

Aberations of self : manifestations in cinema histories

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***ABERATIONS OF SELF: MANIFESTATIONS IN
CINEMA HISTORIES***

John A Douglas

MFA 2008.

Screen Test (Americana/Australiana)- Fragments and Stills

The *Screen Test (Americana/Australiana)* project is a collection of works that re-makes selected fragments of film spanning cinema history. Through a process of selectively slowing and stilling this form, of what Laura Mulvey¹ calls *Delayed Cinema*, opens up new possibilities for interpreting and understanding cinema and the photographic. The aesthetic qualities and repetition of the scene or shot are re-created and re-performed, allowing an alternate form of cinema to take place. This alternate cinema takes on the characteristic of the Hollywood screen test and thus we can see each piece as the artist performing the screen test for each film. However, over time the screen test becomes the site for shifting the aesthetic elements within the film and shaping the narrative as a form of aesthetic building block. The viewing of each fragment allows for a new reading of film that suspends or subverts the temporal narrative and allows the contained segment to exist outside of the film opening up the possibility of constructing and emphasizing new iconic images and meanings. Each video piece is supplemented with a photographic still in tableaux form that further explores the aesthetic material of the film or shot raising the aesthetic components of the film (props, locations etc) to the level of fetishism that may have been missed in the original version. This photographic rendering of the film fragment rethinks the possibilities of photographic tableaux and its relation to the iconic and indexical of photomedia art practice. Similarly, each photographic work is informed by theories of film analysis and psychology that has examined the primacy of the film still with Freudian notions of the primal scene and the uncanny. We are after all bringing to life the graveyard of cinema

history. These photographic qualities of the *mis en scene* and the indexical of metonymy allow a heightened aesthetic experience, which transforms itself into an aberration of the director's intended meaning, thereby reconstructing this meaning within the context of camp humour and irony. The work also acts as a playful and absurd interpretation of the cult of celebrity within cinema and the art world, which frees up of the interpretation of the film's meaning and becomes the site for contemporary re-readings of film culture.

The juxtaposition of the American Hollywood film and its emphasis on studio lighting, props, character and dialogue against the outdoor location of the Australian films conflates the two cultural imperatives, allowing for the examination of cultural myth through cinema. American cinema is revealed as the dominant culture whose imperialism dogs Australian film and fosters a culture of low self-esteem. Further, the *Americana* works become the site for cultural examinations of gender, narcissism and war - both real and imagined – and Hollywood is explored in terms of its social imaginings and how they play into real life events. The *Australiana* component explores the mythology of the Australian landscape with an emphasis on the culture of masculinity and self-destructive violence. However, each work is the result of a conflation of both cultures and other films, or parts of the same film, shifted within the fragment. The production of each photographic and video piece requires the taking on of the role of director, cinematographer, actor and producer. Through the use of interactive technologies such as DVD and the Internet not only am I able to experience a new subjective relationship with the intricacies of cinema but also

by recreating these cinematic fragments I am able to bring into being and transform the spectre of cinema into the realm of contemporary art practice.

John A Douglas

2008

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Introduction

This paper is the outcome of a number of theoretical investigations into cinema and its relationship to photomedia and timed based contemporary art practice. The paper seeks to document the process and production of a body of works entitled *Screen Test (Australiana/Americana)*. The initial idea for the *Screen Test* project began in late 2003 when I began a prototype version of *Screen Test #1*, based on an excerpt from Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*. The work was a playful performative experiment in gender and narcissism, as well as being an ironic, humorous dig at (art)stardom and failure/success somewhat akin to the saying 'flogging a dead horse'. Through my re staging of the tragic character of Norma Desmond, I embodied the tragedy of trying to fit into a youth obsessed art scene.

The prototype work, however, was both low budget and poorly lit, and I realised that if I wanted to restage excerpts of cinema, I would have to lift the production stakes. Therefore in 2004, I revisited and remade *Screen Test #1*, adding the word *Americana* to the title. This time, I became obsessed with every detail; the lighting, costume, jewellery, make up and hair (which morphed with that of Bette Davis's Baby Jane character). I obsessively watched every frame of the action I was to perform in order to recreate (and reclaim) every detail distilled into one single shot. I also worked with a small production crew who photographed the shot and videotaped the action, as well as working with a performance coach. From these beginnings, the *Screen Test* project has grown into a substantial body of work, including several side projects, and I have developed a practice that has gathered momentum in terms of production and scope.

This paper will examine the theories that have informed my practice and will document the works produced from conception to the final outcomes. My use of psychoanalysis, feminist film theories, political, cultural and gender studies, in many cases, provide the underpinnings of my practice and are useful tools in identifying what I am actually undertaking. In particular, the documentation of the production outcomes and the theoretical investigations raise a number of questions. Firstly, is it possible to create an aesthetic experience through the restaging and reimagining of cinema within the context of American and Australian cultura/film iconography? Secondly, what possibilities arise when examining cinema histories through interactive technologies such as DVD; is there a definitive relationship between narrative cinema and the photograph that sits outside of traditional temporal narrative? Thirdly, how does subjectivity play out in the experimental process of performed fragments of cinema? And finally, is it possible to develop a contemporary art practice that seeks to find new meanings in the spectre of cinema histories?

This exegesis is structured to incorporate the key theories and theorists, the artists, films and other materials that resonate with the theories interwoven with and returning to my own work and practice. In Chapter One, I compare my research methodology with that of the artist in Antonioni's film *Blow-Up*, who describes himself as a detective. I then examine the conception of the moving image, particularly *illusionism*, *spiritualism* and *primitive cinema* in the early 20th century, and its relationship with the photographic, noting the spectre of cinema history in contemporary new media technologies and that these technologies are always being reinvented to make sense of our subjective existence. I

analyse the recent theories of Laura Mulvey and the phenomena of removing cinema from the constraints of the linear time frame via new technologies such as the DVD, and relate specifically how this technology has played a part in the research process in the production of each screen test. I also introduce the psychoanalytical theories of Raymond Bellour and the *film stilled*, identifying the power of the photographic and time-based image-making in relation to slowing or stilling of film, and the application of this to my own art practice. Then, making reference to the films of David Lynch, I examine the film *Sunset Boulevard* using contemporary feminist theory of the *fading star*, notions of narcissism, the *social imaginary* in Hollywood and downtown LA.

Chapter Two primarily investigates cinema and psychoanalysis focussing on the aesthetic properties of *screen memories* through Freud's *Wolf Man* case study, and the relationship of Lacan's theory of the *Imaginary* to the cinematic experience and the political. I examine the work of Gregory Crewdson and his contemporary imaginings of psychoanalysis, childhood memory and cinema. I identify how the relevant psychoanalytical theories underpin my practice and the *Screen Test* project. This rereading of cinema is explored through the aesthetic experience of camp (and its significance to art and criticism) and the connotations of *mise en scène*.

Chapter Three delves into the issues of gender identity in cinema culture. I recreate and reinterpret the genre of the American Western and the War film within a contemporary context in *Screen Test #2* and *Screen Test #3*, through use of Michael Crichton's *Westworld* and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*. I

also visit the work of Andy Warhol and his democratisation of Hollywood iconography through his screen test project.

In Chapter Four I focus the lens towards Australia, the tragedy of Australian masculine culture and the insecurities that dog Australian cinema histories. I examine the mythologies surrounding Australian cultural identity and the social imaginary of the 'lost child' through the film *Walkabout* and the paintings of Fredrick McCubbin. I also explore the haunting of Hollywood in Australian cinema, the work of Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* and Tracy Moffatt's reinterpretation of the film.

Chapter Five brings together the theoretical work of Ross Gibson and the mythology of the Australian landscape. I weave the imaging of Australia in the photography of Aboriginal artists such as Mervyn Bishop, the painter Russel Drysdale and the romantic mythologies surrounding the ubiquitous galvo shed in the Australian landscape with the American landscape documentary photography of Walker Evans and Robert Frank. Finally I examine the iconography of Hollywood interpretations of Passion of Jesus through the mythologies of James Dean, *Giant* and the imaginary of the Australian outback.

In addition to the five chapters, a detailed appendix of production notes, synopses of each work, production stills and location images is attached along with published texts reviewing elements of the praxis.

Chapter 1

The Film Stilled: Manifestations and Fading Stars

“It’s a bit like finding a clue in a detective story.”

These words from Michelangelo Antonioni’s film *Blow Up* (1966) that are spoken by Bill, a character who is an artist, summarise the processes I use when looking at my own art production and the ideas that have informed them. Bill goes on to state that he looks for something to hang onto, and that he doesn’t know what it means until sometime after when the work is finished. Towards the end of the film, the character played by Sarah Miles announces that the photograph she is viewing looks like one of Bill’s paintings. Removed from its actual context as evidence of a murder, the photograph has become meaningless,² an abstract pattern of light and darkness. This intersection of art, photography and cinema highlights the relationship between all image production and the role that the audience plays in constructing a meaning that is both illusory and subjective. It is worth noting that, at the time of Antonioni’s cinematic investigation into the nature of visual perception, the art world itself was forging a new language of representation; artists who began using the projected image in the gallery space radically rejected the traditional pictorial space of a fixed vanishing point (which had been inherited from the Renaissance) in favour of the perceptual field of the gallery (as the Minimalists were also doing). Chrissie Isles³ describes this radical shift as the hybrid of the darkened black box of the cinema and the white cube of the gallery, and it is often seen as the birthplace of contemporary video art.

The history of illusion through the still and moving image can be traced back to a more unconventional birth during the period known as *Primitive Cinema*⁴⁻⁵ in the early part of the 20th century. Baron von Schrenck-Notzing relied on the photograph to provide evidence that the ectoplasm⁶ produced by the spirit medium Eva C. was not faked, although he was dissatisfied with the outcomes as it was impossible to register the ethereal qualities of ectoplasm onto the photographic plate. What is most intriguing is that his work signifies the spectre of the photograph and its literal haunting of cinema at the time of its conception. Schrenck-Notzing's desire for a perfect technology to record these ectoplasmic events lead him to use the movie camera to capture the event, only to then render his motion images back into still form. No one knows why he only wrote half a page on his cinematic observations and then abandoned them. Karen Beckman⁷ compares this desire for an elusive truth to Geoffrey Batchen's investigation into anachronistic paradox of the desire for photography. Batchen suggests that the desire for photography can never precede photography if photography was always there.

*"We can understand the desire for photography and film after their inventions by focusing not on the technologies themselves but on what they come to represent- namely, the possibility of exposing and capturing an elusive form of "truth", the possibility of fixing both knowledge and presence."*⁸

For Schrenck-Notzing, the promise of the motion picture camera to expose the truth failed when he filmed two séances only to discover that it was unable to

retain the temporality he had imagined possible. As a result of his dissatisfaction, he turned the motion pictures back into stills for publication, in an attempt to give longevity to his imagined cinema. Beckman observes that “instead of documenting the elusive presence of ectoplasm film collapses into the object it seeks and vanishes along with it”.⁹ What we are left with is a distortion or aberration of a possible truth and this truth can never be made manifest. Cinema must be constantly reinvented in order for us to understand the limits of our own subjective existence.¹⁰

I then must ask myself: is it, therefore, possible to open the possibility of reinventing and performing my own version(s) of cinema drawing on a century of film history? New York artist Zoe Beloff has set about reconstructing the ectoplasmic events of Schrenck-Notzing and Eva C. Her work is concerned with images that are “not there”. Beloff sees herself as a cinematic medium and attempts to revive the illusory properties of cinema. She does this, however, through the installation space of the gallery with multiple projections, digital stereoscopic effects in order to inject cinema with the uncanny and to reconnect the past of early cinema to the present.¹¹ Beloff’s reenactments (of the séances conducted by Eva C) and her digital renderings curiously evoke the idea of using technology to record and reinvigorate those events almost a century ago. As Beloff says, she wants us to re-think the way we see moving images and to think about the séance as an alternate model for storytelling. For her, re-enactment is a way of entering into the psychology of Eva C. Beloff uses performance art, installation, analogue and digital technologies to get closer to her subject.¹²

The performance and reenactment of the male hysteric was central to my early art practice and I had gleaned many of my conceptions from feminist and historical readings of the female hysteric, which in turn lead me to Karen Beckman's historical analysis of the vanishing woman. During that period, I had started to build an extensive home library of DVDs and, as my attraction to cinema was becoming stronger, developed a desire to use cinema in my practice. I had already begun to explore the interactivity of DVDs and similar new technologies, and was particularly fascinated with the way DVDs allow viewers to 'get inside' a film by slowing the frames and stilling the image. The ability to view a film in such detail was not entirely new (since good VCR players already had pause and slow-motion functions), however the DVD medium had the added benefits of superior image quality and placed far more control into the viewer's hands. DVDs transformed cinema into a highly desirable commodity to possess and consume at home; I had never, in comparison, considered building a library of VCR tapes. In hindsight, I can see that the increased interactivity of DVDs has reinvented cinema. For my own part, DVDs have increased my desire and ability to know a film. I can, for instance, still my favourite parts of a film or view the film frame by frame.

The power of this aesthetic practice is explained in an interview between film theorist Raymond Bellour and psychoanalyst Guy Rosolato. Rosolato firstly states that in order to truly analyse a film with a degree of precision, it is crucial that the film and segments of the film be observed over and over. The necessity for repetition is especially true if you are to remember or recall a scene or a specific shot in a film.¹³ Secondly, Bellour outlines the idea of film as

phantasmagoria and postulates that film is always a vanishing object that leaves the viewer with a desire for another film. Thirdly, and critical to my own practice, is the notion of *symbolic blockage*¹⁴ which Bellour suggests is important to aesthetic and cultural phenomena. In particular, it applies to cinema sequences that are miniaturizations of the dynamic of the entire film. Bellour states that this blockage implies a circular mirroring which reflects a *global cultural corpus, especially* in master filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock. The backbone of symbolic blockage is the Oedipal concept, which is a universal principle in Hollywood cinema.¹⁵ Using terms defined in *The Film Work* by Thierry Kuntzel,¹⁶ Bellour's central idea is that, at the level of the unconscious, this can be reduced to the power of the single image or the film stilled. Bellour uses Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* as an example of this concept, noting that when he stopped the film at the point where the housekeeper Mrs Danvers dies in the flames he was overcome by an inexplicable fear as he looked at the shot which had become, stilled, something much more violent than when it appeared within the diegesis.¹⁷ Bellour and Rosolato, referencing Lacan, identify this extreme force as one of paranoia, violence and fixation that takes them into the realm of the primal scene.¹⁸

Douglas Gordon is an artist who has concerned himself with Hitchcock and the power of the film stilled. Ursula Frohne notes that re-framing cinema history and the altered temporality has a marked effect on both viewer and the perception of the film itself

“Like an academic, Gordon made use of this type of «video analysis» in order to draw out symptomatic elements of a given film which act as a touchstone for our cultural assumptions. The depiction of extreme psychological conditions such as psychoses, ecstasy, insanity, and euphoria dominates the aesthetics of his compiled film material, adding to the psychological effects of Gordon’s installations.”¹⁹

Clearly, artists such as Douglas Gordon have tapped into the aesthetic qualities articulated by Bellour in the stilling of *Rebecca*. This precisely describes what I had (albeit unconsciously) been doing with the films in my DVD collection; breaking away from a film’s narrative time and structure, I had become intrigued with stilling particular sections of the film. With the advent of DVD special editions and boxed sets, audiences and consumers can now deconstruct and analyse aspects of a film’s production (including bonus features such as documentaries, production stills, storyboards and commentaries from directors and film critics) and can be immersed in every aspect of the films production, allowing more effective critical analysis of a film or television series. My partner, for example, watches the 1960s Television comedy *Bewitched* in order to critique the gender roles of middle class America of the time. The DVD boxed set allows her to observe the themes and narrative patterns of the series over

multiple episodes - without the constraints of broadcast scheduling. The seminal film theorist Laura Mulvey recent work articulates the phenomena of the growing DVD market and its effect on the way audiences experience and perceive cinema. Mulvey is primarily concerned with representations of time discovered in the relation between the movement and stillness of cinema. As she says:

“Now, I think that the aesthetics of cinema have a greater coherence across its historic body in the face of new media technologies and the new ways of watching film that they have generated.”²⁰

Although Mulvey states that there is nothing new here, what she does go on to say is that the interactive capabilities of DVD technologies allow the viewer to experience, over time, intricacies and details which may have been missed if watched in the linear time of the film. Mulvey calls this process *delayed cinema*, and it works by bringing to life what may have previously lain dormant in the film. Like Bellour and Rosolato, she compares this to the Freudian deferred remembering of the primal scene or perhaps some other early childhood sexual encounter, even to the point of a figurative death in the film still.²¹ Significantly, in the title of her book, Mulvey subtly alters the famous line from Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* “Cinema is truth 24 x a second”²² to “Death 24 x a second” as she believes new technologies take us face to face with the dead. Some critics have pointed out that Mulvey's observations of these new ways of experiencing film are somewhat idealistic,²³ what interests me however is that a

direct connection can be made here to Mulvey's theoretical discourse and the process for researching raw material for my own art practice. The points that are raised by Mulvey are the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of my own work. The repetitive process of using the remote control of the DVD player to mine the hidden and obvious aesthetic qualities of a shot or sequence is how each of my works begins. My own observations are that once again, like Schrenck-Notzing, in order to truly see a film we must re-render it as a still to reveal more of the truth and presence. DVD technology is merely another reinvention of cinema. However, I take this process one step further by actually recreating the sequence and, thereby, physically inhabiting the visual space that DVD technology exposes us to into a real world experience and as a contemporary art form.

