience of the gallery.

Red Green Blue: A History of Video Art presents a certain version of events. There are of course notable absences, primarily in the area of recent practices, due to space restrictions and capacity. Notwithstanding these limitations, the aim of the exhibition was to readdress the forgetting that so much dematerialised art has fallen victim to.

Video was initially developed to give the live broadcast medium of television the ability to capture its memories, an ability it lacked until the early 1950s. In this

136 Ibid., p. 75.
context, video became a type of electronic memory device used to record and archive. Art historian Sven Lüticken suggested, “technology has a way of letting appear and thus (re)generating history, creating rhythms that synchronise past time and present time, with all the distortions this may engender.”¹³⁹ Media historian Erkki Huhtamo also reflects on the delicate relationship between the past and present, claiming, “history cannot claim an objective status; it can only become conscious of its ambiguous role as a mediator and ‘meaning processor’ operating between the present and the past.”¹⁴⁰ Red Green Blue explores Australian video art’s history at the intersection of memory, the archive and video as a creative medium. For viewers of this exhibition, some of the questions that will linger are: What is the legacy of video art in Australia? And what chapters are still to come to help build a comprehensive picture of the history of Australian video art?

[Published 2017]

Appendix 3: Curator’s Essay, ‘Chapter 1: Everything is Political’, Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art

Video arrived on the global art scene in the 1960s at an opportune moment. From the beginning, video was positioned as an interdisciplinary tool taken up by practitioners from fields such as film, performance, painting, sculpture, sound, dance, installation and engineering. Such diversity promised a variety of aesthetic and thematic approaches to the medium with the ensuring pluralism reverberating with emerging postmodern attitudes. In Australia there was widespread feeling that the time was right for a social revolution and artists felt that their actions could influence real political and cultural change. The civil unrest that had taken place overseas in 1968 had a ripple effect here in Australia and social agitators started to question the political authority of the day. With the release of the Sony Portapak video camera in 1967, video became a relatively inexpensive and portable offering, democratising a medium which, to that point, was monopolised by the commercial interests of broadcast television. It subsequently became an important tool for artists with a radical agenda to challenge the existing conditions of society. While the belief that artistic agency can lead to social change has lost some of the euphoric edge of the counter-culture era, video remains a valuable tool for artists dealing with political issues as we move deeper into the twenty-first century.

Resistance and the Avant-Garde
Video played a vital role in avant-garde activities of the 1970s. For artists who wanted to challenge the status quo of the art world, there was a genuine commitment to artistic innovation and a narrowing of the gap between art and life. Video was both new and could record the everyday with ease. In 1965, Nam June Paik recorded Pope Paul VI’s motorcade through the streets of New York and then screened the results at Café au Go Go, thus signalling a radical departure of what constituted art. Meanwhile, here in Australia, artists were also contesting the authority of broadcast television. For example, in 1973, Australian artist collective Bush Video videoed activities at the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin, then broadcasted the results around the town via a cable television system set up for the event. For some artists, using video was itself a political statement because the intent was to challenge the conventions of television, rupture the elitist tradition of the museum and embrace the ease of distribution made possible by the medium. British artist Catherine Elwes says that this oppositional stance to the dominant culture of the time situated “video art in the swell of a highly-politicised avant-garde”.141

In the age of the Internet, connectivity and visibility are imperatives and artists are again using video and social media to mobilise participants for political action and, harking back to the 1970s, taking art out of the galleries and into the streets in the artist’s quest to engage with a broader audience.

Activism and Protest
By the beginning of the 1970s, momentum was gathering in Australia for a change of government and protest became an important instrument for activists. In 1970, over 200,000 people marched across Australia in opposition to our military presence in Vietnam, this being one of the defining issues that helped unseat the Liberal Party in

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1972 after twenty-three years in government. Replaced by the Australian Labor Party, under Gough Whitlam, they initiated a series of important changes relating to immigration, equal pay for women, land right claims for indigenous peoples, and ending Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Artist Peter Kennedy said, “political or socially engaged art was produced in the belief that there was a possible transformational outcome...at the time anything seemed possible. The left was very influential at that point, leftist ideas were ubiquitous, believable and socially attractive.” Similar changes were occurring overseas and, according to British curator Maggie Warwick, within this atmosphere, artists thought “a Socialist revolution still seemed possible and Marx was compulsory reading for anyone who aspired to be left wing.” Video, being technically aligned to television, was seen for its potential to reach the masses and was thus identified as an important instrument for initiating social change.

