

october 16 – december 1 2002

a history of happiness

Nan Goldin, Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Land, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Yoko Ono, Robert Owen, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Yoshihiro Suda and Aleks Danko

EXHIBITION BACKGROUND

'A History of Happiness' brings together works by international and Australian artists to evoke the idealistic nature of the human pursuit for happiness and document the ways we attempt to achieve happiness in our lives. While some try to attain happiness through the accumulation of material possessions and wealth, others seek it through religious and spiritual enlightenment; dependence on personal relationships; through the use of substances that temporarily heighten states of happiness (or alleviate unhappiness) and there are those who search for happiness in the simple things in life.

As the title might suggest the curator does not intend the exhibition to be a definitive History of Happiness, but a highly selective, subjective tour that touches on aspects of happiness, and our attempts and successes in seeking it in life. The curatorial layout of the exhibition has been designed specifically for the new gallery spaces and encourages the viewer to take part in a journey through 'A History of Happiness'.

- The first section features images depicting forms of dependency by Nan Goldin, Barbara Kruger and Robert Mapplethorpe
- The second section, with works by Jenny Holzer, Peter Land and Yoko Ono acknowledges the little things that make people happy in everyday life
- The final section of 'A History of Happiness' represents the peak of happiness, spiritual enlightenment, and features work by Yoshihiro Suda, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Aleks Danko

Please note: This exhibition contains nudity and adult concepts

Artwork and artspace analysis sheets suitable for use in these exhibitions can be downloaded from the www.vceart.com website

Only a selection of artists are featured in this kit, for artists' biographies, images and essays by the curator refer to Melbourne Festival Visual Arts program 2002, (exhibition catalogues), Melbourne Festival; Juliana Engberg; individual authors 2002 (The Unused)

ARTIST BACKGROUND

NAN GOLDIN

Born 1953, Washington, DC, USA

'There is a popular notion, that the photographer is by nature a voyeur, the last one invited to the party. But I'm not crashing; this is my party. This is my family, my history.' Nan Goldin

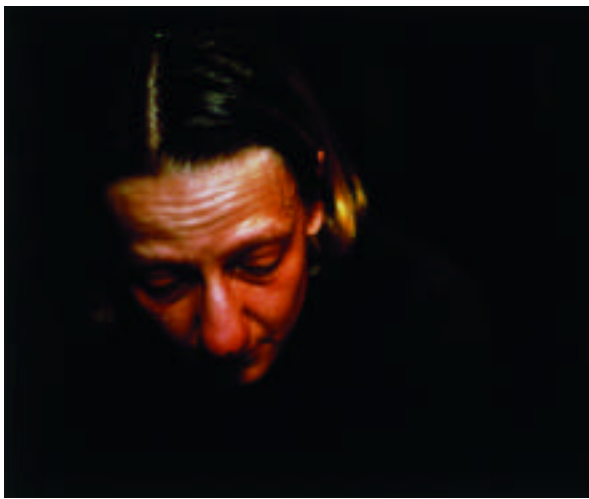
In the exhibition Nan Goldin's work represents the human tragedy that seeks happiness through dependence on relationships with things and people that can cause us damage: sex; drugs and alcohol; self loathing; the search for that elusive relationship of mutual respect and support that turns ugly and debased. Goldin's works explore themes of self-reflection and ageing, the ambiguity of sexual roles and gender and the complexity of love and relationships.

In 1965 when Nan was 11 years old, her older sister committed suicide. Deeply disturbed by the event, and as her memories of her sister began to fade, Goldin began to take pictures and make Super 8 films of her friends to preserve the present, and her fading memories of the past. Her photographs became her way of documenting her own and her friends' lives. People who view her work can be forgiven for thinking that they know the people in her photographs - Goldin's work can seem familiar as it resembles family snapshots and photo albums and our shared experiences of love, loss and betrayal.