This ability to slow and still a film is integral to my practice. Performing and recreating what is revealed in the stilling is the basis of all the works in the *Screen Test* project, as it allows me to explore a particular scene, shot or series of shots in minute detail and pass them through a cultural/historical lens. Unlike the straight appropriations of Douglas Gordon, I was more interested in Pierre Huyghe's restaging of cinema and the reenactment of specific scenes in cinema history. This was more in keeping with my own experience in performing and creating video works and photographic tableau. These reenactments allow Huyghe to move beyond the material of cinema and for issues outside of the film. "For him, the original film becomes a painted canvas which he erases, thus disclosing elements of identity and memory not evident (or intended) in the film."²⁴

Huyghe uses this strategy of demystifying and distancing the narrative when he recreates the heist scene from *Dog Day Afternoon* using the actual bank robber that the film is based on.

The type of films I choose for analysis and production are also very important. Karen Beckman's treatise on fading Hollywood stars, such as Bette Davis and Gloria Swanson, led me to explore the newly released DVD edition of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* and Robert Aldrich's *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. Beckman and Jodi Brook discuss the faded star as a discarded commodity.²⁵ The tragedy and sadness of the characters of Norma Desmond and Baby Jane Hudson are frighteningly realised at certain points in the films. We get a glimpse of each character's growing awareness and horror with the loss of youth and their fleeting success. The themes the characters embody seemed to echo what was happening in my own life; I was confronted with my own mortality, insecurities and lack of success. For me, though, the next step was obvious: I had to inhabit the character of Norma Desmond and perform one of the iconic shots in the film where Norma is watching her younger self on the screen. This scene eloquently demonstrates Billy Wilder's macabre and ironic homage to Hollywood; the film viewed by Norma Desmond (who is played by Gloria Swanson) is actually Swanson's *Queen Kelly*. Thus the film screen becomes a distorted mirror, feeding the fading star's narcissism and providing images of her self that are both flattering and misleading:

"When she leaps to her feet crying 'I'll show them! I'll be back up there, so help me!'", she is caught directly in the passage of



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #1 (Americana)*, 2004 - 08, C-type print
on aluminium, 140cm x 100cm.

light which links the projector to the screen, framing her ominously within this single path of illusion. At this moment the face of Norma Desmond in the chiaroscuro of the living room is one of the cinema's purest expressions of dementia."²⁶

Wilder further reveals Norma Desmond's narcissism by means of the table, placed beneath the gigantic home movie screen, which is entirely covered with photographs of her in her glory days. In a single shot, Wilder brings together the motion and still image in order to emphasise Norma Desmond's illusion of self-grandeur. Karen Horney puts forth one explanation of narcissism (the word has a history of many meanings) that rejects Freud's libido theory:

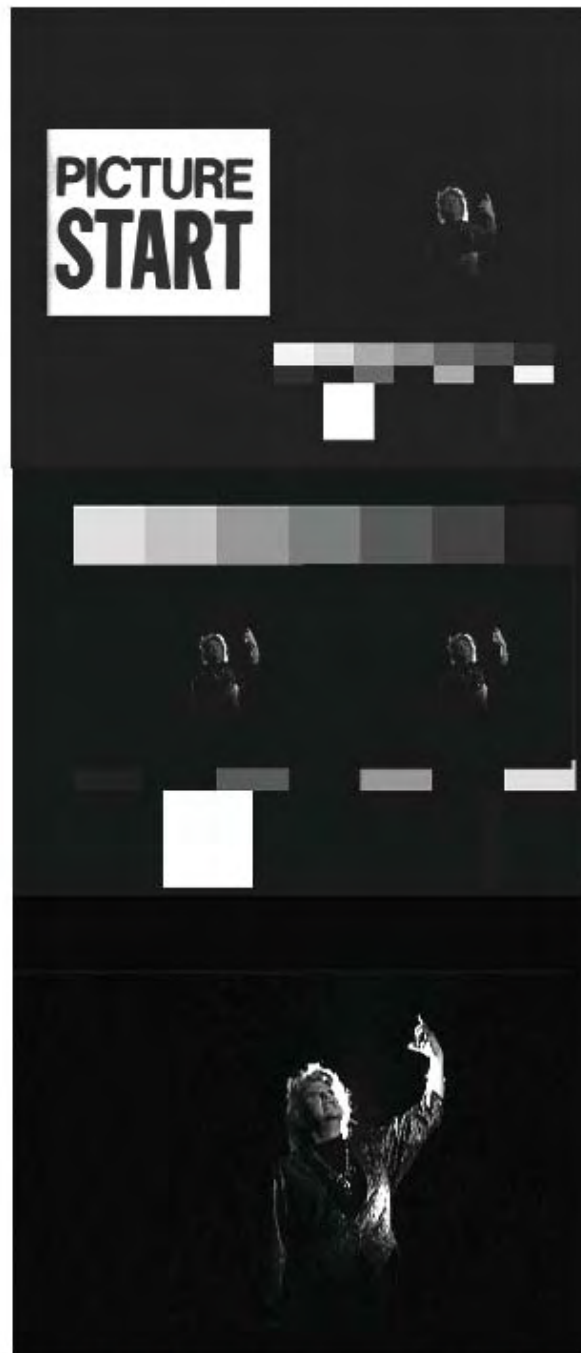
*"Persons with narcissistic pathology tend to create ever more fantastic inflated versions of the self, which, in a viscous circle, lead to greater distortion of the self."*²⁷

This interpretation best fits the trajectory of Norma Desmond's delusions and also what I believe is Wilder's intent, namely to reveal the tragedy of the Hollywood machine. Thus, Norma Desmond clearly embodies the tragic outcome for those seeking success in Hollywood or any form of popular culture that exploits youth and beauty (including the art world in contemporary society). The films of David Lynch explore this tragedy too, with a number of strong visual references to Wilder's films. For instance, the house that opens the scene in *Lost Highway* is a minimal modernist version of the house in Wilder's

Double Indemnity. The references go even further, though, in *Mulholland Drive* in which the narrative trajectory literally follows the street map of *Sunset Boulevard*; in both films something goes wrong with the car, we see the traditional shot of LA from the hills at night, the character stumbles into a house

on Sunset Boulevard, there is someone there who is also trying to achieve fame (in *Mulholland Drive*, this is Naomi Watt's character) and the film ends with a painful and humiliating realisation -- all marked with the spectre of death and dreaming. I have often thought that Bill Henson's *Los Angeles* series has a similar look and feel to these David Lynch films.

The history of Hollywood and Los Angeles is one of forgetting and self-erasure. A map of Hollywood included in the DVD special edition of *Sunset Boulevard* curiously intersects the line between historical fact and narrative fiction, revealing the locations of the house, Schwab's Drug Store and Joe's apartment, etc. In the film itself, we see shots in the film of the trolley car on Bunker Hill, which does not now exist. Bunker Hill itself was erased to make way for freeways and, in the fifty years from 1933 to 1982, 50,000 dwellings were demolished in the downtown area. Any attempt to remember what Hollywood was and where it is located thus transforms into urban myth and social imaginary.²⁸ Ironically, the city that has generated most of cinema history disappears into nothingness as does film itself. Like the character of Rita in *Mulholland Drive*, Hollywood renders us amnesiac as we seek to find clues and answers across the illusion of cinema history.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #1 (Americana)*, 2004, Video Still.

CHAPTER 2

Aberrations: Screen Memory/Screen Idol and the Aesthetics of Camp

“Everybody has their own America, and then they have the pieces of a fantasy America that they think is out there, but they can’t see.” – Andy Warhol

Sigmund Freud’s case study of male neurosis, *The Wolf Man*, contains one of the most strikingly visual and aesthetically intriguing aspects of his work. Through the words of his patient, Sergei Pankejeff, Freud explores *screen memories* by means of interpretation of dreams and particular objects that cause phobias and anxieties.²⁹ Although I do not necessarily agree with Freud’s analysis, I find his use of cinema-like terminologies to frame the events interesting, for example, ‘episodes’, ‘scenes’ and ‘screen memories’ and his highly detailed visual descriptions. The dreams and memories are highly aestheticised and, in turn, become part of Freud’s analysis of the primal scene and of the foundation of the Oedipal theory. The *Wolf Man* case study provides a useful interpretation of the symbolic representation of dreams and memories, and I will link these findings with Lacan’s theory of mirroring, the imaginary and cinema, and also return to the work of Bellour and his Freudian interpretation of Norman Bates in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*.

The screen memory that becomes central to the Wolf Man’s case study is known as the *Grusha* scene. Freud calls this recollection a ‘screen memory’ because he connects it with something more important that is hidden from the

patient. The patient recalls that when he was very young he chased a butterfly with yellow stripes, large wings and pointed projections. When the butterfly landed on a flower, he became very frightened and ran away screaming.³⁰ Sometime later, in another session, the patient stated that the opening and closing of a butterfly's wings reminded him of a woman opening her legs forming the shape of a Roman V. Freud then makes a connection between this and the hour that the patient becomes depressed which was usually at 5pm each day. What lay behind the screen memory of the butterfly was another memory. The word for 'pear' in the Wolf Man's language was 'grusha' and this was also the name of his nursery-maid. Freud states that the Wolf Man had connected her name with a type of pear, grown in the region, which had bright yellow stripes. Freud makes a further connection that it was this girl whom the child had seen making movements with her legs. Soon there was another recollection where the patient remembered Grusha kneeling on the floor and beside her was a broom made of twigs and a bucket. She was teasing and scolding him for playing with himself and then threatened him (jokingly) with castration. Freud links this memory with the later primal scene of his father and mother. What stands out here, is the strong and deep emotional associations made between the objects, colours shapes and movements. The key visual elements had, in Freud's analysis, become highly charged with guilt, eroticism, anxiety, fear and love. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the power of cinema and the film still lies both in its ability to evoke the strong feelings associated with primacy and in the visual elements within a particular film. It is the cinematographic sequence of screen memories in childhood that is linked to the primary visual elements of cinema. The structure of film is such that film scenes can implicate

other scenes revealing layers of meaning and narrative.³¹ Freud's emphasis on the visual components in a screen memory or dream of the Wolf Man were also integral to his study of the fetish that emerged from the Oedipal complex. Worth noting is Sergei's own fascination with the visual elements and his obsessional neurosis. Freud asserts that all of these facets stem from the Grusha scene (and the wolf dream) and played a part in his mental and sexual fixations, his phobias and his relationships with others.

The dream-like qualities of cinema often evoke childhood emotions and memories. Similarly, visual memories often resemble the pleasure and trauma associated with fetishism. In cinema, this is often done via a system of complex narrative codes that are both cinematic and visual.³² This is interesting when considering Bellour's take on the primal scene and the stilling of the cinema image. In his analysis of the reception room scene in *Psycho* where Norman Bates invites Marion Crane for a sandwich amongst the stuffed birds, Bellour makes a number of intriguing assertions of the dream-like qualities of that scene. Annette Kuhn summarises Bellour's observations:

*"The film, or the sequence, is being treated as analogous to a dream, and analysed by unpacking the condensations and displacements at work in the text. Thus, the stuffed birds in the motel office are analysed as a condensed representation of a series of associations and issues governing the trajectory of the film – death mummification and voyeurism to name but a few."*³³

This unpacking of the visual components of a small part of a film, achieved through the slowing and stilling of the images and interpreted through the tool of psychoanalysis, allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the cinematic and narrative codes and to raise the viewing of the segment to the level of fetishistic voyeurism. It also reveals the ability of Hitchcock to force the audience to participate in Norman Bates's voyeurism; Marion sees the stuffed birds on the wall much as we see them, however we are also able to observe Norman watching her like a bird of prey zeroing in on its quarry.

One artist whose work is steeped in childhood memory and Freudian symbolism is Gregory Crewdson, whose father practiced Freudian Psychoanalysis from their Park Slope home. Crewdson was able to overhear fragments of his father's sessions where patients discussed their dreams. For Crewdson, these accounts helped him to develop a sense of the magical and the uncanny in the urban and suburban.³⁴ His memories of his father's patients are fused with his own dreams, television, movies, punk music and teen romances. The uncanny properties of his images present fragments of narrative and dreamlike states into a striking aesthetic form utilised by the directness of the photographic. His work is a dramatisation of his own memories and dreams, employing the production values and techniques of a film director. I find his use of cinematic lighting to be his strongest aesthetic element. Much of his work resembles the lighting in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The film was released around the same time he overheard his father's front room sessions. Many of the characters and props in his tableau film stills are metonymically representative of authority or nature and are assembled with a sense of child

like play.³⁵ Crewdson believes that the process of photography is about creating other worlds that taps into memory and childhood.

In film semiology, it is often stated that film communicates meanings via the short circuit of the iconic and the symbolic that provides immediate interpretation. This is also true of the photographic – an image is what it is. However the indexical lies half way between both the iconic and the symbolic and is useful for us to understand the connotation of film. A director often uses metonymy to communicate a character's state of mind and emotion. A visual element or elements often hold the key to understanding a character and/or the *Mise en scène* and, thus, we construct meanings from what we see and what we don't see leaving open the possibility of multiple connotations.³⁶ It is these wider social mythologies of the connoted image that often have a much deeper dimension than is intended and can be best understood both subjectively and politically through the psychoanalytical theory of Lacan.

Lacan's theory of the 'mirror-stage' states that the infant child first encounters its own individuation by looking into a mirror. The child sees itself as fragmented and dependant, an aberration of itself. In order to claim a form of unity (and to make sense of itself in the world), the mirror experience triggers the creation of the *imaginary*. According to Lacan, it is the imaginary that sustains our belief in what we are seeing on the motion picture screen. We construct meanings, events and people from the images that pass by through the imaginary. The illusion of the film interacts with the illusion we have of ourselves and we are positioned in this encounter with the motion picture like a child watching itself in

the mirror³⁷. Film theorists of the latter 20th century have asserted that this illusion created and sustained by the imaginary also guides our own perceptions and illusions in the creation of a psychoanalytic dimension to the political. The state apparatus³⁸ of the media and cinema often defines and perpetuates these ideas and is the site for the reproduction and dispersal of capitalist and patriarchal ideologies. Like the visual elements in the Wolf Man's memories, the visual elements of cinema often hold deeper meanings that define ourselves and also the culture we live in. All of the *Screen Test* works embody this principle. In the process of creating each work the visual elements of a film scene are highly aestheticised and imbued with subjective meanings of self, identity, culture, politics, gender and place. One of the aims of my practice is to tease out these subjective meanings and to make them evident in each work. It is ultimately the self that supports and creates these meanings. It is also the self that we mirror in the relationship we encounter when viewing cinema. We see ourselves, or aspects of ourselves, on the screen and this relationship is integral to the illusion of the film star. These aspects of ourselves are always a distortion or aberration of the self. The Hollywood film star is idolised through the subjective imaginary; we project our desires and our ideals onto these illusory stars. Since the mid 20th century, capitalism has exploited Hollywood film stars to support the illusion of beauty, wealth and fame that has become a strategic operation in global branding and marketing. The Lacanian mirror, and the illusions we have of ourselves and of celebrities, saturate popular culture and generate billions of dollars. Both the aesthetic schemata of Freud's interpretation of memories and dreams and Lacan's mirror theory in relation to cinema have been useful in positioning myself in my work. The distorted

versions of film characters and the aesthetic properties of each screen test that I inhabit reveal the subjective illusion created and projected by the self as audience.

Similarly, Andy Warhol concerned himself with the iconography of Hollywood and the consumption of the Hollywood star. Warhol produced his own cynical take on the Hollywood star system by filming his own screen tests and creating screen prints of Hollywood icons and other famous people. Arthur Danto, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University in New York, describes Warhol as fashioning himself like a machine or android whose mechanical reproduction of the products of Hollywood employs a cultural strategy of removing the evidence of his own hand from the process of making art.³⁹ Likewise, Peggy Phelan, the Professor of Performance Studies at NYU, explains that Warhol removes himself from his work in a deliberate attempt to show his absence. His disappearance, therefore, has an element of theatricality that creates a desire for his appearance.⁴⁰

Warhol's first Hollywood screen print tests were of Warren Beatty and Elvis Presley, and the project eventually culminated with the Marilyn series in 1963. The repetitive images embodied the American obsession with the consumption of fame and glamour, and its ubiquitous presence in the media. Warhol was creating a new art form that would define the iconography of Hollywood screen culture and Warhol's own obsession with fame and glamour that, like his Campbell soup cans and Coca Cola bottles, would exemplify the

democratisation of those products. He saw American society as consuming its stars in the same way that it consumed its products of mass production.⁴¹

In the autumn of 1963, Warhol moved into the *silver factory* in Manhattan and ended this phase of his painting career, instead focussing on filmmaking. Many of Warhol's films challenged cinematic expectations. For example, *Empire* (Warhol's film of the Empire State Building) forced the audience to consider a static object as a moving image. Interestingly, at the premiere screening, Warhol spent more time watching the audience as they walked out, threw paper cups and booed than he did watching the film:

"Andy turned to me and said 'Gee do you think they hate it?'