Anxieties about the effects media was having on society were already being raised by influential media theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and Gene Youngblood. Elwes observed that for many artists working with video McLuhan’s ideas concerning the power of global communication lead them to “believe that they could harness the tools of mass media to awaken a new, alternative social and political consciousness with artists and activists alike believing that their actions could make a difference to society.” In his book Expanded Cinema, Youngblood calls for the "artist to be an anarchist, a revolutionary, a creator of new worlds imperceptibly gaining on reality". Another important visionary at the time was Buckminster Fuller, who referred to our planet as ‘Spaceship Earth’ to emphasise our need to maintain its ecology. Michael Glasheen (Teleologic Telecast from Spaceship Earth: On Board with Buckminster Fuller, 1970) filmed a Fuller lecture in Sydney in 1970 and transformed it into a psychedelic technologically advanced video with the aim of showing it on television—something that was refused by television executives at the time. In an era of utopian thinking, artists strongly believed they were making art that would interact directly with the important issues they were addressing. The Whitlam Government provided funding to create video access centres around Australia specifically to give a broader cross section of the community access to media, thus giving artists the opportunity of making politically and socially engaged videos. This evolution in art practice was experienced equally here in Australia, as it was overseas, with artists taking on the dual role of artist/activist to document political unrest and social injustice. In Australia, artists such as Jeune Pritchard and Luce Pelissier documented the political unrest that was emerging in Queensland under the Joh Bjelke-Petersen state government in their video Queensland Dossier (1979). This video not only created a dialogue relating to specific political events but also the artist’s low-budget approach with long takes questioned the objective reportage propagated by commercial television. In contrast, Peter Callas’s work Night’s High Noon: An Anti-Terrain (1988), used technological intervention to explore Australia’s history of occupation by juxtaposing symbols representing indigenous and colonial lives. The video was completed in the same year Australia celebrated its bicentennial of European occupation.

144 Elwes, Video Art, A Guided Tour, p. 5.
Globally, issues relating to oil, environmental degradation and energy were becoming an increasing concern in the 1970s. In Australia, artists such as Bonita Ely positioned themselves as a critical force in relation to how we affect our natural environment and demonstrated how “Australian women had moved out of the kitchen and into the public realm to take on the larger issues of land degradation and environmental collapse.” Ely produced a number of important performances and video works about the state of the environment. *Sunset Video*, showing images of sunsets in New York, was made as a component of the sculptural installation, *C20th Mythological Beasts: At Home with the Locust People* (1975). In this work, a family of half-human, half-locust people sit on a settee watching *Sunset Video* on television. The television is presented as a cultural artefact, as an integral part of the ‘living room’, but also as a creative medium on which the artist’s work was played.

Media theorist Yvonne Spielmann suggests that in the 1970s, “video played an important role for political groups that had no media expertise but were dissatisfied with media coverage in institutionalised television”. The late 2010s have heralded a new era of political uncertainty, and video continues to be an important tool for artistic agency. A new generation of artists is becoming increasingly educated about media, both technically and theoretically, and continues to extend the role of early video artists. Artists such as Soda_Jerk (*Astro Black*, 2007–ongoing) and Hannah Brontë (*Still I Rise*, 2016) continue to undermine the codes of contemporary commercial media through mash-ups of ‘borrowed’ footage or by embracing the style of music videos to offer different political realities. While Soda_Jerk’s work critiques African-American social politics through a collage of appropriated videos, Brontë questions male dominated politics at a time of global unrest with a proposal for a matriarchal, Indigenous-majority government. Alternatively, artist Susan Norrie utilised the codes of documentary film making to highlight the effects of natural and man-made disasters on humanity in works such as *Transit* (2011). While the news has become just another part of the media entertainment landscape, the voices of McLuhan and Youngblood still echo through the hallways and ripple through contemporary media theory.

**Gender and Identity Politics**

Ever since video became accessible to artists they have been interested in identity-based discourses. Elwes says, “without exception, every generation and nationality has used video as a personal medium, an electronic mirror with which to investigate social identity—femininity, masculinity, ethnicity, and sexuality”. This conceptual interest was largely driven by advances in theory relating to identity, especially through a feminist lens. In addition, television reinforced forms of social stereotypes based on race, gender, and sexuality, and video was a tool through which artists could disrupt such discriminatory images by exploring alternative subjectivities.

Beginning in the 1970s, the slogan “the personal is political” became an important feminist statement in recognition that “the personal was no longer relegated to the private world of domesticity, but was raised to the level of ‘objective

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146 Juliana Engberg, “Breadline,” *Artlink* 19, no. 4, p. 32.
significance”.

Video was appealing to feminist artists at the time because it offered an intimacy that could be linked to the personal and it could present the body in real time with a great deal of physicality. Australian theorist Anne Marsh noted that such subjective responses were characteristic of the counter-culture era and that this position was later challenged by Left-wing thinkers and superseded by “an analysis of the ‘subject’ constructed through cultural structures and institutions.” Moreover, men had not occupied video in the same way as traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture, making it an ideal medium for disrupting a patriarchally driven ideology of gender. Artist and writer Stuart Marshall states that “the questions that women had been asking for several years tended to concentrate upon issues of representation and the ideological effects upon women’s consciousness of dominant media representations of femininity.” Gender theorist Judith Butler advocated that with this evolution in thinking, many artists began to question an essentialist analysis of the body, which exposed a stereotypical delineation of the body as problematic. While such ideas were directed towards correcting gender inequalities, they had wider social implications, influencing debates relating to other social prejudice, such as racism and homophobia.

In the 1970s and ’80s Australian artists such as Jill Scott, Jill Orr, and Lyndal Jones paved the way for a re-imaging of gendered bodies with their highly performative video works. With the development of portable computers and the Internet in the 1990s, cyberfeminism emerged at the intersection of gender studies, technology, and the Internet with artists such as VNX Matrix (Beg and Gen in the Bonding Booth, 1993) and Linda Dement (Cyberflesh Girlmonster, 1995) investigating the relationship between technologies and the socially positioned gendered bodies. Artist collective Barbara Cleveland continues this line of investigation in Bodies in Time (2016). In this work, dancer Angela Goh recreates a series of gestures appropriated from the history of performance art. In effect, their ‘re-performing’ of iconic works reclaims art practices that have been historically marginalised and positions them within the melee of contemporary art. Art theorist Amelia Jones conceived the term parafeminism to articulate art practises she believed ran parallel, rather than post, to historical practices; rethinking rather than oppositional. Barbara Cleveland’s video brings the past into the present, examining a particular history of the body in performance in an increasingly complex network of theories about gender.

