

Push the Button

Toshi Endo, Terrence Handscomb, Sean Kerr,
Michelle Lawrence, Amanda Newall

The five artists in this exhibition are connected by their use of technology in art, however each responds very differently to their experiences of technology and its various manifestations in contemporary culture. The clash of the virtual and the physical is apparent in much of the work, and the body is never far from view.

Sean Kerr's friendly monster *Fred II* greeted visitors to this show, appearing to watch and talk to us with his googly eyes peering out from an oversized cardboard box. Fred had a limited capacity for conversation, simply repeating comments programmed in by his creator, taken from a gallery visitor book. Artificial sight was provided via a surveillance camera sensitive to movement. So although Fred was incapable of watching us, the illusion was not so, we were in fact watched, and tracked - caught on camera in the gallery as we are multiple times a day going about our business in shops, garages, banks and city streets.

Taking a mouse as her central protagonist, Michelle Lawrence re-enacts a local reality television series from a different perspective in her work *Colonial Mouse*. Lawrence's digital video is installed within an ornate gold frame set into a familiar deep red wall colour - the artist setting her work within what would have been the ideal colonial gallery style.

Rejecting the framing of cyberspace as some kind of abstract globalised phenomenon as clichéd and irrelevant, Terrence Handscomb focuses instead on the physical reality of the singular and human - his own body. Part of "Under Southern Skies", a 2003 suite of digital video works by Handscomb, *Spa* and *Healing Hands* were paired in *Push the Button*, each providing intimate and gory details of the artist's body in the form of a video diary documenting ritualistic foot-cleansing and scab-picking.

The nasty and sinister comes in to play in Amanda Newall's exhibited works. Various media are deployed by the artist with a lack of hierarchy, combining sculptural and electronic means to both humorous and cautionary effect. Newall's two works *Tree* and *Blobs Game* encourage interaction, utilising gaming interfaces, yet not quite following all the customary rules and expectations we have of mainstream games. Props and icons from Newall's computer environments have been left behind in real space, as the vinyl mask of the rabbit character manipulated in *Blobs Game* sits beside the computer station, adding a touch of theatricality and uncertainty.

Gaming environments have also infiltrated Toshi Endo's art practice, yet *Safeplaces* is a purely playful device, a reaction from the artist to the nasty potentials of the internet. The result of Endo's aim to create a safe place online is a utopic scene, a playground for a solitary character set upon a grassy hill where the sun always rises and the birds always sing. Like Kerr's *Fred* and Newall's games, this world is also limited, conditioned and directed by the artist.

Rosemary Forde

Push the Button
Sean Kerr, Michelle Lawrence
Image: Rachel Brunton