*Empire was a film where nothing happened except how the audience reacted."*⁴²

With his film making, Warhol was also generating his own Hollywood dream factory. The film *Harlot*, for instance, featured the drag queen Mario Montez performing camp renditions of 1940s screen idols. Moreover, for the young and hip of the New York art scene, the factory was the place to see and be seen; people who came to the factory were photographed, filmed and, often, screen tested. Warhol produced over 500 screen tests, shot on 16mm black and white at 16 frames per second. He placed each *star* in front of the camera without the aide of props, script or direction. Often, as Mary Woronow recalls, Warhol left the subject to their own devices so that any attitude or posturing that they brought to the filming would melt away, thus revealing the true nature of that

person.⁴³ Warhol wanted to create his own versions of Hollywood stars and his democratisation of the Hollywood system seemed to pay off; often the people in his screen tests were given starring roles in his films and anyone who starred in one of his films became an instant underground art star. Indeed, Warhol himself emerged as a superstar who knew how to work the media, employed his own press agent and incited jealousy amongst those who worked with him.⁴⁴ He was, in fact, both a master at defining the aesthetics of camp in pop art and the epitome of artist as media personality.

In each of my own screen tests, I have attempted to inject my performance with a similar element of camp irony and, to some extent, an element of kitschy grotesqueness. Without this aspect, the work would be nothing more than a didactic demonstration of film and psychoanalytical schemata or political theory. It would be just an exercise in mimicry, a mere imitation of each film excerpt. By initially positioning myself as an armchair film critic, armed with a remote control and a DVD player, I am able to scour each fragment of cinema, looking for particular aesthetic elements in each shot that I can decide to use. The theories of Lacan and Freud best explain the unconscious dynamic of this process. (For example, am I attracted to particular scene and the objects, colours, and the period because it evokes a childhood memory or emotion? The answer is obviously 'yes'.) However, there is a further dimension to the process.

Parker Tyler, a Vanguard film critic who was originally a New York surrealist artist, rejected the post-war abstract expressionist movement and became a film critic due to the demise of the New York surrealist movement. Later in his

career, he wrote a number of books exploring psychoanalysis, underground cinema and the history of homosexuality in film.⁴⁵ Tyler's work operates as spectator serving as artist and critic – something that has been done throughout the history of modernism. Oscar Wilde is quoted as saying “surely criticism is an art...it does not require the finest materials, anything will serve his purpose.”⁴⁶ One of the hallmark practices of the early *avant-garde* of the 20th century was to collect the detritus of popular culture. Artists such as Kurt Schwitters and Kasimir Malevich remade mass culture in order to assert control over the materials of their lives. In doing so, they positioned themselves as both artist and critics, creating a better culture than the one that was offered.⁴⁷ Greg Taylor asserts that one of the key objectives of the *avant-garde* was to liberate art and make it accessible to the masses.⁴⁸ This objective always eluded vanguard artists because they were never able to resist a kind of elitist anti-elitism, which distanced them from mainstream society. The vanguard artist was able to democratise popular culture and become accessible to the masses in the area of film criticism, liberated from the shackles of art production. Vanguard film criticism was capable of success that Breton could never have imagined⁴⁹ and vanguard film critics like Parker Tyler tended to elevate the mythic psychological aspects of Hollywood to a level of camp spectatorship. Camp aesthetics are non-aesthetic made by the artist/critic who seeks to lay claim to mainstream culture and manipulate it to suit him or herself, giving the cultural artefact a make over. This transformative process is central to the critical undertakings of camp as described by Greg Taylor in his examination of Parker Tyler's analysis of a Disney Cartoon:

“His associational method, justified by assumed interrelation of psyche, culture, and myth, allows him to discuss film against a series of backgrounds (sociological, historical, mythic, cultural, psychological).”⁵⁰

Essentially what Parker Tyler is doing is heightening the mundane surface of a film to the level of cultural aesthetic experience. Tyler believed that Hollywood was only capable of producing empty and naïve narratives that the camp critic was able to reclaim and transform. However this was always done in the spirit of fun and irony, a kitsch reworking of Hollywood classics. Camp is, as Susan Sontag states,⁵¹ something that is exhibited outwardly, a way of seeing the world not in terms of beauty but in terms of artifice or stylisation. There is something of the ridiculous and the absurd (which can be seen as camp) in the creation of each *Screen Test*. By daring to take on some of the great iconic stars of Hollywood and to feign the space of a screen idol, I reclaim cinema and transform its surfaces.

CHAPTER 3

Hollywood and Hypermasculinity: Blokes, Bombs & Bibles

*"Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room."*⁵²

One of the key narrative themes in Hollywood cinema is the perpetuation of masculine stereotypes, specifically American hero films. The action/war film and the western stand out as two obvious examples of the imaginary in masculine culture, through the sustaining of the cowboy and war hero myths. The western although not necessarily *about* masculinity, has been the site for male audiences to play out what it is to be a man.⁵³ Westerns have been central to supporting and keeping alive male fantasies of heroism, power and violence as well as fantasies around wilderness and civilization and the occupation of the American frontier.⁵⁴ Michael Crichton's 1973 film *Westworld* is an early example of hypermasculinity pushed beyond its limits, not by a man but by a hypermasculine robot. Interestingly, *Westworld* was made at time when the western had become marginalised in favour of new forms of masculine fantasy including the western itself.⁵⁵ Following World War II, Hollywood cinema had begun to reflect upon and question masculine ideals⁵⁶ and yet cinema always returned to themes that exploited hypermasculine heroes and the dominant American ideologies that surround them. *Westworld* also acts as a pre-cursor to later films such as *Terminator*. In both films, the main character's nemesis is a robot with a single mission to search, kill and destroy. Where the films differ is that the robot gunslinger of *Westworld* is doing so due to a malfunction in his programming; the robot is literally out of control. This enhances the robots

menace and could be seen to refer to the potential for technology (or the war machine) to go out of control and destroy us (a common trope). There are elements of the hyperreal⁵⁷ and the simulacra⁵⁸ here, too; the robot has been assembled as a cowboy in a theme park for tourists to have an 'authentic' experience of the Old West.

Later hypermasculine films, like those starring Sylvester Stallone (*Rocky*, *Rambo*) and Arnold Schwarzenegger (*Terminator*, *True Lies*), seem to be a protest, even a backlash, against a reformation of masculine ideals in Hollywood and perhaps America itself. For example, recently we have seen another resurgence in the Stallone characters of Rocky and Rambo (*Rocky Balboa*, 2006 and *Rambo IV*, 2008, respectively), playing on the insecurities of the post-9/11 American psyche and presenting the reassuring image of the battle-weary but eventually triumphant masculine hero. Rachel Adams provides an interesting analysis of analogous links between masculine identity, the male body and political eras. She argues that if the Reagan Era of the 1980s could be said to be characterised by its links between the presidency, the stories, the stars and iconography of Hollywood film (as exemplified by the hard bodies of Stallone and Schwarzenegger), then masculine and national identity must be renegotiated with each new president.⁵⁹ It follows, then that the Clinton era was characterised by a softer male body that resonated with the gathering media hype surrounding the metrosexual male and heads of state crying in public. In keeping with the times, Stallone played an ordinary aging overweight cop in *Copland* (1997). Audiences were used to seeing the hard body of Rocky as the epitome of the ideal masculine. A shot of Stallone's protruding naked gut in a

preview of *Copland* caused such an uproar with the audience that the scene was cut from the final version. Stallone even made public appearances with Clinton in which he made statements about the difficulties he had experienced in losing weight, thus situating his masculine body in the feminised terrain of dieting and weight loss.⁶⁰ Conversely, the George Bush era – the so-called Age of Terror – has seen a return to the hypermasculine ideals of the previous eras, tinged with both paranoia and megalomania. In an article on Leo Braudy's book *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*, Melbourne Age reporter Reed Johnson discusses the complex face of masculinity as seen in the media during the war in Iraq; heartbroken, macho-cool or terror stricken. Typifying our era, the images we are presented with are of buff marines in designer combat-wear or Staff Sergeant Chad Touchett smoking a cigar while sprawled across one of Saddam's sissy French-style stairs.⁶¹ America espouses a compassionate nature whilst bombing civilians in its pre-emptive strike attack on Iraq. R.W. Connell explains that on a global scale, the growing European and American gender order is expanding into the colonised world. The idea that the traditional male sex role is softening is anything but the reality. As the world capitalist order expands, with local labour linked to global markets, local versions of Western patriarchal systems are installed.⁶²

Thus, the actions I perform as the robot gunslinger in *Screen Test #2* distil and embody the Hollywood hypermasculine robot killing machines into a simple repetitive action: aim, shoot and fire. In keeping with the interior studio lighting throughout the American series, and adding a camp twist, the backdrop used in



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #2 (Americana)*, 2004, Video Still.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #2(Americana)*, 2004 - 08, C-type print on aluminium, 140cm x 100cm.

Screen Test #2 is a painting of Hill End, a gold mining tourist town in New South Wales, by artist David Pavich. The survival of Hill End relies on keeping alive the romantic mythology of the Australian pioneer and the imaginary of the Goldrush. Like the *Westworld* theme park, a tourist entering the town steps into a simulacra of the past and relives a history where one can try panning for gold and visit the town pub and general store. Hill End also has a history of artists living and working in the town, such as Donald Friend and Russell Drysdale, and today this aspect of its history is promoted and revived through artist residencies, adding to the mythologies surrounding Australian landscape painting. *Screen Test #2* sees the beginning of one of the primary aesthetic strategies employed in my practice. The use of the Hill End painting as a backdrop serves two purposes. Firstly, by shifting the background from the outside desert location of the original to an interior painted backdrop of an Australian site injects new cultural meanings, I reclaim the distilled actions of the robot gunslinger and transform the intention of the original. Secondly, this transformation allows for the visual components of a shot to become aesthetic building blocks and narrative codes that can be shifted around and built upon to suit the desired aesthetic experience. As with *Screen Test #1*, I build upon the costuming, make, up props and backdrops. Each visual piece removed from the original becomes the material of my own subjective aesthetic experience of the film, achieved initially through the examination of the slowed and stilled original and then painstaking recreation and interpretation of the original.

At the completion of *Screen Test #2*, I produced the first of two works that augment the *Screen Test* videos and photographs and have an exhibition

history of their own. The first work, *Screen Idol (Americana)*, was made for the Sherman Galleries 'artbox' space. In a sense it distills *Screen Test #1* and *Screen Test #2* into a video and photographic sculptural lightbox, and is a humorous take on gender and movie stardom. The idea germinated when I, as already narrated in Chapter 1, noticed Norma Desmond's table full of photographs in *Sunset Boulevard*. *Screen Idol (Americana)* is a deliberate exercise in camp kitsch. Over a period of months, I collected vintage photo frames on ebay, and then inserted polaroids and black and white contact prints from each *Screen Test* shoot in them. For the images of myself reenacting Norma Desmond, I used porcelain floral photo frames that are perfect examples of mid-20th century Americana kitsch. For the robot gunslinger, the frames used are souvenir photo frames dating from World War II right back to the US Civil. Families used these patriotic themed photograms, which were often government issued, to display photographs of their sons in uniform, whether on duty or dead in combat. Both sets of images were displayed on a tiered acrylic lightbox; Norma Desmond's numerous iterations (like Warhol's *Marilyn gone wrong*) are surrounded by relics of the fake jewels used in the *Screen Test #1* shots on the lowest tier, and on the second level (to indicate dominance and power) the robot gunslinger's repeated image is surrounded by bullet casings. In a play on still and motion images, a miniature video screen mounted in a photo frame plays a loop of Norma Desmond and the robot gunslinger performing their actions repetitively.



Screen Idol(Americana) Detail view of photo frames.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Idol (Americana)*, 2005, Installation view, Sherman Galleries, Artbox, Sydney. Acrylic lightbox, porcelain, brass, cardboard, bullet cases, crystal, polaroids, silver gelatin contact prints, LCD screen, DVD, 70cm x 90cm 80cm.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #3 (Americana) - The War Room*, 2005, Installation view, Blankspace, Sydney. Acrylic, wood, aluminium, lightbulbs, digital jet print on paper, DVD, Widescreen monitor.

In *Screen Test #3*, I expand the shifting aesthetic-building process to create a contemporary rendering of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove* that examines masculinity and identity in the era of George W. Bush. . Using the scene known as the 'six points of General Turgidson' as raw material, I explore the genre of the war film and create the only dialogue piece in all of the works. *Dr Strangelove* is a black comedy that examines the insanity and absurdities of the cold war, although Kubrick returned to the theme of the futility of war later in *Full Metal Jacket* and had explored it earlier in *Paths of Glory*. *Screen Test #3* was my direct response to the *Iraqi Freedom* campaign of 2003. My choice to use *Dr Strangelove* was based on an observation made by my partner that there was an uncanny physical resemblance between General Turgidson (played by George C. Scott) and General Tommy Franks, the commander in charge of the *Iraqi Freedom* operations.⁶³ In *Dr Strangelove*, the president of the United States has called a meeting in the War Room, though in reality the Pentagon has no war room. The War Room is a fictitious place existing only in the social imaginary, and is often depicted in Hollywood war films as the place where generals discuss war strategies with the president. Audiences need a War Room to bolster their belief that the might of the American military is getting the job done and is succeeding in keeping the world safe from the perceived enemy. In 2003, the US government built its own version of a war room from which Tommy Franks issued daily statements to the press involving digital animations, maps, bombing patterns and strategies. In this war room set, purpose designed by Hollywood art director George Allison, the 'theatre of war' was played out daily for the media. An Australian correspondent for ABC Radio's *AM* program reported:



US Military Photograph of General Tommy Franks, in Command Centre, Iraq War, 2003.



Black and White press photo of General Tommy Franks, 2003.

“George Allison may not be a household name but his credits include a host of MGM and Disney movies... No one is shouting “hooray for Hollywood” just yet, but the Americans believe they’ve set the scene for a successful media campaign.”⁶⁴

In another report in the *Toronto Globe*, George Allison was quoted as saying:

“I like to achieve a level of detail that makes it difficult to distinguish a set from reality.”⁶⁵

I used this quote as part of an installation entitled *The War Room*, but it also stated my goal for constructing the set in which to produce *Screen Test #3*, based on *Dr Strangelove*; I wanted to make the war room look “really real”. The set itself was constructed from a number of elements in order to create the appearance both of a period pressroom and the war room in *Dr Strangelove*. Firstly, I created a backdrop from a map of South East Asia, which was inspired the control centre map used in *Casino Royale* (1967), although the map’s location was altered from the original’s Northern Hemisphere. I placed a 1960s microphone on top of a desk emblazoned with a star emblem and then placed a stuffed bird to the right of the desk in a visual reference to *Psycho* and the taxidermy birds in Norman Bates’ parlour. Significantly, this was the first instance in which I used a visual reference from a second film for a *Screen Test* project, and, in referencing in *Psycho*, thus adopted the narrative codes of *Psycho*’s Norman Bates and fetishised the object. This reference is fused with the insanity of war and mass murder as portrayed by Turgidson; Norman Bates,



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #3(Americana)*, 2005 - 08, C-type print
on aluminium, 140cm x 100cm.

although timid and seemingly lacking Turgidson's machismo, was thought to symbolise the 'enemy within' when first screened in the US.

Screen Test #3 features dialogue, through which it transforms post 9/11 paranoia of the present into a performance of ironic camp hypermasculinity and madness. The video component opens with Little Marcy singing *I'm In the Lord's Army* while the general appears from an animated star. The use of Little Marcy, an early 1970s children's puppet used in bible belt Sunday Schools, signifies (with camp irony) the agenda of the American religious right and connects the character of General Turgidson with contemporary American policy⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷ before leading into the dialogue. Before filming, I studied every nuance and mannerism of General Turgidson's speech over and over on DVD, using the methodology previously described, however for my performance, I substituted 'Terrorist' instead of 'Russian' or 'Communist', thus altering the visual and narrative codes. The dialogue piece ends with the General admitting that, in striking first, the US had already invalidated its own policy, thus highlighting Kubrick's prophetic and satiric vision of military madness and presaging America's pre-emptive strike on Iraq in 2003 against UN protocols. From there, *Screen Test #3* descends into a frenetic simulated war game played to the sound of Benny Goodman's *Sing, Sing, Sing* to evoke a sense of wartime nostalgia. While aerial photographs of Saddam's Baghdad palaces and an animation of a fighter plane model used in the war repetitively bombs them, I repeat a line of dialogue from Kubrick's screenplay over and over. The repetition, in part, signifies Kubrick's reputation for making actors do multiple, even scores, of takes of scene so that he was able to see every possible

variation and interpretation of the scene. I tried to achieve a similar effect in my performance by practicing the dialogue every day for several weeks. The final version is of several takes, edited together to create the entire sequence.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #3 (Americana)*, 2005, Video Still.