Like gender, identity is a multifaceted subject developing from the interplay between being the observed and the viewer’s own frames of reference. Artists from Indigenous backgrounds have been dealing with the complexities of their own subjective narratives and how these intersect with broader contemporary issues for many years. In Destiny Deacon’s video Forced into Image (2001), two children play with masks to obscure their identity in a very familiar childhood ritual. But Deacon observed that some writers focused on the difference in skin colour between the two children and that for her she did not see this as a factor, “it amazes me that people see them as

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152 Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1990)
black and white.”¹⁵⁴ Artist Tracey Moffatt has been very conscious of the limitations of categorisation, stating, “I have never been a mere social issues type artist, in fact my work has never been BLACK. (If there is such a definition). I have made a point of staying out of all black or ‘other’ shows.”¹⁵⁵ So while her film _Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy_ (1990) examines the relationship between a white woman and her adopted Aboriginal daughter, the artist has been careful that the work not be seen as thematically one-dimensional. For these artists, the politics of representation underpin a complex, but somewhat inescapable, reading of their work.

Since September 11 attitudes towards race and cultural difference have become increasingly complex. In Australia, artists such as Nasim Nasr (_Beshkan [Breakdown], 2013_) probe issues relating to both gender and culture. In this work, Nasr depicts a ‘dance’ of double-handed clicking, known throughout Middle Eastern countries as _beshkan_. Shot on a black background, Nasr’s video transforms a well-known act into a highly symbolic political statement about cross-cultural discourse. Born in Iran and now based in Australia, Nasr says she explores “the complexities of contemporary issues between East and West, because I am from one and now in the other.”¹⁵⁶

### Conclusion

In the 1970s, video allowed artists the opportunity to take art out of the gallery and into the world in their pursuit to be socially and politically relevant. Video maintains its persuasive force as a medium through which artists can engage in the relationship between agency and change. Prominent curator and critic Okwui Enwezor advocates that it is this connection between the artistic and the political that “constitutes a form of ‘social aesthetics’ whereby artists attempt to go beyond the demands of conventional aesthetic norms to comment on the social crisis that pervades all relations of production and reception”.¹⁵⁷ Video has been a technological witness to the struggle between capitalism and socialism, between the mainstream and alternative perspectives of the world. Through satellite transmission, video guaranteed to connect art with the world, a notion finally fulfilled by the Internet. When Nam June Paik broadcast his video art around the globe in 1984, visibility itself was radical. But is there a correlation between visibility and political agency in today’s context? Everything is of course political, but in the age of the Internet what methodologies can artists engage in to truly give them the agency that challenge the way we think and behave? Will social media offer artists input into the political debate that many crave or will the commercial realities of the art world compromise these aims, as they largely did in the late 1970s?

[Published 2017]

One of the most enduring legacies of the 1970s has been the relationship between performance and video. Performance art was one of the most profound art forms to develop out of the 1960s, and there has been a dramatic reengagement with it in the last twenty years. Parallel to the development of performative videos was an increasing number of artists who were interested in producing electronic imagery or using technology as an extension to their body. In the Internet era, technology is more readily available than ever before and artists are still questioning how these advances affect our very being. Both performance and technology have been persistent concerns for artists over the fifty-year history of video art.

Performance and Video Art

The rise in popularity of performance and video art in the 1960s was a direct result of artists rejecting commodity driven practices such as painting and sculpture in favour of dematerialised forms. Both video and photography played central roles in the documentation of live performances so they could be shown after the fact. Initially, performance and ephemerality openly challenged the position of the commercial gallery because there was no object, as such, to sell and the hand of the artist was increasingly absent from the artwork. However, according to artist and writer Stuart Marshall, “many galleries [quickly] adapted their marketing strategies to recuperate these works as saleable commodities and hence documentation of performance, site-dependant and conceptual art [were] offered to the collector in the place of the work itself”.\(^{158}\) For artists, translating performance to video was as easy as putting a camera on a tripod, pressing record, performing the work, and then showing it on a television.

In the pioneering days of the 1970s, there was no such discipline as ‘video art’, and the camera became another tool to aide artists’ increasingly interdisciplinary practice. This allowed artists to experiment with time as a medium, performing various acts directly to the camera within private settings. An early example of this is the work *Idea Demonstrations* (1972), for which artists Peter Kennedy and Mike Parr recorded a number of simple actions or ‘ideas’ that were performed to the camera. In one such work, Peter Kennedy attached a number of clips to his bare chest, making this one of the earliest Australian examples of self-inflicted pain on the body so familiar from body art. Videos such as this challenged ideas about art but also allowed the body to be taken out of the context of the everyday world and transformed into an art object, giving the body political, social, and cultural agency as a material in itself. In *Extreme Bodies: The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art*, Francesca Alfano Miglietti observes that within this context, “[psychological] tensions are transferred onto the artist’s own body to the point of rendering them visible, giving them a physical dimension”.\(^{159}\) This physical rendering of the artist’s psychological condition is what gives the work its empathic power: the ability to transfer the felt experience of the artist to the felt experience of the audience.