Chapter Four

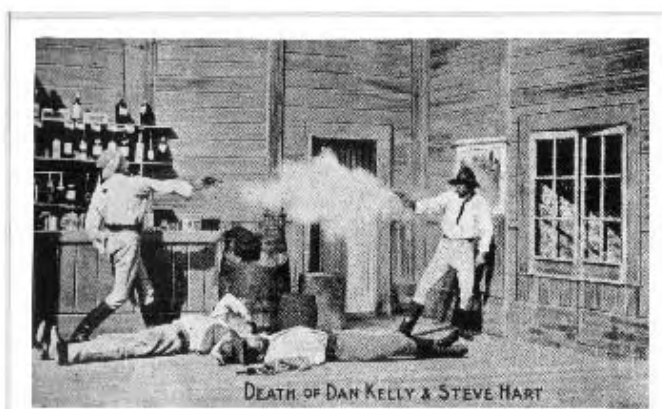
Cinema and Loss: Landscape, Trauma and the Low Self Esteem of Australian Cinema.

“May you dream of the devil and wake in fright” – an old curse

A survey of Australian film reveals the dominance of American culture that dates back to the beginnings of cinema itself. Hollywood hangs like a shroud that dogs every attempt to succeed in creating a uniquely Australian cinema and the telling of our own stories. Hollywood and British studios have sought to define our identity through cinema and Australians have mostly embraced that support. However, regardless of whether they are by local or international directors, one thing we can be certain of is that the Australian landscape is the star of films shot in Australia. Similarly, Australian masculine identity is also explored and defined through film. To present a history of masculinity in Australian cinema is to expose the raw and tragic underbelly of Australian culture, often set in the mythical social imaginary of the Australian bush or the outback and defined by the geographical settings of those landscapes both real and imagined. The roles played by Australian actors often end in violence and self-destruction; they are tragic figures rather than Hollywood’s gleaming heroes. With this in mind, *Screen Test (Australiana)* emerged from the shadows *Screen Test (Americana)* to form the second part of the project.

In 1906, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, possibly the world’s and certainly Australia’s first feature length film, was shot in Heidelberg on the outskirts of

Melbourne on the family estate of director Charles Tait's wife Elizabeth. Tait, the older brother of film entrepreneurs John and Nevin, belonged to a show business family that had teamed up with two chemists and began screening films to large crowds at St Kilda Beach and the Melbourne Cricket Ground as early as 1904.⁶⁸ When the final version of *The Story of The Kelly Gang* was completed in 1910, it ran for over an hour and presented a range of events in the history of the Kelly brothers' bushranger career. There were no titles in the film and it relied on groups of actors and foley artists to tell the story and create sound effects. The audience response to the film underpins the trajectory of Australian mythmaking and the romance of the Australian bushranger. The audiences cheered the Kelly brothers as heroes and viewed the police as the enemy, which was, of course, the unapologetic intent of the films makers. The extraordinary response to the film was reflected by the huge box office sales both nationally and abroad. The film returned huge profits⁶⁹ until 1912 when the Victorian government banned the film.⁷⁰ Later that same year, federal government first censored and then banned all bushranger films in the belief that they were corrupting the minds of Australian children, especially boys. It took the Australian film industry 60 years to recover, but no Australian film has ever engendered such enthusiasm or success as *The Story of the Kelly Brothers*. The ban on bushranger films allowed, as Marilyn Dooley of the Screen Sound Archives in Canberra asserts, "Australia to become culturally colonised by the Hollywood cowboy".⁷¹ Indeed, the vacuum created by the ban was filled by kangaroo cowboy films, which were a genre of American westerns, directed and produced in Australia by Hollywood actors Wilfred Lucas and Bes Meredith. These films were neither good Australian nor good American films



CHARLES TAIT: *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, National Screen Sound Archives
Film still, postcard, 1906.

and were dismissed by the Australian Actors Association and the press of the day as having too many handkerchiefs and revolvers.⁷² By 1926, the Australian government ordered a Royal Commission into the crisis of Australia's struggling film industry. The dumping of poor quality American films into the market, the report revealed, was damaging the Australian film industry. The film distributors who worked for or were a part of American companies were seen as responsible for undermining the Australian film industry. From its earliest conception, cinema in Australia has been sabotaged by its mimicry of American culture and its erasure, through policy and profit motivations, of an Australian voice. Moreover, as Justine Saunders states, "Aboriginal people were never acknowledged for the part they played in early Australian cinema."⁷³

Australia is still struggling to define itself with a viable film industry, even a century later. I see this phenomenon as the antithesis of American culture and Hollywood. Australia is constantly coping with a sense of cultural low self-esteem that can be reflected in notions of cultural cringe and the subordination of art as an elitist and marginalised industry. We value sporting achievements far more than any cultural contributions. Indeed, if cultural contributions do receive recognition, that recognition comes first from somewhere other than in Australia. Similarly, when Australians appear in films, it is usually a Hollywood production and the actor speaks with an American accent, once again silencing the Australian voice.

Charles Chauvel is, arguably, the only filmmaker up until the 1970s who was able to give Australia a voice. Chauvel began working in film in the 1920s and

built up a repertoire of locally made films, although he was named in the Royal Commission of 1927 as one of the filmmakers who were responsible for Americanising Australian cinema. Reviewers have described Chauvel as exhibiting a dynamic grasp of contemporary Hollywood cinema.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, when Chauvel attempted to establish a serious documentary approach to the opening sequence in *Jedda*, it ended up resembling a B-grade Hollywood western and is a good example of the kangaroo cowboy effect. Additionally, the left dismissed the opening sequence's British ethnographic style of presentation (reminiscent of a primary school lesson in Australian geography) as racist rubbish.⁷⁵ *Jedda*'s patronising discussion of Aboriginality is a telling reminder of the attitude of white Australian in regards to assimilation and segregation.⁷⁶ The film haunts modern audiences with the legacy and trauma of the Stolen Generations, acted out in Chauvel's interior studio of the cattle station. Tracy Moffatt used this setting as a site of exploration in her short film, *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*. Moffatt's works, rooted in personal childhood experience and images from popular culture, fuse the compositional and aesthetic modes of post-war Australian Landscape painting with her own personal history of being fostered to a white mother.⁷⁷ The reference point for *Night Cries* is the opening scene in *Jedda*, with an emphasis on the mother and daughter relationship. Moffatt recreates the interior of the cattle station where Jedda was raised and spent time with her mother learning the white man's ways. Moffatt, however, fast-forwards to some thirty years later and reenacts an adult Jedda looking after her geriatric mother.⁷⁸ Moffatt's use of a vibrant colour palette from Namatjira's landscapes, staged theatrical lighting and props heighten the aesthetic components of the original set. The railway station is also reminiscent

of Tiboonda Station in Ted Kotcheff's *Wake in Fright*. *Night Cries* is a powerful and deeply moving account of loss and separation, making an aesthetically stylised image and reinterpreting a fragment of Australian cinema.

Kenneth Cook's descriptions of life in the Australian outback in his novel *Wake in Fright* make reference to American cultural intrusions, such as the songs of the American hit parade playing on the radio. Throughout the book, Cook describes how the consumption of American culture (cars, guns, movies and songs, etc.) is washed down with cold beer and is tinged with sadness and isolation:

*"He stood looking at the picture crowd and wondered why the celluloid image of American culture should have penetrated so far into this desolate land. Strange it was that these withered and weathered people of the west should be fascinated with by some American director's concept of war; that they should pay to come from their wooden homes to sit in discomfort for hours, dripping sweat, to watch a badly scratched film of purely formal heroics."*⁷⁹

The film *Wake in Fright*, directed by Ted Kotcheff in 1971, was made at the end of the era when films were made by overseas directors and featured American or British stars. Tony Buckley, who worked on the film and is responsible for its rediscovery,⁸⁰ describes *Wake in Fright* as the most important film ever made in Australia⁸¹ for its gritty and honest portrayal of the Anglo Australian male and

depiction of the culture of alcohol, violence, homophobia and self destruction. Brian McFarlane states that the film's honesty and depiction of the ugly aspects of Australian outback life is because it is seen through the eyes of a Canadian director.⁸² This seems like an apologia in support of an Australian story being told by a Canadian, since the film copies almost verbatim the book written by the Australian author Kenneth Cook.

In *Screen Test #5 (Australiana)*, I interpret Kotcheff's rendering of Kenneth Cook's *Wake in Fright* through a series of actions taken directly from the film: the suicide scene and the drunken brawl during the roo shooting scene. I perform the teacher and the doctor morphed together into one character by means of carefully selected and tightly edited shots: running towards the shack, two-up pennies over my eyes, yelling and smashing bottles outside the pub and the suicide.⁸³ The location used for *Screen Test #5 (Australiana)* embraces the cultural colonisation described in the book. On a location scout, I found an abandoned petrol station off the Bells Line of Road in the Blue Mountains. The ambience of this traumatised, derelict petrol station was reminiscent of one of Ed Ruscha's gasoline stations⁸⁴ gone wrong. Douglas Crimp recalls finding a copy of Ruscha's book in the New York Public Library transportation section and wanting to let the library know the book was a work of art and therefore belonged in the art section. He later realised that the book did not make sense in the library's system of classification and this of course is part of its appeal⁸⁵. My use of the petrol station as the set thus signifies the dilemma of Ruscha's book, of not belonging, and the narrative of displacement played out by the John Grant in *Wake in Fright*. Moreover, the roadhouse petrol stations in *Wake*



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #5(Australiana)*, 2006-08, C-type print on alluminium, 140cm x 100cm.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #5 (Australiana)*, 2006, Video Still.



JOHN A DOUGLAS *Screen Test # 4 (Australiana)* , production still and publicity image, 2006



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Idol (Australiana) - Wake up and Puke*, Installation view IDG, 2006. Acrylic Lightbox material, LCD screen, DVD, found photo frame, beer bottle glass, Australian currency(pennies),

in Fright are often also pubs. I located 1970s *West End* and *Southwark* beer bottle labels (the kinds used in the film) on ebay and pasted them onto the beer bottles. I also located period signage, including a Vincent's Powders⁸⁶ sign, for around the petrol station door. These signs not only denote the products that they are advertising but also signify the culture of alcohol and substance abuse that was so vividly fetishised in the book and the film. It is interesting that such harmful products have become cultural icons. I also restage the violent and out of control drunken behaviour that is central to the films narrative structure.

From this shoot, I also produced another smaller *Screen Idol* lightbox, titled *Screen Idol (Australiana) – Wake Up and Puke*. As with the earlier *Screen Idol (Americana)*, I inserted an LCD screen into a picture frame, in this case a kitschy wooden triptych photo frame in the shape of Australia, which played a video loop of myself as the drunken doc yelling “you bastard” to the sound of the men cheering him on. I scattered the relics of the shoot (broken beer bottle glass and the two up pennies) around the photo frame on the lightbox. This work distils the *Screen Test* performance of *Wake in Fright* into an aestheticised object, amplifying the ugly realities exposed in the film and Australian masculine culture.

Melbourne artist Brendan Lee’s work seeks to encompass the broad spectrum of criminality and larrikinism in Australian film history. He explores the decline in Australian masculine culture, including its distinctive language. Citing *The Story of the Kelly Gang* as an early example of antagonism towards the authorities, Lee traverses this motif, including *Wake in Fright*, *Chopper* and *Ghost’s of the*



BRENDAN LEE: *Two Birds With One Stone*, 2 channel video installation view, AGNSW, 2006.

Civil Dead. Through close ups of an ex-criminal performing spoken expletives taken from the cannon of Australian cinema, Lee's work *Two Birds With One Stone*, seeks to disturb the viewers passive stance towards the filmic image.⁸⁷ The short punchy effect created in the two suicides that I depict in the *Screen Test (Australiana)* series also achieves this. I wanted to shake the audience from its complacency and challenge expectations of what it will see in video and the photographic.

Nicholas Roeg's 1971 film, *Walkabout*, depicts another example of male suicide in the outback. Unlike John Grant in *Wake in Fright*, who attempts suicide because he is trapped in the outback and can't get back to Sydney, the father character goes to the outback in order to effect murder and suicide, attempting to kill his children and successfully taking his own life. Roeg's vision is clearly a more stylised interpretation of Australia and the outback, exploring symbolic and imaginary notions of paradise lost and the noble savage. Firstly, Roeg gives the impression that a drive to the outback is within easy reach of Sydney, creating an unrealistic impression of geographic distance, and thus setting up a visual shorthand to estrange the audience from the landscape. This estrangement is emphasised by the daughter setting up a picnic on the hard desert ground with the radio playing in the background, all of which appears alien to the surrounds. When the father tries to shoot his children, he does so in a very cold and unemotional way and then, in his own madness, sets fire to the family car and shoots himself. Louis Nowra interprets this scene as "modern society driving us mad" and the shocking suicide as an example of this madness.⁸⁸ This aspect of the film is often overlooked, so I extended this scene in *Screen Test #4* and

drew out the aesthetic elements and actions that would stand in juxtaposition to *Screen Test #5* (exhibited together they were titled *Screen Test (Australiana) – A Suicidal Synthesis*).

My interpretation of the *Walkabout* suicide scene is highly subjective and personal, yet it evokes the nightmare of the Australian dream as a lived childhood experience. If we take the entire opening sequence of *Walkabout* as an account of a middle class Australian male who has it all (an apartment on the harbour, swimming pool and children in private schools, etc.), then we can see the attempted murder and successful suicide as a metonymy of the frustration of trying to keep it all together. The suicide in *Walkabout* depicts a controlled and internalised frustration, characteristic of the quietness of suburbia, that juxtaposes the externalised, out of control drunken madness depicted in *Wake in Fright*. Every prop used in *Screen Test #4* denotes and signifies the orderliness of suburbia, from the neatly laid out period picnic set with the brightly coloured utensils, and the cut fruit, radio and children's toys set on an Australiana tablecloth, through to the neat 1960s business suit and the family car.⁸⁹ In each shot, we see in extended detail the destruction of this order with the exploding picnic set and the burning car.

The children are absent from my reenactment of Roeg's opening sequence, highlighting the central narrative of the film and one of the key mythologies in the imaginary of European settlement in Australia – the lost child. Fear, loss and isolation played out in the Australian bush are repeated motifs in Australian art, literature and cinema history and lies deep in the Australian psyche. Ross

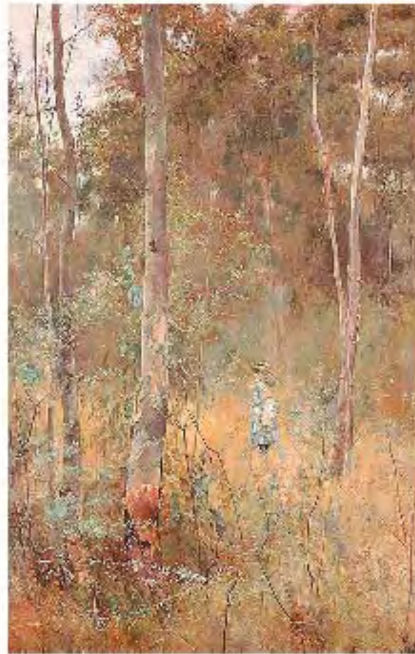


JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #4 (Australian)*, 2006 - 08, C-type print on aluminium, 140cm x 80cm.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, Screen Test #4 (*Australiana*), 2006, Video Still.