Artists also began to use video to document their gallery performances. While phenomenologically different to the studio-based video, this allowed artists such as Dale Frank, Jill Orr and Lyndal Jones to distribute their live performances on videotape. At the time, there was some contention about the authenticity of performance art documentation, which continues today. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan has famously stated, “performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.”160 By contrast, art historian Amelia Jones counters that “the body art event needs the photograph [or video] to confirm its having happened; the photograph needs the body art event as an ontological ‘anchor’ of its indexicality”.161 Australian artist Sam Schoenbaum (Chapter 3: Still Life: Breakfast Piece, 1976) concurs with Jones’s position, saying “video secured some kind of permanence for something that was essentially ephemeral”.162 Younger artists such as Barbara Cleveland and Nasim Nasr are acutely aware of these issues in their own work. The reoccurring question is: How does performance art enter into art history if it is not remediated through photography or video?

Since the 1970s, in situ performances have allowed the artist to take art out of the gallery and into the world to engage directly in the site and social context that their art was responding to. Video became a way of documenting artists’ performances and disseminating them via the gallery system, thereby positioning their work within a critical art discourse while also guaranteeing access to a larger audience. For example, while living in San Francisco in the late 1970s, Australian artist Jill Scott produced the performance work Taped (1975), which was documented on videotape. In this performance, the artist stood on the tops of two twenty-foot ladders, with one foot on each ladder, and leaned against the exterior wall of a warehouse. Two assistants took ten rolls of two-inch masking tape and literally stuck her to the wall, defying gravity, until sundown.163 In a similar fashion Shaun Gladwell enacts urban-based street activities and records them to video. In his most iconic work Storm Sequence (2000), the artist is filmed skateboarding in front of the undulating waves of the sea, near Bondi Beach in Sydney, during a storm. The artist uses slow motion to transform this commonplace activity into a poetic rendering of urban experience and contemporary dance, echoing the counter-culture aim of elevating the everyday to the status of art. For both these artists their own performance is central to the work, but for artists such as Gabrielle de Vietri it is the interaction between a number of social groups that becomes the focus of the experiment. For Three Teams (2013-14), de Vietri conceived a game of Australian Rules Football that involved three teams and three sets of goals. Reminiscent of another Australian social interventionist work, Introductions (1974-76), by Peter Kennedy (Chapter 1), de Vietri’s video documents the process of negotiating the rules of the game, preparation for match day, and the actual game itself. The artist says, “I wanted [the work’s] social, political and intellectual effects to resonate through the community in which it was taking place. I wanted to create this project outside of the art scene, and from within the depths of

162 Sam Schoenbaum, conversation with the author, 8 April 2017.
163 For images of this work, see the artist’s website, http://www.jillscott.org/.
Australia’s sporting culture.” These videos demonstrate the diverse ways in which performance can manifest itself in the world, with the artists using video to create cinematic experiences within the gallery context.

Another important category of contemporary Australian videos focuses on an examination of identity through cinematic and technically innovative means. David Rosetzky has produced a highly stylised body of videos that explore our fragile sense of self through performance, dance, and speech. His video *Gaps* (2014) depicts a group of four dancers from diverse cultural backgrounds who explore the gaps in their experience and formation of self. Obscuring the link between an on-screen subject and a voice-over is an important strategy that Rosetzky uses. The artist says that this strategy presents “the idea of the self and identity as shifting and relative” and the construction of “a more fractured and unstable subject that is perhaps more difficult to identify”. In contrast to Rosetzky, Heath Franco’s aesthetic approach to exploring subjective volatility is much more lo-fi. In Franco’s *YOUR DOOR* (2011), the artist presents himself in various absurd disguises: at one point, he is an archetype of Australian masculine culture, complete with hi-vis jacket; at another, he is dressed in a cat bodysuit, aggressively asking, “What are you doing here? What are you doing here?” Identity is indeed not fixed and Franco presents the struggle to pinpoint masculine identity within Australian suburban culture as vexed ground. In this context, gender theorist Patrick McGann suggests, “the conflicted body can, if not determine the semiotic, then at least compel the search for different semiotics that potentially challenge normative masculine texts”. Visually, the artist’s deliberate use of low-quality green screen technology suggests a further instability of the male subject. The plasticity of video—its ability to bend, combine, and shift image and sound—is what has attracted many artists to the medium.

**Technological Interventions**

Video, as a recording device, has allowed artists to capture images in front of the camera and screen them as art since the mid-1960s. From the start, there was also a strong contingency of pioneering artists who wanted to explore a visual language that was specific to technology. In New York, *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering* took place in 1966 at the 69th Regiment Armory and was one of the first large-scale events in which artists collaborated with engineers and scientists. Two years later, the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* was held in London, with curator Jasia Reichardt focusing her attention on the relationship between computers and creativity.