Gibson explores this fear in his study of 'land gone wrong' titled *Badlands* in which he describes Australia's most famous badland as the Outback. Citing Charles Sturt's diary entries,⁹⁰ Gibson believes that Sturt, as the consummate mythmaker, is integral to fostering the anxieties of those living in the colonies settlements and imbining them with a sense of vulnerability while also providing comfort that they can draw on in the knowledge of being far away from the Outback's terror.⁹¹ The lost child story was first immortalised by 19th century painter Frederick McCubbin and his two works, simply titled *Lost* (1886) and *Lost* (1907), are the most famous visual representations of this story. Both of the renderings of the Australian colonial nightmare were based on actual incidents of lost children reported in the press at the time.⁹² McCubbin succeeds in suggesting the seductive allure of the Australian bush that tempts children to wander from home. His works have been described as exalting the commonplace in colonial Australia into visual clichés, thus becoming an entry point for many urban Australian's understanding of the bush in the century to follow.⁹³ In the 1950s, the 'lost child' became the topic for a British documentary titled *The Back of Beyond* and movies such as *Little Boy Lost*. One film, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* germinated the renaissance of Australian cinema of the 1970s. Its dream-like qualities and juxtaposition of the genteel girls with the grandeur of the rock and the suffocating heat play with the mystique and mythology of the bush. Peter Weir evokes the Australian social imaginary of the 'lost child' and the terror of the landscape through the lens of the camera and the soundtrack. Artists Brendan Lee and the culture-jamming duo, Soda_Jerk, have drawn upon the legacy of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, absorbing it into the vernacular of contemporary Australian video art. Today, stories of being lost in the bush and



FREDERICK McCUBBIN, *Lost*, 1886, oil on canvas,



FREDERICK McCUBBIN, *Finding Clara Crosbie three weeks lost in the bush*, Australasian Sketcher, 1885.

the mythologised terror of the Australian landscape continue to be documented in contemporary news media and dramatised in Hollywood cinema such as *Evil Angels*, depicting the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain, and more recently, *Wolf Creek*. Tapping into fears of the outback and the bush that have become internationalised through news coverage of the murder of Peter Falconi in the Northern Territory and the serial killer Ivan Milat's backpackers murders, *Wolf Creek* draws on visual and narrative codes of Australian films of the 1970s such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Wake in Fright*. Ironically, John Jarratt, who played Mick, the serial killer in *Wolf Creek*, had a significant role in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Many of the stories of lost children take place on the margins of settlements, the fringe of cities. I therefore chose to situate *Screen Test #4* not the Outback like Roeg's *Walkabout*, but instead in a bushland location on the outskirts of Sydney. The actual site used was a recycling depot in the northern suburbs of Sydney, which has a history of being used for television commercials and films. This screen test required a great deal of planning and coordination due to its complexity and special effects. I employed a large crew, including the local fire brigade (see appendix) and a pyrotechnics team, to oversee the special effects such as the burning car, the gun shots, exploding picnic set and a pump, concealed in the back of the suit jacket, which spurted fake blood when I fired the Barretta pistol at my head. The sound mix used *London Bridge is Falling Down* recorded from the vintage children's toy record player in order to signify and emphasise English culture and settlement as the origin of Australian suburbia.

Screen Test #4 paved the way for a future work that required a location in a lost and neglected part of the outback – the Hay Plains in New South Wales. I used this site to further explore Ross Gibson's traumatised landscapes and to bring together elements of Hollywood iconography and American photography, thus fusing it with the myth of the Australian outback.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test (Australiana) - A Suicidal Synthesis*, 2006
2 channel video projection, Installation view First Draft Gallery.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test (Australiana) - A Suicidal Synthesis*, 2006
Promotional Image, First Draft Gallery.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test (Australiana) - A Suicidal Synthesis*, 2006, Performance Relics, Installation view First Draft Gallery.

Chapter Five

The Death of the Icon: Transfiguring Hollywood in the Australian Landscape.

“Madroad driving men ahead – the mad road, lonely, leading around the bend into the openings of space towards the horizon...” – Jack Kerouac

In 1955, Swiss born Robert Frank set out on a Guggenheim Fellowship to photograph America across 48 states, and in the process, captured a tragic and empty sadness that had never been seen before.⁹⁴ That same year, James Dean died in a car crash on a dusty Californian highway. Embodying the notion of the teen rebel and non-conformity, James Dean’s death transformed him into a god-like icon of Hollywood and American culture:

“The teen rebel transcended its origins in iconoclasm – in rejection of the status quo – and was itself elevated to iconic status, becoming a revered object of devotion.”⁹⁵

These two events formed part of the conceptual framework of *Screen Test #6* and transformed into a work based on impressions of George Steven’s *Giant*, played out in the desolation and emptiness of the Australian outback. The outcome was a photographic and video exhibition entitled *James Dean Jesus*, consisting of a number of works including *Screen Test #6*. These works intersect with European interpretations of the Australian landscape, ideas surrounding ‘truth’ in the documentary, trauma in historical accounts of

landscape and the transformation of the religiosity of Hollywood iconography into a heightened aesthetic experience.

Robert Frank's *The American* series has often been debated and compared to the photographs of his predecessor, Walker Evans.⁹⁶ Tod Papageorge argues Frank used Evan's work as an iconographical source for his own work, looking for not only a guide to what he could photograph in America, but a vision of what he might come to understand.⁹⁷ The photographic tradition of creating an America visually dates back to the mid 19th century. The pioneer landscape photographers of the 19th century saw themselves as documenting a *true* picture of America through images of landscape, territory and the wilderness presented as a Garden of Eden.

*"The assumption is that photographs stand in relation to vision, but vision detached from any particular viewer. It is a distributed vision, one that transcends individual subjectivity and, accordingly individual interest."*⁹⁸

The subjective works of Robert Frank make the assumption of the American landscape tradition problematic. Frank's search for an American vision is ruptured by his deeply poetic and emotional take of that vision. Roland Barthes states that the photograph, by definition, is capable only of transmitting a message simply by what it denotes.⁹⁹ Barthes further argues that the denotative status of the photograph, and the perfection of its plenitude, is capable of being mythical.¹⁰⁰ At the level of production, we can infer that the documentary

photograph has been constructed and aestheticised and, thus, the paradox of the photographic message can be seen as having two messages: one with a code and one without. It is the coded message that makes it possible to manipulate a photographic image to present an idea or myth of reality. Frank is engaged with constructing romanticised mythologies of ordinary Americans and the land that they inhabit. To a lesser extent, the photographic works of Walker Evans also employ this subjective strategy. This objective has spanned the histories of colonised territories, in particular America and Australia. Ross Gibson delves into these connotations of myth when examining the role of the *camera obscura* in the exploration and colonisation of the Australian landscape in the 19th century. Photographers such as Foelsche and Claire, among others, brought the traditions of Renaissance to bear on the Australian landscape, thus sharing a commonality with their American counterparts. Their photographs of explorers in the Outback and the Northern Territory often depict a manmade intervention such as a flag in order to exercise some form of compositional control over the landscape.¹⁰¹ This aspect of Australian photographic history is played out in Ross Gibson's film, *Camera Natura*, through the character of Thomas Watling. The monocular perspective of the camera is such that it continues to exert a pervasive power as a translation of reality itself. In one section of *Camera Natura*, Ross Gibson places a grid over the 19th century photographic images and uses a voice over to effect:

*"I am an English Draughtsman. I use line and measurement to domesticate wasteland."*¹⁰²

Through this, Ross Gibson clearly highlights the theme of making sense of the Australian landscape through a colonised European perspective. Watling was a Scottish painter and a convict, and Ross Gibson bases the character in his film on Watling's actual journal entries in which Watling related his melancholia and homesickness due to his struggle to represent what he saw. Watling becomes a dramatised version in *Camera Natura* of the inability of Europeans to comprehend the Australian landscape that has been documented since white settlement. Ross Gibson further explores melancholia in the landscape in his study of the *Horror Stretch* of Queensland, and the history of racial violence that establishes the region as a traumatised landscape. My series of work *Sites of Refusal*, which augments *Screen Test #6*, by means of an artistic and constructed intervention based on two images from Robert Frank's *The Americans* (*Car Accident US 66* and *US 285, New Mexico*) and the structures documented by Walker Evans in the deep south, brings together the stylised historical contexts of the documentary and its relationship between reality and myth making with the notion of Ross Gibson's traumatised Australian landscape.

Following his death in 1955, James Dean became a cult figure for youth culture, and young people adopted his mode of dress (blue jeans, etc.) as a mode of rebellion¹⁰³ (although Dean himself wore these clothes because he liked them not because they had any social significance).¹⁰⁴ Some fans even elevated Dean to the status of Jesus himself. Beulah Roth recalls:

“Like the two young women, members of a sect calling themselves ‘The Widows of James Dean’, who wrote to me from Berlin asking to be allowed to visit my house, to talk about HIM and to sit in HIS chair... dressed in unrelieved black, wearing wedding rings engraved with JBD on their right hands signifying the state of widowhood... I could hear Jimmy say ‘They’re spooky. They’re sick in the head!’ They kneeled in front of the chair chanting a petition and I was the sexton of this weird chapel.”¹⁰⁵

Moreover, in a number of iconic shots in *Giant*, James Dean’s arms are stretched out like Jesus on the cross and the final scene in the film has even been called The Last Supper.¹⁰⁶ These scenes are sacred to fans because they are some of the last moments of James Dean’s life to be captured on film; his stations of the cross. The ruins of the Little Reata structure in Marfa, Texas, are still fetishised¹⁰⁷, as they are seen as having a direct lineage to Dean, since it was the site of his last few days alive. Fans making the pilgrimage to Marfa often trespass on the private property where the ruins stand in order to take a fragment of the timber¹⁰⁸ and get close to their object of devotion, much like seeking a piece of the True Cross as a relic of Jesus.

David Cronenberg had previously explored an erotically charged version of James Dean’s death by car crash in *Crash* (1996). The crash, staged by Vaughan and a stunt driver, was designed to be exactly the same as Dean’s crash, using the same model cars, travelling at the same calculated speeds and



The ruins of "Little Reatta" Marfa, Texas.



The ruins of "Big Reatta" Marfa, Texas.

ending in a head on collision. This fragment of Hollywood history played out by Cronenberg through JG Ballard's narrative explores the mystique of a Hollywood icon and his transcendence in death from a mortal to god-like immortality. Vaughan ritualises and dramatises James Dean's death when he intones the date and time it occurred like he is announcing some highly sacred moment in time. This scene serves to remind us that Dean also had a career as a racing car driver and had a reputation, both on and off screen, for being an extreme risk taker and the personification of coolness. There is a memorial road sign at the site where the real car accident took place, and this too has become a site of pilgrimage; each year on the anniversary of Dean's death fans gather where he died. Japanese businessman, Ohnishi, commissioned a nearby monument engraved with "What is essential is invisible to the eye", quoted from Deans favourite book, *The Little Prince*.¹⁰⁹

Simply put, then, my intent with the performance was to depict James Dean, covered in molasses as he was in *Giant*, and crucified on the Marfa ruins. In his review of *The Passion of Christ*, David Gibson noted that Hollywood has a long history of putting a face on Jesus that "probably bears little resemblance to what the Jesus of history looked like".¹¹⁰ From Jeffrey Hunter's "Malibu Jesus" in *King of Kings* (1961), through to Willem Dafoe's "celluloid saviour" in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), he lists the Hollywood hunks who have portrayed Jesus as a movie icon. David Gibson observed that, as a response to Christian leaders who believed traditional representations of Jesus were too wimpy and effeminate, the cultural icon of Jesus in the early 20th century emerged as a peculiarly triumphant American Jesus who was tougher and more militaristic.¹¹¹



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test # 6 (Australian)*, 2007, Video Still.

Many other cinematic depictions of Christ, however, have shown him as a counter-cultural rebel; Pier Paolo Pasolini, for example, rejected Hollywood's imagery in favour of a stripped down Marxist Jesus in his 1964 film, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, and during the 1970s Jesus was transformed into a hippy rock god in Norman Jewison's filmic interpretation of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Ironically, James Dean's own rebellious performances in *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Giant*, were for directors who went on, after Dean's death, to film their own versions of Jesus; Nicholas Ray (*Rebel Without a Cause*) went on to direct Jeffery Hunter in *King of Kings* in 1961 and George Stevens (*Giant*) made *The Greatest Story Ever Told* in 1965. My own version of Jesus seeks to transfigure him into a heroic, muscular, working class 'man on the land' similar to the character of Jett in *Giant*, thus referencing both the Hollywood Jesus and the ultimate American cultural icon in an Australian context.

To perform the crucifixion for *Screen Test #6*, I needed a location resembling the gate structure of Little Reata in *Giant*. During my initial reconnaissance to Hay, I found suitable ruins on a back road in the tiny village of Oxley, 100km west from Hay and other elements of Little Reata, such as the old truck and the shack, in the ghost town of Gunbar, 100km north of Hay. The flatness and space of the Hay Plains evoked the dusty plains of Marfa, Texas. Driving on the straight flat bitumen of the highways and back roads of the Hay Plains forced me to see the landscape from the European perspective articulated by Gibson in his *Camera Natura* project, as did the degradation of the landscape caused by decades of drought, cattle and land clearing dating back to the time of the Cobb and Co. coaches.¹¹² 'The Long Paddock', as it is known, has been

reduced to arid plains of salt grass and red dirt. Much of this once fertile area has been abandoned this decade. This, then, was the *Badlands* that I was looking for, traumatised by European occupation and unspoken aboriginal massacres. Who knows what undocumented and unspoken crimes lay hidden in the dry dust and dead trees of Booligal Road or the ghost town of Gunbar. The land spoke of the same emptiness and sadness that Robert Frank had captured in *The Americans*. These locations served as pick up shots that held the visual elements in *Giant* and as a location for the covered body in Frank's *Death on Highway 66*. I repeated this motive at four different sites. Then finally I set a large format camera in the middle of the Cobb Highway, making reference to the monocular perspective, characterisation of Watling from Ross Gibson's *Camera Natura* and replicating Robert Frank's *US 285, New Mexico*.

The ghost town of Gunbar also became a site for examining one of the most iconic materials in Australian culture - galvanised iron. The material was canonised into the visual codes of Australian culture during the mid 20th century when Russell Drysdale set out to document the effects of the drought in western NSW. Exploring the stark and surreal qualities of the Australian outback particularly in his 1950 work *Emus in A Landscape*,¹¹³ Drysdale elevates the twisted forms of the corrugated iron, set against the vastness of the plain, to the status of an Australian icon and a part of the mythology from the Australian social imaginary. In the 1970s, 'galvo' as it became known, became a part of the cultural vernacular, the idiom of Ockerism, and the rising fever of national identity. The pop anthropology books of photographer Douglass Baglin included titles such as the *Dinkum Dunnies* and *Rough as Guts*. His introduction to the

book titled *Galvo Country* literally raises the humble material to the status of a national hero.¹¹⁴ He romanticises the material's propensity over time to change colour and eventually disintegrate back into the dirt. Many of the structures in



RUSSELL DRYSDALE, *Emu's in a Landscape*, 1950, Oil on canvas, 101.6cm x 127cm.



Burnt ruins of galvo house, Oodnadatta, South Australia.



,Galvanised Iron Shack, Wellington, NSW
DOUGLASS BAGLIN, Images from the Book,
Galvo Country, 1979.



the book resemble the weatherboard buildings documented in Walker Evan's photographic essays of rural America. Indigenous photographers in the 1970s and 1980s made the photography of galvanised iron structures their own. Images by artists such as *Woman in Wheelchair* by Mervyn Bishop and Ellen Jose's *The Roofless House*, both from 1988, capture a depth and honesty in their depiction of the realities of aboriginal life in Australia without romanticised mythmaking of white photographers. Bishop and Jose document the harsh conditions that contemporary aboriginal people endure in the outback and urban areas, yet speak of the profound bonding in aboriginal kinship in community and family.¹¹⁵

In *Sites of Refusal*, I depict a shrouded body, denoting Robert Frank's car accident victim, in the foreground of the only remaining corrugated iron building left in Gunbar (the town hall, which also served as the school and the local pub) and a similar shrouded corpse in an image of the galvo ruins, relics of the town. The dumped and shrouded bodies are repeated in these images, and the viewer must interpret and wonder why the corpses are dumped there. Although these images are intended as a visual quote of Frank's roadside car accident victim, the abandoned body may also suggest the shrouded corpse of James Dean or the unknown traumas of the lost town of Gunbar.

The name of Ross Gibson's book, *Badlands*, was originally applied to a section of Dakota in the US,¹¹⁶ which was the location for the Hollywood film, *Badlands Killers* in which Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek play two out of control teens. Director Terrence Mallick makes many visual and spoken references to James

Dean; towards the end of the film we see Sheen with his arms hanging over his rifle replicating James Dean's pose in *Giant*. In an uncanny coincidence, the similarities between the flat plains of the Dakota badlands and the Hay plains are remarkable. Some of the shots resemble the landscape shots I had taken in *Screen Test #6*, for example the highway and the sunset on the stretching plains. Similarly, the use of visual elements from *Giant* is central to my performance in *Screen Test #6*; cattle roaming on the plain, an oil drum overflowing with Texas crude, the heat, dust and rain, the artesian windmill (resembling an oil pump). The most significant of these elements is molasses, used by myself and in *Giant* to denote crude oil; James Dean was covered with molasses to represent oil when his character, Jett Rink, strikes crude oil on Little Reata. To me, the image of Dean covered in oil, was like a ritualised holy anointment, or even an embalmment that signifies death and the resurrection. Further elements of Dean's mythology incorporated into *Screen Test #6* are the flashes of the car head lights played as a POV shot, which ends in a blinding light followed by a shot of an old chapel, then kneeling at the silhouetted structure in front of the crucified figure, a widow of James Dean makes her invocations, shrouded in a veil, as the sun sets on the Hay Plains.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #6(Australiana)*, 2007 - 08, C-type print
on aluminium, 140cm x 80cm.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #6 (Australiana)* - *James Dean Jesus*, 2007, Video Still.



JOHN A DOUGLAS, *James Dean Jesus*, 2007, HD LCD Screen, Silver gelatin prints on aluminium, Installation view, Chalkhorse Gallery, Sydney.

CODA

February 16, 2008 — March 22, 2008 .18 Wooster Street, New York

Be Kind Rewind, an exhibition of new work by Michel Gondry, opens at Deitch Projects on February 16, 2008, shortly before his identically titled film is released in theaters.

Be Kind Rewind is a film about two childhood friends living in Pasaic, New Jersey, trying to make ends meet. After one of the characters accidentally gets his brain magnetized by trying to sabotage a local power plant, he visits the video store his friend is taking care of while the owner is away and unknowingly erases all of the video tapes in the store's inventory. The characters decide to make their own homemade versions of popular films in a junkyard behind the store. These new "sweded" films—recreations using commonly available, everyday materials—prove more popular with the customers than the originals, making the two friends local celebrities.

For the exhibition, Michel Gondry will be recreating the video store in the gallery, complete with a back lot containing a variety of movie sets where visitors can make their own renditions of films. All videos created during the exhibition can be viewed in the gallery. About the project, Gondry states, "I don't intend nor have the pretension to teach how to make films. Quite the

*contrary. I intend to prove that people can enjoy their time without being part of the commercial system and serving it. Ultimately, I am hoping to create a network of creativity and communication that is guaranteed to be free and independent from any commercial institution."*¹¹⁷

ENDNOTES

- ² Brunette, Peter, 'Commentary', *Blow Up* (directed by Michelangelo Antonioni), DVD, Warner Home Video, 2004.

Brunette states, in his commentary on the film that any image or any thing has meaning only when it is seen in context and that context must be social. Without the evidence of the body and the verification by a social group, the blown up photograph becomes meaningless. This idea is emphasized in the final scene when we see a tennis match performed by a mime troupe without a ball, which gives rise to the notion that all images and representations are an illusion and that the artist/director/photographer is the maker of that illusion.

- ³ Iles, Chrissie, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art 1964 – 1977*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2001, p. 33.

- ⁴ Salt, Barry, 'Film Form: 1900 – 1906' in *Sight and Sound*, 47, No. 3, Summer 1978
- Primitive cinema is the period before narrative cinema and is also known as pre-cinema or the cinema of attractions. Salt contends that the cinema of attractions was a dead end in the development towards narrative cinema.

- ⁵ Beckman, Karen, *Vanishing Women: Magic, Film and Feminism*, Duke University Press, London, 2003

Beckman argues that Primitive Cinema lay the foundations of male spectatorship and the female body as the site of that spectatorship.

- ⁶ Defined as '2. *Spiritualism*, the supposed emanation [from the body of a medium](#)' in the *The Macquarie Concise Dictionary, Third Edition*. [The American Heritage Dictionary](#) gives [another informal](#) meaning: 'an image projected onto a movie screen'.

- ⁷ Beckman, op. cit., pp. 87 - 89,

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 91.

¹¹ Beloff, Zoe, 'Biography', *Zoe's World*, viewed December 2007,
<<http://www.zobeloff.com/pages/biography.html>>,

¹² Beloff, Zoe, 'The Ideoplastic Materializations of Eva C.' *Zoe's World*, viewed December 2007, <<http://www.zobeloff.com/eva/EvaLoad.html>>,

¹³ Bellour, Raymond, *The Analysis of Film*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2000, p. 199.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 200

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 200 – 203.

¹⁶ Kuntzel, Thierry, 'Film Work 2', (First published in French as 'Le Travail du Film' in *Communications* no 23, Paris, 1975).

The work was one of the first experiments in film semiotics that explored Freud's *Dreamwork* and the displacement of visual codes via the film still, credits opening sequence etc are seen as autonomous to the diegetic structure of a film.

¹⁷ Bellour, op. cit., p. 200

¹⁸ Gardiner, Muriel (ed. & trans.) *The Wolf-Man*, Hill & Wang, Noonday Press, New York, 1991.

The primal scene was first used in Freud's case study of the Wolf Man and refers to the child's observance of the parents' sexual relations which is the child perceives as violence whether real or imagined.

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- ¹⁹ Frohne, Ursula, 'That's The Only Now I Get, Immersion and Participation in Video-Installations by Dan Graham, Steve McQueen, Douglas Gordon, Doug Aitken, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Sam Taylor-Wood', *Media Art Net*, Viewed May 2004, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/art_and_cinematography/immersion_participation/12/>
- ²⁰ Mulvey, Laura, *Death 24 x a Second: stillness and the moving image*, Reaktion Books, London, 2006, p7.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, pp7 - 8.
- ²² Sterrit, David, 'Abridged DVD Commentary,' *Le Petit Soldat* (directed by Jean Luc Godard) , DVD, Fox Lorbach Films, New York, 2001.
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- ²³ Ford, Hamish, 'A New Gaze Via Remote Control', *Realtime* 77, Feb-March 2007.
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- ²⁸ Klein, Norman M, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, Verso, London/New York, 1997, p1, 5, 247, 263
- ²⁹ Gardiner, op. cit.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 231,.
- ³¹ Bellour, op. cit., p. 211.
- ³² Doane, Mary Ann, 'Caught and Rebecca: The Inscription of Femininity as Absence', in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley, Routledge, New York, 1988, p196.
- ³³ Kuhn, Annette, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, Routledge, Boston, 1982, p103,
- ³⁴ Moody, Rick, *Twilight: Photographs by Gregory Crewdson*, Harry N Abrams, New York, 2003, p. 6.
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- ³⁶ Monaco, James, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, Multimedia: Language, History, Theory*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, pp.160 – 162.
- ³⁷ Erwin, Edward, ed., *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy and Culture*, Routledge, New York, London, 2002, pp. 86 –87,
- ³⁸ Althusser, Louis, *Lenin and Philosophy, and other essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, 2nd edition, New Left Books, London, 1977
- The neo-Marxist Louis Althusser's theory of the capitalist state articulates that the role of the media and specifically the primary function of cinema, a part of the ideological state

apparatus (ISA), distracts the working class from revolting against the unjust objectives of the capitalist elite and is implicit in class oppression.

³⁹ *Andy Warhol: The Complete Picture*, (directed by Chris Rodley), DVD, World of Wonder, UK, 2002.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Bockris, Victor, *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol*, Fourth Estate Ltd, London, 1998, p. 207

⁴³ *Andy Warhol: The Complete Picture*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Bockris, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 - 218

⁴⁵ Tyler, Parker, *Sex, Psyche, Etcetera in the Film*, Penguin, Baltimore, 1969.

⁴⁶ Taylor, Greg, *Artists in the Audience: Cults, Camp, and American Film Criticism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J, 1999, p. 13

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 3 - 5

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 8 - 11

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 61

⁵¹ Sontag, Susan, 'Notes on Camp', *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays*, New York, Anchor Books, 1990, p. 277.

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- ⁵² *Dr Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, Kubrick, Stanley, dir., Motion Picture, Columbia Pictures, 1964.
- ⁵³ Cameron, Ian & Pye, Douglas, eds., *The Book of Westerns*, Continuum, New York, 1996, p. 12.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 14 –17.
- ⁵⁵ Films such as *Midnight Cowboy*, *Easy Rider*, *Deliverance*, *The Hired Hand* etc, were contemporary reworkings of the cowboy myth that, along with the spaghetti western and the psyche western, in my opinion, questioned masculinity and heroism.
- ⁵⁶ Fischer, Lucy, 'Mama's Boy: Filial Hysteria in *White Heat*' in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, eds. Steve Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 70
- Fisher examines the confluence of hypermasculinity and paranoia in James Cagney's gangster film, *White Heat*. Machismo meets hysteria reflecting the disillusion of men returning home from war and the anxieties of manhood within the American nuclear family.
- ⁵⁷ Eco, Umberto, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, translated by William Weaver, Minerva, London, 1995.
- Umberto Eco examines theme parks such as Disney World and the reproduction of historical interiors in museums etc with the objective of exposing societies obsession with hyperreal experiences that are more satisfying than the real.
- ⁵⁸ Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1994.
- ⁵⁹ Adams, Rachel, 'Fat Man Walking: Masculinity and Racial Geographies in James Mangolds Copland', *Camera Obscura*, No. 42, p. 5.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶¹ Johnson, Reed, 'At war with masculinity', *The Age*, 7 May 2007, viewed 11 May 2007, <<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/05/07/1051987739321.html>>

⁶² Connell, Robert William, *Masculinities*, 2nd edition, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2005, p. 191.

⁶³ Ryan, Melanie, 'Separated at Birth?' in *Veracity or Mendacity*, 23 March 2003, viewed 23 March 2003, <http://www.veracity-or-mendacity.com/2003_03_01_archive.html#200031013>

⁶⁴ Lloyd, Peter, 'US readies Coalition Media Centre in Qatar', *AM*, transcript of radio program, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, 12 March 2003, viewed November 2005, <<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/s804947.htm>>

⁶⁵ Gill, Alexandra, 'U.S. Forces enlist Hollywood to build set for war briefings', *Toronto Globe*, 12 March 2003, viewed March 2003, <<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20030312.UTVTVM/TPStory/?query=U.S.+Forces+enlist+Hollywood+to+build+set+for+war+briefings>>

⁶⁶ Huffington, Ariana, 'Bush and McCain's Displaced Ardor for War', *Huffington Post*, 29 January 2008, viewed February 2008, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/bush-and-mccains-displac_b_83870.html>

Arianna Huffington states that a speech by Republican candidate for the 2008 election John McCain could easily have been delivered by Buck Turgidson.

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- ⁶⁷ Greenwald, Robert, 'John McCain Channels Dr. Strangelove', *Huffington Post*, 31 January 2008, viewed February 2008,
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-greenwald/john-mccain-channels-dr-_b_84368.html>
- ⁶⁸ Pike, Andrew & Cooper, Ross, *Australian Film, 1900-1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production*, Revised edition, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 7.
- ⁶⁹ loc. cit.
- ⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p13.
- ⁷¹ *Screen Sound Symposium: National Identity in Australian Cinema*, Videotape, National Screen and Sound Archive Canberra, 28 – 29 October 2000
- ⁷² Pike, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
Gives examples such as *The Man from Kangaroo* by Wilfred Lucas, which was criticised by the press as being steeped in Americanisms and later was screened in the US under the title of *The Better Man*. Lucas also directed *The Shadow of Lightning Ridge*.
- ⁷³ loc. cit.
- ⁷⁴ Cunningham, Stuart, *Featuring Australia: The Cinema of Charles Chauvel*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 156.
- ⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 156-158.
- ⁷⁶ Collins, Felicity, *Australian Cinema after Mabo, Port Melbourne*, Cambridge University Press, 2004,
See for more studies on the stolen generation and cinema.

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- 77 Cooke, Lynne, *Tracey Moffatt: Free – Falling*, Exhibition Catalogue Essay, DIA Center Art Foundation, New York, 1998.
- 78 I read Marcia Langton's performance as the daughter as a stand in for many of the aboriginal children who were taken away from their families and fostered to white mothers. Langton embodies the drudgery of domestic servitude that many of these girls were subjected to.
- 79 Cooke, Kenneth, *Wake in Fright*, Penguin Books, Ringwood Victoria, 1967, p. 117.
- 80 Maddox, Garry, 'Wake in Fright: Found in Time – Just', *Melbourne Age*, 16 October 2004, viewed November 2005.
- In 2004 Tony Buckley found the only existing negative of the film in a shipping container in Pittsburgh USA. Television stations had destroyed all other copies of the film because copyright had lapsed.
- 81 *Screen Sound Symposium: National Identity in Australian Cinema*, Videotape, National Screen and Sound Archive Canberra, 28 – 29 October 2000
- 82 McFarlane, Brian, *Australian Cinema 1970 to 1985*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1987, p51
- 83 I use a knife instead of a gun to denote the cutting of the kangaroo tail and the cutting of the film to black. The cutting of my wrist is interspersed with the sound track of the kangaroo tail scene during the roo shooting sequence. The teacher attempts suicide towards the end of the story after a long ordeal of losing all his money at two up, binge drinking and trying to get back to Sydney and out of the outback. These shifting of the narrative and visual codes add a particularly violent aspect to this screen test.

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- ⁸⁴ Ruscha, Edward, *Twentysix gasoline stations*, 3rd ed, Cunningham Press, Alhambra, Ca, 1969
- ⁸⁵ Crimp, Douglas, 'The Museum's Old / The Library's New Subject' in *The Contest of Meaning*, ed. Richard Bolton, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1993, pp. 9 –11.
- ⁸⁶ 'Packet of Bex Powders, 1965', *Powerhouse Museum*, accessed March 2008, <<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=340661>>
- "...while everyone knew that the analgesic properties of the aspirin, phenacetin and caffeine in Bex and Vincent's Powders were used by Australian housewives to help them get through the day, it took a doctor newly arrived from South Africa in the 1960s, Priscilla Kincaid-Smith, to recognise that these substances were addictive and that the massive doses of phenacetin taken by habitual users were causing widespread kidney disease. Eventually, in response to political activism, government controls were put on analgesic products in the 1970s."
- ⁸⁷ Lee, Brendan, personal communication by email, January 8 2008.
- ⁸⁸ Nowra, Louis, *Walkabout*, Currency Press and Screen Sound Australia, Strawberry Hills, 2003, p. 25.
- ⁸⁹ I used a 1970 Holden Kingswood replacing the Volkswagen used by Roeg. The Holden was more in keeping with middle class suburbia of the early 70s. The Holden also evoked the era of the great Australian classic car which is now gone and is often fetishised by collectors and car historians.
- ⁹⁰ Gibson, Ross, *Badlands*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002, p. 16.
- The entry from Sturt's Journal reads as follows; " Neither beast nor bird inhabited these lonely and inhospitable regions, over which the silence of the grave seemed to reign."

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- ⁹¹ loc. cit.
- ⁹² Pierce, Peter, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1999, pp54 –55.
- ⁹³ *ibid.*, p54.
- ⁹⁴ Kerouac, Jack, 'Introduction' to *The Americans* by Robert Frank, 2nd Scalo edition, New York, 1994, p. 5.
- ⁹⁵ Springer, Claudia, *James Dean Transfigured: The Many Faces of Rebel*, University Press, Austin, 2007, p. 1.
- ⁹⁶ Evans, Walker, *American Photographs*, MOMA, New York, 2000.
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- ⁹⁹ Barthes, Roland, *The Photographic Message from Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York, 1978, pp. 196 –197.
- ¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p198.
- ¹⁰¹ Williams, Deanne, 'Mapping the Imaginary: Ross Gibson's Camera Natura', *Moving Image*, No 4, Australian Teachers of Media, Carlton South Melbourne, 1996, p. 17 and p. 25.
- ¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰³ Springer, op. cit.

In the years that followed Dean's death, there was increased commodification of the rebel icon through the social imaginary of the blue jean and its resistance to the establishment of Eisenhower's America.

¹⁰⁴ Roth, Beulah & Roth, Sanford, *James Dean*, Pomegranate Art Books, California, USA, 1983

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 56 -57

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 22

¹⁰⁷ Leonardo, Magdalin, 'Little Reata', *Deaners*, 7 December 2001, viewed November 2005, <<http://our.tentativetimes.net/marfa/lilreata.html>>

Little Reata was a parcel of land where James Dean's character in *Giant*, Jett Rink, discovers oil. The property had a gate entrance made with wooden beams that still stand today.

¹⁰⁸ Leonardo, Magdalin, 'The Ruins of Reata, Theatrical Archaeology', *Deaners*, 7 December 2001, viewed November 2005, <<http://our.tentativetimes.net/marfa/reatarun.html>>

¹⁰⁹ Roth, op. cit., p. 108.