In Australia, parallel developments were underway. As early as 1964, Polish-born artist Joseph Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski produced a series of abstract telematic images titled *Electronic Drawings* by manipulating the signals of a television set and documenting the experiments via photography. In 1968, David Perry, while working for the ABC, was working with a camera that developed a fault thus producing a series of abstract moving patterns from which he made the work *Mad Mesh*. In the early 1970s, artist collective Bush Video used video feedback—the result of pointing the camera at its playback monitor thus creating a feedback loop—to create abstract

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electronic images. Typical of Bush Video’s work was *Meta Video Programming One* (1974) (Chapter 3), which showed swirling brightly coloured abstract shapes that were easily identified with the psychedelic interests of the counterculture era. For Australia, one of the most important events in the field of arts and technology was *Australia 75: Festival of Creative Arts and Sciences* that took place in Canberra in 1975. An example of work from this festival was a collaboration between Philippa Cullen and John Hansen in which Cullen played music with her body by activating different electronic controls through a pressure-sensitive floor, while Hansen created special colour television effects in response to musical or visual inputs. These early experiments signalled an ongoing engagement between artists and the electronic tools they came in contact with, motivated by the need to explore new aesthetic forms while also questioning the effects of emerging technologies on our human condition.

Initially, technology-driven artwork received a less-than-welcoming reception into the fine art world. While performance art was closely associated with conceptual art, the same cannot be said about a great deal of the work produced by artists who were heavily invested in experimenting with technology. Art historian Edward Shanken observes that art-historical literature has traditionally drawn rigid categorical distinctions between conceptual art and art-and-technology. The result of this bias is that some technology-based artworks have been marginalised or forgotten altogether.

New technologies are continuously challenging our perception of the body. In the 1990s much of the debate focused on the posthuman, the idea that technological advancement would eventually terminate the function of the body. But creative experimentation charting relationships between the body and machine emerged much earlier with artists such as Stelarc who has been extending his body through performance and technology since the late 1960s. In 1975, the artist performed *Insert / Imprint / Extend – An Event for Amplified / Modified / Monitored Man* at the George Paton Gallery in Melbourne. During this performance, Stelarc sat naked in the gallery between two slabs of steel, twenty-four hours a day, for two weeks. Technology was a critical part of the work, with Stelarc’s vital signs being continually monitored by medical equipment and amplified into the gallery space. Two further monitors showed videos of his gastroscopy and colonoscopy, which had been pre-recorded in a Japanese hospital in Tokyo. By emphasising our awareness of the artist’s physical condition, which in the normal course of events is inaccessible, Stelarc enlarged the viewer’s awareness of their own physicality. In many of his performances throughout the 1980s and 1990s, he continued to explore his bodily limitations with the use of prosthetic extensions, involuntary movements, and amplified body sounds to create cyborgian wonder worlds. As curator Timothy Druckrey suggests, “rather than conceptualize the body as an effect of computer modeling, Stelarc renders the human–machine interface as the site of controlled conflict, trauma and shock.” Artists such as Justine Cooper are indebted to the work of Stelarc. For her video *Rapt* (1998), Cooper had a Magnetic Resonance Image taken of her own body. This contemporary self-portrait explores the unknown realms of the body and raises

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questions about our own mortality. In contrast to Stelarc, who presents the body as an iteration found between the visceral world of flesh and its technological self as an electronic body, Cooper presents the body in its fragile digital state. This digital self is fragile because we only come to view this image via a breakdown of the body, seen as a product of medical investigations of illness.

In the 1990s, computing power increased dramatically and computers themselves started to become more compact and inexpensive. At the same time, the Internet began its rapid growth and there was another moment of euphoria among artists about the potential of technology. Reflecting on this development, journals such as Artlink published technology-focused issues and galleries hosted exhibitions concentrated on media art, such as Burning the Interface<International Artists’ CD-ROMS>,172 which featured the work of Australian artists such as Troy Innocent (PsyVision, 1996) and Linda Dement (Chapter 1: Cybergirl Fleshmonster, 1995). Capturing the zeitgeist of the moment, Cyber Dada, a collaboration between Innocent and Dale Nason, released the video Cyber Dada Manifesto (1990), which features Nason reading the manifesto to the camera, predicting a somewhat oblique future under the pervasive influence of computers. In the video, Nason reads lines such as:

DIGITIZE THE WORLD (a new life awaits you).
Master COMPUTERS and you will have HACKING POWER over banks, governments, and the military through technology.
FULL-ON BRAIN EXPERIENCES await you inside a computer. Even have SEX with a computer.
Organic life is no longer a valid life-style. FULLY SYNTHESIZED environments where ALL PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL FEELINGS CAN BE CHEMICALLY SIMULATED. Soon it will be possible to INJECT A BIOLOGICAL COMPUTER to PROGRAM YOUR BRAIN, extend your life, anything.
The NEW SPECIES are cyborgs, man/machines, precise superior flawless beings to house our consciousness and create a new world.173

Prophetically, these artists affirmed an increasing paranoia among the non-converted about how technology would affect us.

The irony for many artists using technology for creative purposes is that its initial development was propagated by the military.174 This irony takes on a critical force when artists focus on the subject of the military itself. Both Ian Andrews (Chapter 1: Programme, 1995) and Baden Pailthorpe (Cadence, 2013) utilise appropriated footage to examine the performative aspects of warfare. In Andrews’s video, he employs footage of cadets in training, using simple editing techniques and repetition to highlight the poetics of exercise. While Andrews’s archival treatment of the images place Programme in a bygone era of war and indoctrination, Pailthorpe’s slick use of effects transforms a modern soldier into a geopolitical statement about global conflict.

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172 Artlink published two special editions in the 1990s with a focus on electronic art: “Film and Video” (1993) and “Art in the Electronic Landscape” (1996). Burning the Interface was initially hosted by Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 1996, then toured to various venues around Australia.
Through special effects and slow motion, the artist converts the soldier’s bodily movements into dance-like sequences that deepen our meditations on the effects of war. In the late 1960s, confronting images of casualties from the Vietnam War were transmitted into lounge rooms around Australia. This was very influential for the protest movement at the time but also for performance artists who were using the body as a raw material. Today, images of modern warfare can be seen on our mobile phones within moments of the event or even in real time and artists are again dealing with the effects of war and how these events are remediated into our lives.

**Conclusion**

Technology makes promises. Always on the precipice of new advances there exists a never-ending rapture for the wonderful unknown, the solution, a new way of being—always undertaken but not quite fulfilled because the next one is already unfolding. When Peggy Phelan says that technology promises, she is referring to the emergence of “new languages, new art forms, new ways to transmit goods, information, and money”. For art, new technology has always promised political agency, promised to bring art and life closer, promised to transform the body. The relationship between technology and performance art is as strong today as it was in the 1970s as the body becomes more redundant in our increasingly virtual orientated lives. Performance video helped transform the body into a creative material but, ironically, technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and self-driving cars will also help make the body more redundant.

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For it is another nature that speaks to the camera than to the eye: other in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious.
—Walter Benjamin

Artists’ first interactions with video in the 1960s explored the video camera’s role as an instrument for monitoring what was before it; that is, the camera as object. But another important line of investigation also emerged, with artists attempting to make visible the multifaceted relationships between such things as the body and mind, time and space, and being and our environment. In these cases, video was no longer the object but the subject, the inner eye, where the camera = I see, an insight Walter Benjamin made in The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction in 1936. In the early 1970s, American artists such as Peter Campus and Dan Graham examined the relationship between the video signal, psychology, and perception to create cerebral experiences by combining the viewer’s presence with live images via closed-circuit cameras. In Australia, artist Mitch Johnson responded to a live image of himself being relayed to a monitor within the gallery in his work Video Feedback Participation Piece (1974), while artist collective Bush Video created a number of psychedelic moving images throughout the mid-1970s. Video art works in this manner form an important legacy for contemporary artists who are exploring the psychophysical aspects of the human make-up; that is, those who have an interest in perception, consciousness, memory, and experience. Within this domain, the viewer’s encounter with the video image takes them to an altered state of consciousness, or heightened perceptual awareness, through the experience of the time–movement–spatial phenomena that remains as influential today as it was in the formative years of video art.

Perceptual Encounters

Perception—our ability to see, hear and become aware of our surroundings—can be seen as an objective truth resulting from our collective experiences. But as we increase our individual knowledge of the world through cultural and sensorial interactions, we begin to question the foundations of our lived experiences. Recognising the capacity of the moving image to ‘stand-in’ for an experience of the real because of related properties—temporality, movement, and spatial qualities—artists have been drawn to video for its ability to engage viewers beyond the medium’s narrative and symbolic capacity. In 1945 French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty published Phenomenology of Perception, where he proposed that, as a field of study, phenomenology suggests the state of being is constantly changing relative to changes in the experience of the real. In this way, we can think of the video image not only as a signifier but also as an event linked to perception; it is the interactivity between the "perceptible physical object (the video) and the perceiving motile subject (the viewer) that consciousness is instantiated". In Australia, artists

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such as Joan Brassil, Daniel von Sturmer, Masato Takasaka, and Michaela Gleave have engaged the moving image to question not only our being in the world, but also the veracity of seeing itself.

During the 1980s, Joan Brassil embarked on an intense period of experimentation, merging video, sound, and reflection to connect issues such as perception, time, memory, and the environment. In her most iconic video works, the artist utilised a series of layered curved transparent Perspex screens to either project onto or reflect monitor-based video images back to the viewer. For example, in *Kimberly Stranger Gazing* (1988), Brassil represented the European ‘gaze’ through an edited sequence of images that symbolised their incursions into the landscape, such as windmills, wire fencing, and farm buildings. Played on a cathode ray tube monitor, these images were distorted by the curved Perspex, giving them a metaphysical quality because the images floated in space rather than fixed to the screen. According to Sally Couacaud, curator of Brassil’s 1988 retrospective at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, “with Brassil’s multiplicity of translucent membranes, the image resonated and reverberated in and through a space-time continuum, effectively dislocating and destabilising the terrains of typography and temporality and, indeed, our perception of perception”.179