¹¹⁰ Gibson, David, 'What Did Jesus Really Look Like?', *New York Times*, February 21, 2004, viewed March 2004, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/21/arts/21JESU.html?ex=1392786000&en=4d732275d553f498&ei=5007>>

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

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Leonardo, Magdalin, 'Little Reata', *Dealers*, 7 December 2001, viewed November 2005, <<http://our.tentativetimes.net/marfa/lilreata.html>>

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APPENDIX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis and documenting my produced art works has been, at times, an arduous and difficult task. In the early stages of the research, I became afflicted with a serious illness making the production and research a daunting and overwhelming task. Thankfully I have been generously assisted by a wonderful and supportive group of people, who have acted in a highly professional manner who have provided me with invaluable assistance and support. In many ways this work is the result of their assistance as it is mine.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my partner, **Melanie Ryan**. Melanie has been outstanding in her relentless assistance at every aspect of the work. Many of the ideas and concepts were discussed with her from conception to completion. She has provided invaluable support by assisting with finance, production management, props and costuming, makeup and being there to provide valuable feedback and emotional support. Her assistance with the paper such as proof reading, formatting and editing has been exceptional and is much appreciated. I couldn't have done this without her. Secondly, my supervisor **Lynne Roberts-Goodwin** has assisted with her guidance and patience and motivating me to continue when I found it difficult to go on. Her expertise in visual arts research and her dogged determination as a successful practicing artist has inspired and encouraged my own practice. Her assistance in cutting through red tape and trouble-shooting administrative problems caused

by my disability was most appreciated. Lynne provided direction and support when I most needed it, which ultimately reduced the impact of time constraints on the research.

I would also like to thank all of the production crews that assisted with the work across the various shoots that comprised this project. **Alex Kershaw** has generously given his time and expertise in providing his photographic skills and technical advice as a friend and colleague. His assistance provided an opportunity to learn and develop further important on the job photographic skills that have enhanced my practice and work methodology. **Craig Bender** and **Vera Hong** were also able to provide exceptional photographic skills and digital documentation on Screen Test 4 and valuable on site management of the project. **Chris Ryan**, of the Performance Space and Actors Centre, generously donated his time and efforts to provide performance coaching and technical assistance with Mise en Scene. His expertise in movement and expression and his coaching helped me to deliver crafted characterisations. **Triston Keyon** also provided skilled video camera operation for a number of the projects, which added greatly to the work's effect. **Karina Paine** provided assistance with transport and recognisance for locations as well as location scout. I have listed all of the production teams in the production notes section of the Appendix.

Also, **Marilyn Dooley** at the Screen Sound Archives in Canberra provided assistance in researching material on Australian cinema and the staff of the

library there also provided help and support in suggesting research material. I would also like to thank Melbourne artist, **Brendan Lee** who has encouraged and assisted my practice through curatorial recommendations and research assistance. Sydney artist **Rosemary Laing** also provided advice in proposals and management of practice that led to exhibitions in Melbourne. Last, but not at all least, I'd like to thank Sydney artist **Lisa-Ann** for her ongoing advice, encouragement and practical assistance.

In Gratitude,

John A Douglas

March 2008.

PUBLISHED REVIEWS

Artlife

<http://artlife.blogspot.com/2005/09/no-fighting-in-war-room.html>

Thursday, September 08, 2005

No Fighting In The War Room

It took a lot for us to get to First Draft Gallery. We were hung over in a way so profound we had moved beyond mere language into a realm beyond thought and gesture. Then we switched on the TV and Dr. Strangelove was playing on Fox Classics, the scene where Mandrake tries to convince Col. Guano he has to telephone the President, and all that dialogue about "preverts doin' perversions". Then we crashed the Art Life Van into a tree. Then we thought we'd stop for coffee and walked into Blank Space Gallery instead.

John A. Douglas was having his show Screen Test #3 [Americana] - The War Room. The exhibition was a series of works that together created a scene from Dr. Strangelove, or elements very similar to a scene, and

starred the artist taking the role of General Buck Turgidson, played by George C. Scott in Kubrick's original. In the gallery was a circular blue light box with gold stars on the top. There was a big, back lit map of Australia and our Asian neighbours called Imaginary Backdrop for A Pre-Emptive Strike. There was a photograph of Douglas in a US Air Force uniform with the map and the blue light box with gold stars caught in a facial gesture very reminiscent of Scott. And there was a DVD playing, at times abstract flickering shapes and colours under a static aircraft shape, sometimes Douglas acting out dialogue from Strangelove discussing the potential survivability of a strike.

For an exhibition with so few elements there were a lot of potential combinations and a host of potential meanings. Of course, the politically pointed reading

seemed most obvious, what with Douglas's conflation of Cold War and War on Terror imagery, and then there was another probably just as obvious reading of the work as some sort of commentary on the nature of masculinity enacted in the regalia of the modern military. The room sheet for the show with an explanatory statement from Douglas went to some lengths to explain the associations and said that "Kubrick's prophesy pre-emptive strike has become a reality in the 21st century, and moreover, [the work] is my own response to that crisis and the crisis of masculinity."

Another work in the show was displayed on the outside wall of the gallery; a statement by the guy who designed the set for General Tommy Franks to make his appearances before the media during Gulf War II. The text had an ironic twist in that the set designer claimed his sets would look just like reality. [Jeez, eh, Americans?!! - they just hand you this sort of stuff on a plate]. The difficulty with work that has a number of prescribed meanings attached is that the artist has to avoid falling under the wheels of

didacticism. It can leave the audience crushed, but Douglas's work was interesting for us for another reason. The work very nicely evoked the ways that narrative is a series of prefabricated modules that can be rearranged to suit the circumstances of the day. Change the players, alter the set slightly, some new music, and you have a different story in a new setting.

This entry was posted on Thursday, September 08, 2005 at 6:47 PM. [Comment \(1\)](#) | [Trackback \(0\)](#)

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More Video Art Please

Brendan Lee, feature

I remember the good old days. Video art was categorised as multimedia and using a computer to do anything apart from your CV had to be kept top secret. How times have changed. Today, video is inescapable and as ubiquitous as the LCD screen. How many inches is yours? Art galleries (the epitome of conservatism) even have screens promoting what videos are on show. Galleries have gone into a video frenzy. Suddenly projectors are cheap, freight and shipping of artworks non-existent and you can fill an entire gallery with one piece and a bench. Galleries have it made. Overheads have been reduced, artist fees turned to smoke and a bottomless pit of eager artists have backed up the s-bend ready to put out at all costs.

Welcome to the video age.

Just as painting had its day and assemblage saw more than it deserved, it's now time for video to take centre stage. But be warned. Just because it's video and happens to be in a gallery doesn't mean it's art... anything can look like art, yet we now know from experience that a painting of the city skyline (in various pastel shades) or a photograph of Bondi Beach at sunset is not art. From one day cock of the walk, the mood is feather duster. All mediums take a dump at some point. Here's a perfectly feasible scenario. You walk into a gallery and see a number of artworks on display. The theme can be anything you choose, but best bet it's non-political and is quite fashionable. You'd be safe to assume that there are at least four videos in the show. Most would be performative and all of them poorly projected onto an unmasked wall or screen of inappropriate ratio. If you were to actually view them all you'd find a few basics in curatorial practice. One video had to ambiguously break copyright (you only care if you've sold it to the gallery), one would portray the artist on their way to a fancy dress party and most likely another one goes on and on forever without much happening (did I mention a happening?). The last slot in the show uses found footage re-edited or manipulated in some way to make the artist seem all wondrous in their computer scenery, although handheld footage taken on a stroll through the city fits in here too.

Now there isn't anything wrong with this at all. It's abnormal in today's gallery system not to have multiple videos in an exhibition. What must be asked is why there's a distinct lack of alternative video art modes being shown. What I mean by 'alternative' is video art that has a level of sophistication that challenges the viewer. We're all familiar with the artist reels where they dance around for us, but what about the works that use the medium because it's the only medium that will do.

Australia has produced a few artists that have learnt how to adequately communicate the strengths of the moving image. Anything by David Ruessky or Daniel Von Stummer is going to be breathtakingly fantastic because they understand how to get the best out of their medium, how it's installed and how it's viewed. As a template in video installation look no further than the past works of David Noonan or Patricia Piccinini. The video is integrated into the exhibition space. Half of the pleasure in seeing their work is the experience. You should feel privileged to be in a position to see their work in a similar way to seeing a great band. You inhabit their space. You are welcomed in and treated with respect. David Noonan's installation *Films and Paintings 2001-2005* at the Monash University Museum of Art in 2005 had several raised platforms beautifully carpeted from which the viewer could reflect peacefully upon what was presented before them. *SQWA* at ArtSpace in 2003 used a similar elevation with wallpapered constructions to position the viewer within the mise-en-scène. Piccinini's *Swell* (2003) and *Breathing Room* (2001) psychologically tampered with that same mise-en-scène to put the viewer at the heart of an audiovisual experiment. Sadly, Noonan and Piccinini have vacated the world of video art only to leave a gaping hole of technical proficiency and a genuine sense of anticipation for us to mourn.

And why not use the medium of video to examine the god of the moving image: cinema. What better a medium is there than video to make a comment on the very nature of cinema. Filmmakers are the first ones to jump up and down when calling a video film. 'It isn't a film', they cry out like small children. Well if you were to follow that kind of mentality then *Wolf Creek* (2005) isn't a film either, or *Superman Returns* (2006). In some ways video is best suited to stick the big one up those guys. The little man can kick the big man. I had a critic say how much he liked my work until he found out it was shot on digital. What a wanker. The medium can be part of the message yet what's flickering before you is what it's all about. The addition of *High Definition* to the arena is making waves in an already confused moving image environment. We've got a new divide

<http://www.artlink.com.au/articles.cfm?id=2990>

PRODUCTION NOTES, PLANS & DIAGRAMS

Screen Test # 1 (Americana)

Date of Production	April 2004 – photo first printed 2008
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on
Synopsis	Recreate an action performed in the film <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> played by Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond directed by Billy Wilder – Norma is silhouetted against the smoky light of a film projector with her finger pointed in the air she repeats the words with a melodramatic facial expression “I’ll show them I’ll be on top again!” She then drops her hand down and gracefully lowers her head turning to her left.
Venue	Indoor studio space, 8a Dick Street Chippendale

PRODUCTION CREW

In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, DVD Authoring

Assistant Director	Chris Ryan (Performance Space, Sydney)
Large Format Camera, Video Camera	Alex Kershaw
Lighting Design	Alex Kershaw, Chris Ryan, John A Douglas
Make Up	Sarah Toner
Costume Design	Rolando Canto (ABC Television)
Producer, Onsite Management, Jewellery Design, Special Effects <i>Cameras and Consumables</i>	Melanie Ryan

Video	Sony PD 100 dv cam using dv cam digital tape, aspect ratio 169 widescreen, 50 mm lens . Miller tripod.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera 150mm lens, Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 100T (tungsten balanced) x 6 = 3 darkslides

Lighting Based on the lighting of John F Seitz

Video Special Effect	16 mm film projector running with B&W film reel add cigarette smoke to fill light path as per still from <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> – 4 x 50 w dedolight pinspots and stands (may only need 1 - 3) plus umbrellas.
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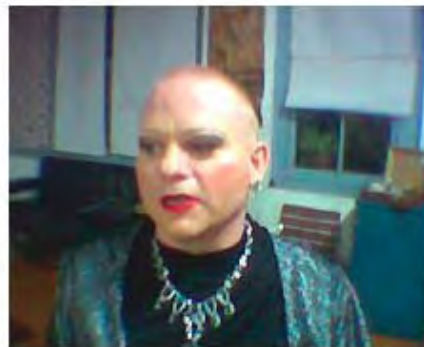
Photographic Lighting

16mm film projector without film as per film still of Gloria Swanson from Sunset Boulevard – cigarette smoke used to fill light path – no film reel in projector

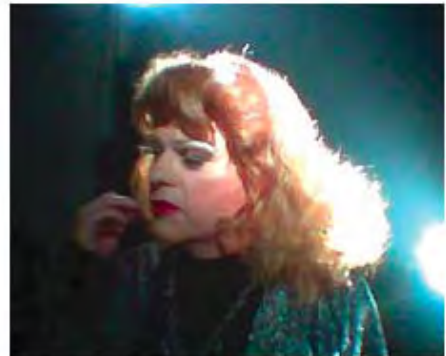
4 x 50 w dedolight pinstots and stands plus umbrellas. This lighting scenario abandoned replaced by 3 x Arri 1,000 watts Readheads.



Screen Test #1, make up test.



Screen Test #1, Production Still, 2004.



Screen Test #1, Production still, 2004.



Screen Test #1, Production Still, 2004.

JOHN A DOUGLAS, *Screen Test #1(Americana)*, Production stills, 2004



ROLANDO CANO (ABC Television wardrobe).
Design based on Edith Head's costume
Screen Test #1 (Americana).



MELANIE RYAN, Cut crystal jewelry
design based on Edith Head's design,
Screen Test #1 (Australiana)



Screen Test #1 (Americana), **ALEX KERSHAW** and **CHRIS RYAN**
creating smoke and spot light effect.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Screen Test # 2 (Americana)

Date of Production	September 2004 – photo first printed 2008.
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on aluminium
Synopsis	Recreate an action shot from the film Westworld. The scene will be performed indoors with myself firing a gun in front of a painted backdrop framed as a mid shot. I will be firing a revolver and a rifle using blanks. The performance will be shot on video and still film. Take up shots of detail closeups gun barrel, chamber, horizon line.
Venue	Indoor studio space, 8a Dick street Chippendale

PRODUCTION CREW

In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, DVD Authoring.

Large Format Camera	
Video Camera	Alex Kershaw
Lighting Design	Alex Kershaw and John A Douglas
Backdrop Artist	David Pavich
Make Up	Sarah Toner
Costume Design	John A Douglas
FX Contact Lenses	John Marton, Optometry
Armourer	Tony Garland (Stockade Productions) Colt 45, Winchester Rifle, gunbelt, theatrical blanks.

Cameras and consumables.

Video	Sony PD 100 dv cam using dv cam digital tape, aspect ratio 169 widescreen, 50 mm lens . Miller tripod.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera, 150mm lens, Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 100T (tungsten balanced) x 6 = 3 darkslides

Lighting

Ambient daylight	3 x 800w tungsten lamps with scrims Single key light with reflectors as fill- effect over all soft sunlight.
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View of Hill End, Proposed Location for Screen test #2.



Detail of Hill End street, Proposed Location. Screen Test #2.

screen test #2 storyboard

alex kershaw : dv cam operator - thursday april 29 @ 13:00hrs.

shot 1; full shot of still backdrop for 2 minutes

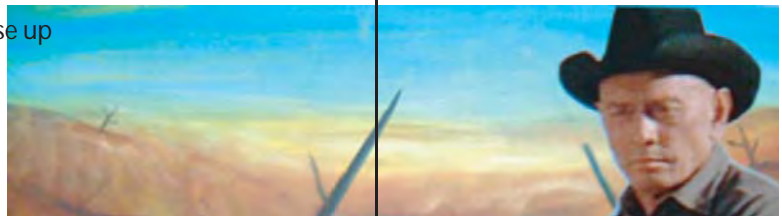
shoot in widescreen - no audio



shot 2 pan from left to right close up
on horizon line to head.
stop at head shot. very slow will
need to rehearse this one.

shoot in widescreen - no audio

duration: 3 minutes



shot 3: head shot - hold

shoot in widescreen - no audio

duration 2 minutes



shot 4 : extreme close up of both eyes.

widescreen - no audio

duration 2 minutes.



shots 5 -8 -full shot of backdrop with midshot of robot
firing blank bullets do a few takes of 1 minute each
using shot gun and revolver.

shot in widescreen - yes for audio

mike plugged into camera - test audio level first.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Screen Test # 3 (Americana)

Date of Production	June 2005 – photo first printed 2008.
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on aluminium
Synopsis	Perform the dialogue piece 'The six points of General Turgidson' from the film Dr Strangelove. Seated at a desk with gestures and expressions based on the character General Buck Turgidson. Set design to be constructed according to props in Dr Strangelove. Backdrop design based on Casino Royale.
Venue	Indoor studio space 8a Dick street Chippendale

PRODUCTION CREW

In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, Animation, DVD Authoring.

Large Format Camera	Alex Kershaw
HDV Video Camera, DAT recorder	Triston Kenyon
Performance Coach	Chris Ryan
Lighting Design	Alex Kershaw, Chris Ryan, John A Douglas
Make Up	Sarah Toner
Backdrop Artist, Costume Design	John A Douglas
Producer, Onsite Management	Melanie Ryan

Cameras and consumables.

Video	Sony ZP 100 HDV cam using HDV cam digital tape, aspect ratio 169 widescreen, 50 mm lens . Miller tripod.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera 150mm lens. Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 100T C41 (tungsten balanced) Ilford 100 large format Black and White plus x 10 = 5 darkslides

Lighting

Ambient daylight	3 x 800w tungsten lamps with scrims Single key light with reflectors as fill- effect over all soft sunlight.
Special Effects	smoke machine.

SCRIPT

Script for Screen Test # 3 adapted from the original screenplay.