Both Daniel von Sturmer’s and Masato Takasaka’s works create a type of feedback loop in which the artwork expresses an awareness of its own mechanical self as it unfolds over time. Von Sturmer is well known for video works that play tricks with the eye—objects that defy gravity or small unremarkable studio experiments that take on dramatic scale—with an emphasis on painterly and sculptural concerns relating to scale, colour, volume, and composition. In his series *Painted Video (Sequence 1–4)* (2009), slowly expanding circles of paint are created by dripping paint onto a flat black surface, with each video representing a colour from the video pixel palette: red, green, blue, and white. The title itself, *Painted Video*, establishes a linguistic and experiential feedback loop—paint representing video’s colour palette presented to the viewer via the medium of video, a type of consciousness of consciousness. Artists and writers Andy Thomson and Tanya Eccleston articulate that von Sturmer’s work “moves from the still, pictorial space of painting to conflate real time and space with the recorded time and space of video”.180 There exists a similar existential experience in Takasaka’s *ANOTHER PROPOSITIONAL MODEL FOR EVERYTHING ALWAYS ALREADYMADE WANNABE STUDIO MASATOTEXTURES MUSEUM OF FOUND REFRACTIONS* (1994–2017)181 where the artist creates a number of modernist-inspired abstract sculptures from found objects, which, in turn, become the projection surface for his videos. Like von Sturmer, the title of the work itself is a linguistic puzzle, reflecting a web of intersecting interests. For example, “Another Propositional Model” suggests that the current work is actually a proposition for a future work. Compounding this time-shifting effect, the artist has incorporated video documentation of previous iterations shot by friends, which is projected onto surfaces of the newer work. Who made the work? When was it made? And who cares anyway?

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181 The full title of Masato Takasaka’s installation is *ANOTHER PROPOSITIONAL MODEL FOR THE EVERYTHING ALWAYS ALREADYMADE WANNABE STUDIO MASATOTEXTURES MUSEUM OF FOUND REFRACTIONS 1994–2017* (eternal return to productopia-almost everything all at once, twice three times (in four parts) Red Green Blue remix) 2017
One suspects that Takasaka does not, as he appropriates modernist abstraction and blends it with the readymade in the most postmodern way.

When using the interactive app *A Galaxy of Suns* (2016), by visual artist Michaela Gleave, composer Amanda Cole and programmer Warren Armstrong, the participant is literally placed within the galaxy of stars. The app plays different sounds relating to specific stars as they rise and set over 360° of the horizon, tailored to the precise location of the listener. The user’s device displays a single colour throughout the duration of each star’s musical note, sound and vision uniting to connect the earthbound user to the cosmology. To paraphrase theorist Vivian Sobchack, an account of *A Galaxy of Suns* can be described as an experience of signification, which calls for “a reflexive turn away from the work as object and towards the act of viewing and its existential implication of a body-subject: the viewer”.¹⁸² It is through the active participation with *A Galaxy of Suns*, the orchestration of its colour and sound, that the viewer’s body, their self, the world, and others meet as an existential experience—this is the philosophical underpinning of this interactive work.

**Reflexivity and Video Art**

An important thread of early video works included artists who investigated not only the mediums real-time quality but also the way in which the medium itself seemed to foreground its own physical state—its reflexive ability. David Perry’s *Interior with Views* (1976) was made while undertaking an artist residency at Griffith University. The video is a structurally simple work that shows three main elements: the boiling of a kettle to make a cup of tea (shown in virtual real time); images of the Australian bush; and the same landscape being played on a television monitor. The work provides a subtle commentary on Australia’s relationship with the landscape while also experimenting with video’s real time capacity. In Sam Schoenbaum’s *Still Life: Breakfast Piece* (1976), the camera simply observes a bowl of fruit on a table as the light changes over time. The art references are overt—the still life, the observation of light, the re-presentation of an artistic trope—with the very act of looking emphasised by the tactility of the low-resolution black-and-white analogue signal. Both Perry and Schoenbaum’s videos can be identified by their slowness, by the observational ability of a camera that is allowed to linger. Theorist Christine Ross suggests that experiments such as these,

> “were not always seen by most artists as shaped by technological determinism (i.e., the standard videotape length) or by their lack of experience in time-based arts, but as unique means to disrupt dominant conventionalities of time, notably acceleration and temporal linearity.”¹⁸³

Driven by ideas, artists such as Perry and Schoenbaum were linked more closely to conceptual art and dematerialisation than modernist concerns with the medium itself.

The same consciousness of the medium has been explored in more recent works that re-engage with modernist sensibilities towards the medium. For *Light/Strike (An Open Window)* (2011), Geoffrey Weary used an obsolete Sony Portapak video camera from the 1970s. The video depicts a woman moving towards the camera and raising her

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hands to a surface in front of her as if conscious of the video screen itself. A significant feature of video cameras of the 1970s was the ghosting or comet-tails that would appear and fade in areas of excessive highlights. In *Light/Strike*, this effect becomes a surface quality, foregrounding *obsolescence* as a conceptual device equally applied to the technology and the entrapped physicality of the subject’s body as she eventually recedes into the black of the studio. Jess MacNeil’s *Disruption Continuum* (2013), also explores the movement of human presence through space, this time using Trafalgar Square as the site. Shot in London over the course of a day, MacNeil painstakingly removed the human figures in post-production and replaced them with painterly textures and patterns. As in Weary’s work, this focuses our attention on the surface qualities of the medium itself, exploring the gap between the physicality of the medium and the psychological response of the viewer, between the realness of the world and the imagination of the artist.

**The Synthetic Image**

To enact social change, some early video-makers believed that they needed to disrupt the production of ideology by producing images that looked different from those broadcast by commercial television. Such artists and technocrats were drawn to the potential of video and other electronic tools to produce images that were highly synthesised using video feedback, colourised and layered video imagery, in addition to pure electronic signals with an emphasis on non-linearity and abstraction. For some artists, this was an attempt to subvert the ‘television message’, while for others there was a close relationship between these psychedelic images and hallucinogenic drugs, “suggesting that new realities could be electronically synthesized”. Norbert Wiener's writing about cybernetics was also very important to many of these artists because it reinforced their belief that there was “a correlation between electronic circuitry and the workings of the human nervous system”. The opportunity to ‘turn on, tune in, and drop out’ was a way of bringing art and life together by affecting the viewer’s experience in real time.

In Australia, artist Michael Glasheen was an important figure in exploring the abstract potential of video and its capacity to create psychologically affecting viewing experiences. In addition to his practice as a solo artist Glasheen was also a member of the art collective Bush Video. Typical of Bush Video’s work was *Meta Video Programming One* (1974), which showed swirling, brightly coloured abstract shapes easily related to the psychedelic interests of the counter-culture era. For many artists working in this vein, exploring the technology itself was central to the process of creating new images, often using electronic synthesisers to manipulate their videos. In the early 1970s American artist Warren Burt had been using such tools to make abstract videos produced synthetically without a camera. The artist came to Australia in 1975 to help establish the Music Department at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Burt’s *Dying Song* (1974) exemplifies this approach: the video showing slowly moving organic shapes morphing into a variety of other forms and colours, working in unison with an electronic sound scape.

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184 Jess MacNeil’s *Disruption Continuum* was originally produced as a 16mm film.
187 Ibid.
At the time, these early experiments in technology and abstraction lacked the critical support of the more performative and conceptually based videos. As mentioned, critics saw this work as overly connected to the modernist drive to explore the specificity of the medium, and its non-figurative nature was easily connected to Abstract Expressionism. American artists Woody and Steina Vasulka countered this position, seeing their own work as a manifestation of a kind of language…a syntax. Artists such as Bush Video and Burt paved the way for the ongoing investigation of emergent new graphic and sonic languages and spaces made possible by electronic media. John Tonkin, Jon McCormack, and Kit Wise are more recent exemplars in the use of technology to create electronic spaces that wrestle with the paradox of producing synthetic worlds and making them increasingly real. In Tonkin’s These Are the Days (1994), computer-generated paper slowly drifts downwards like a waterfall representing the passing of time; in McCormack’s Turbulence: An Interactive Museum of Unnatural History (1994), a self-propagating natural environment is produced entirely from computer code; and in Wise’s Xanadu (2010), numerous iconic architectural structures and landscapes are condensed into a synthetic whole, depicting a luminous utopian city. In his book The Lost Dimension, Paul Virilio describes our rapidly changing experience of urban spaces in which screen-based images have become a primary element rather than the physical; “deprived of objective boundaries, the architectonic elements begin to drift and float in an electronic ether, devoid of spatial dimensions.” This is no more evident than when moving through postmodern cities such as Tokyo and New York where there is an unsettling experience of the tangible and the virtual. The physicality of ‘space’ comes under question as the real becomes interweaved with the artificial. It is this very space that an increasing number of artists are exploring as mobile devices become yet more screens through which our experiences are mediated.

Conclusion
In James Lynch’s hand-drawn animation Everybody was… (from the series ‘Other People’s Dreams of Me’) (2006), the artist replays a series of dreams that friends and family have had in which he is the central character. What plays out is an irrational and incomplete narrative that is shaped by the unpredictable workings of the unconscious mind. Lynch’s video highlights the complex workings of the brain where our various experiences intersect into subjectivity through an irrepressible cerebral network. Here, the video screen itself becomes a site of affective encounter, a place to contemplate one’s own subjectivity and how it connects with the broader world. In Cinema II: The Time-Image, Gilles Deleuze refers to the screen as a ‘cerebral membrane’ where ‘immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and the future, the inside and the outside, at a distance impossible to determine, independent of any fixed point’. Early on in video art’s history, it became apparent that artists could use the medium to explore the immaterial effects of the moving image on perception. Rather than the screen representing an encounter with political or social conflict, its potential for personal revelation became important. The notion that the screen is a cerebral membrane, a meeting point between the represented on

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188 Ibid., p. 236.
one side of the glass screen and the perceivable world on the other, still accounts for a major area for artistic experimentation. It is a surface through which transmission and reception collide as an experiential zone.

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Figure 40: Chapter 1: ‘Red: Everything is Political’ (30 March-29 April, 2017), photographic documentation. Image credits: Carl Warner.
Figure 42: Chapter 3: ‘Blue: Perception and Encounter’ (6 June-8 July, 2017) photographic documentation. Image credits: Carl Warner.

Please note that for examination purposes a USB stick was provided alongside the thesis which included high quality photographic and video documentation of the exhibitions *Resistance: Peter Kennedy* and *Red Green Blue: A History of Australian Video Art*. The photographic documentation is already included within this document but it is not practically feasible to include the video documentation as part of this PDF.


The catalogue for the exhibition can be found in the Swinburne University library.
Appendix 9: Human Ethics Approval

All conditions pertaining to the clearance were properly met, and a final report submitted.
A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance. The SHR project number should be quoted in communication. Researchers should retain a copy of this email as part of project recordkeeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely,

Kaye Goldenberg
Acting Secretary, BHESC2

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