Turgidson	One, our hopes for recalling the 843rd bomb wing are quickly being reduced to a very low order of probability. Two, in less than fifteen minutes from now the terrorists will be making radar contact with the planes. Three, when they do, they are going to go absolutely ape, and they're gonna strike back with everything they've got. Four, if prior to this time, we have done nothing further to suppress their retaliatory capabilities, we will suffer virtual annihilation. Now, five, if on the other hand, we were to immediately launch an all out and coordinated attack on all their training camps and chemical and nuclear stockpiles we'd stand a damn good chance of catching 'em with their pants down. Hell, we got a hundred to one missile superiority as it is. We could easily assign three smart bombs to every target, and still have a very effective reserve force for any other contingency. Now, six, an unofficial study which we undertook of this eventuality, indicated that we would destroy ninety percent of their capabilities. We would therefore prevail, and suffer only modest and acceptable civilian casualties from their remaining force which would be badly damaged and uncoordinated.
Muffley	General, it is the avowed policy of our country never to strike first with weapons.
Turgidson	Well, Mr. President, I would say that we have already invalidated that policy. laughs

POST PRODUCTION

Audio tracks sampled from	Little Marcy – The Lords Army , Word Records 1973. Benny Goodman Sing, Sing, Sing
Additional sounds	wav file of air traffic control tower South Carolina Airport.

Animation

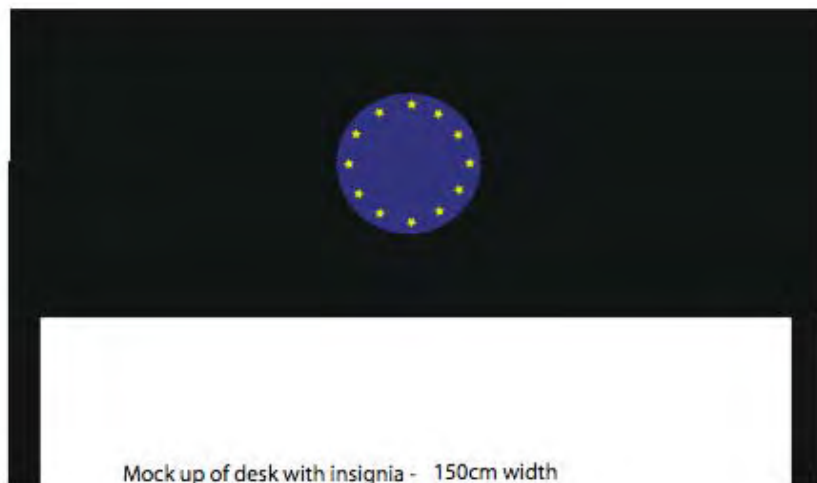
Audio filters added to sound recording of firearms used in Screen Test 2.

using digital effects in Final cut pro – drawings created in Adobe illustrator and photoshop.

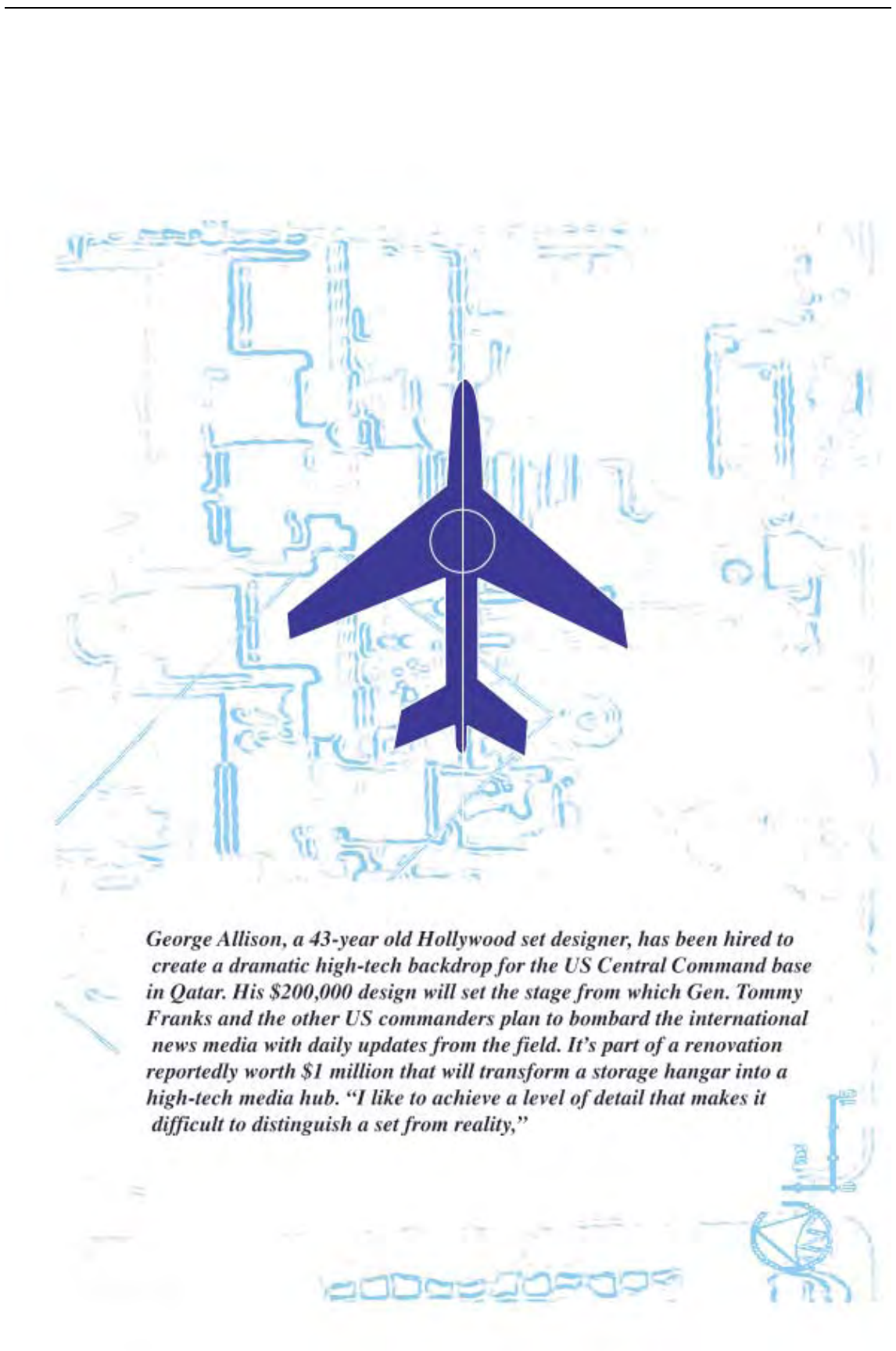
SET DESIGN :SCREEN TEST #3 AMERICANA



Printed backdrop on paper to be mounted on clear acrylic with lights designating cities
this back drop to be hung on the wall behind the desk. 200 cm x 110cm



Mock up of desk with insignia - 150cm width



George Allison, a 43-year old Hollywood set designer, has been hired to create a dramatic high-tech backdrop for the US Central Command base in Qatar. His \$200,000 design will set the stage from which Gen. Tommy Franks and the other US commanders plan to bombard the international news media with daily updates from the field. It's part of a renovation reportedly worth \$1 million that will transform a storage hangar into a high-tech media hub. "I like to achieve a level of detail that makes it difficult to distinguish a set from reality,"

(previous page: *Lightbox Design for The War Room*(2005)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Screen Test # 4 (Australiana)

Date of Production	June 2006 – photo first printed 2008.
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on alluminium
Synopsis	Perform actions as follows based on suicide scene of the father in Walkabout. Aim gun at rocks and fire several shots, aim gun at picnic set and fire several shots walk around to front of car. Aim gun to side of head while car burning in the background. Briefcase in forground with papers also on fire. Shoot gun with blood spurting from head fall to ground.
Location	Kimbriki Recycling Depot Terry Hills

PRODUCTION CREW

In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, DVD Authoring.

Large Format Camera	Craig Bender
HDV Video Camera	Triston Kenyon
DAT recorder	Triston Kenyon & Vera Hong
Digital Stills and Makeup	Vera Hong
Armourer, Pyrotechnian, Special Effects, and Stunt Coach	Tony Garland
Costume Design	John A Douglas
Car Preparation, Prop Sourcing	John A Douglas
Production Assistant	Vera Hong
Additional Assistance	Warringah Council and Terry Hills Bushfire Brigade

Cameras and consumables.

Video	Sony ZP 100 HDV cam using HDV cam digital tape, aspect ratio 169 widescreen, 50 mm lens . Miller tripod. Sony DAT tape.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera 150mm lens. Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 160 VC daylight 5 x darkslides Nikon D30 digital still camera



Location Screen Test #4, Kimbriki Recycling Depot, Terrey Hills, NSW.



Final Allocated Location, Screen Test #4, Kimbriki Recycling Depot, Terrey Hills, NSW.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Screen Test # 5 (Australiana)

Date of Production	December 2005 – photo first printed 2008.
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on alluminium
Synopsis	Perform actions as follows based on suicide scene of John Grant in Wake in Fright. Intersperse with performance of drunken character Doc Tydon – see story board
Location	Old petrol station Bells Line of Road, Bell NSW

PRODUCTION CREW

NB In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, DVD Authoring.

Large Format Camera, Lighting Design Transport Driver	Alex Kershaw
HDV Video Camera DAT recorder	Triston Kenyon
Photographic Assistant, Additional DAT	Fahud Ahmed
Performance Coach	Chris Ryan
Costume Design Site Preparation Props Sourcing	John A Douglas
Producer, Onsite Management, Make Up	Melanie Ryan
Additional Assistance	Thanks to Karina Paine for location recognizance.

Cameras and consumables.

Video	Sony ZP 100 HDV cam using HDV cam digital tape, aspect ratio 169 widescreen. 50 mm lens . Miller tripod. Sony DAT tape.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera 150mm lens. Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 160 VC daylight
Additional Lighting	Portable flash kit 2 x elecrom guns with battery packs. Reflectors and scrims.

Screen Test #5(Australiana) - Storyboard for videographer Tristan Kenyon
 Date: Wednesday December 21 2005; Shooting times : 15:00 - 18:00 (aprox)
 Location: Old petrol station: Bells Line of road Bell near Darling Causeway



1. Static Shot - on tripod - subject walks towards camera along track drinking from beer bottle holding suitcase in other drops suitcase then second shot carrying knife full to mid shot



2. Tracking shot following subject from the back mid shot Plus POV following same path as subject



3. Tracking shot- subject moving towards camera full to mid shot camera tracks backwards



4: Static shot - subject moves to door and opens and enters - full shot -(break to set props inside)



5. POV camera kicks door open and enters



6. Static shot low down - from opposite corner subject kicks open door and enters room looks around lpartially opens door

PRODUCTION NOTES

Screen Test # 6 (Australiana

Sites of Refusal 1 – 6.

Date of Production	March 2007, May 2007 – photographs first printed 2007/08.
Media	DVD video with sound, C-type photograph on aluminium, silver gelatin print on archival paper and aluminium with sillerium toning.
Synopsis	Perform crucifixion of James Dean based on character of Jett in Giant. Intersperse with panning, tracking and still shots of Hay plains, cattle, Ghost town ruins , Sunset, rain, POV car on highway at night, Old church, James Dean widow walking into frame and kneeling at the foot of the cross. Create impression of Giant rather than literal interpretation.
Locations	Stuart Highway, Hay NSW, Mid Western Highway, Gunbar, NSW, Billogal Road, Hay Plains NSW, Oxley Road and Oxley NSW, Cobb Highway, One Tree NSW.

PRODUCTION CREW

In all works John A Douglas Director, Producer, Performance, Concept and Production Design, Video and Sound Editing, DVD Authoring.

Large Format Camera,

HDV Video Camera

DAT recorder

Transport Driver

Costume Design

Site Preparation

Props Sourcing

John A Douglas

Photographic Assistant,

Additional Camera Operator

Additional DAT

James Dean Widow

Producer

Onsite management

Melanie Ryan

Additional Assistance

Thanks to Karina Paine for location scouting

Cameras and consumables.

Video	Sony ZP 100 HDV cam using HDV cam digital tape,aspect ratio 169 widescreen. 50 mm lens . Miller tripod.Sony DAT tape.
Photographic	TOYO large format camera 150mm lens. Manfrotto tripod C41 Kodak Portra 160 VC daylight, Ilford 100 Black and White, 10 x darkslides
Soundtrack	Copyright clearance granted for use of Windmill by Bruce Langhorne from the soundtrack The Hired Hand Directed by Peter Fonda 1971. Courtesy of Mute Records London 2005



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Oxley Road, Hay Plains, NSW



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Cobb Highway, Hay Plains, NSW.



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Booligal Road, Hay Plains, NSW.



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Gunbar, Hay Plains, NSW.



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Galvo ruins, Gunbar, NSW.



Location for *Sites of Refusal*, Gunbar Hall (Disused), NSW.



Hay Plains, NSW, March 2007



Ruined wooden structure, Oxley, Hay Plains, NSW
Final location Screen Test #6.



Ruins of *Little Reatta*, Marfa Texas, USA, 2003

Design forScreen Idol Australiana
Lightbox: EPS file for lazer cuttin



height
15cm

FRONT
VIEW





Screen Idol (Americana), Mock up of vintage photo frames sourced from ebay with contact prints and proofs, 2005.



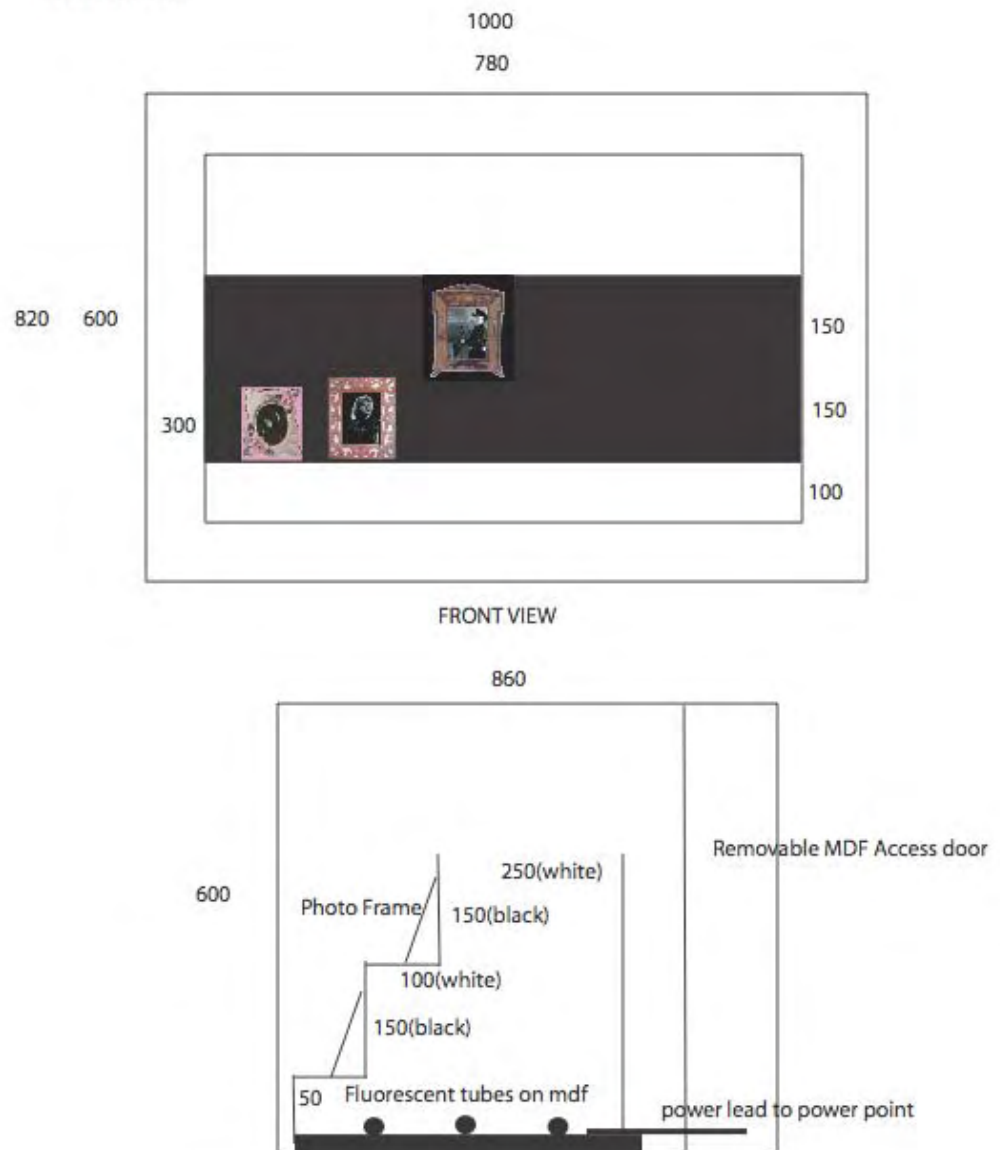
Detail view of silver gelatin large format proofs, 2005



Single channel split frame screen shot of video used for mini LCD screen, Screen Idol (Americana), 2005.

Screen Idol(Americana) 2005.

Installation Plan



Light box Dimensions : H 400mm W 775 D 450 mm

Materials: Black and White Acrylic panels, flouro tubes mounted on MDF board