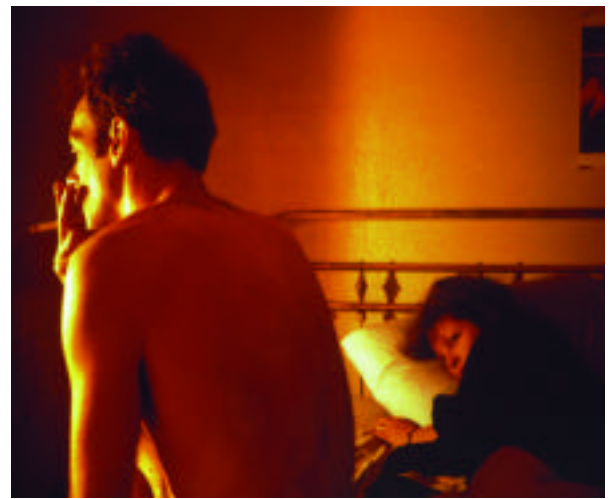
Tracing lives / recording memories

Goldin depicts her subjects in a straightforward, non-judgmental way, her 'snapshot'-style images of her friends; drag queens, drug addicts, lovers and family are intense and highly personal portraits. Goldin's photographs trace people's lives, and in many cases she has photographed her subjects over several decades. One series 'The Cookie Portfolio', 1976-1989 documents Goldin's relationship with her friend Cookie Mueller, an underground actress who died of AIDS in 1989. The series starts with a portrait of Cookie and her son and ends with an image of Cookie in her coffin, her son grieving. No aspect of the human experience is too personal or painful for Goldin's camera.

Nan Goldin,
The Ballad of Sexual
Dependency: Suzanne
Crying, New York, 1985.
Collection, The Museum
of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles. The Nimoy
Family Foundation.



Nan Goldin,
The Ballad of Sexual
Dependency:
Nan and Brian in Bed,
New York City, 1983.
Collection, The Museum
of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles. The Nimoy
Family Foundation.



The Ballad of Sexual Dependency, 1978–88

In 1978, after moving to New York, Goldin began to create the long-term photographic series for which she is best known, The Ballad of Sexual Dependency. The series is a highly personal and intimate record of her immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. Goldin has always encouraged this autobiographical reading of her work, describing The Ballad of Sexual Dependency as ‘the diary I let people read’. Goldin has said: ‘I often fear that men and women are irrevocably strangers to each other, irreconcilably unsuited, almost as if they were from different planets to each other.’ With her work The Ballad Goldin seeks to make some sense of this instinctive human desire to form relationships.

A constantly evolving work

Since 1979, first in New York clubs, and later in galleries and museums around the world, Goldin has presented constantly changing versions of The Ballad of Sexual Dependency. The photographs were first shown in the form of slide shows, accompanied by a soundtrack, at punk rock clubs in New York City in order for Goldin's friends and photographic subjects to see the shots that she had taken of them. The Ballad of Sexual Dependency has been constantly re-edited over the years and now, in its various forms, comprises up to 700 images. The 50 images on show at ACCA were chosen from a larger series of 150 images. Unlike a single photograph or a film, the photographic series; slide show presentations; video and book versions of ‘The Ballad’ allow Goldin to update her representations of the subjects.

The use of colour in Nan Goldin's photography

Rarely working from natural light, Goldin illuminates her subjects with the use of a flash that exaggerates her vibrant colors. The bright, saturated colors are achieved by printing her 35 mm film with a photographic process called Cibachrome. Goldin uses colour to heighten the emotion and intensity of the images. In ‘Nan and Brian in Bed’, NYC, 1983, the orange glow of late afternoon envelops the scene, perfectly capturing the atmosphere of a relationship at its end. Brian, her lover at the time, sits naked on the edge of the bed, smoking a cigarette; Goldin lies behind him, her facial expression a mixture of affection, vulnerability and weariness. The relationship ended in violence, as another image, Nan One Month after Being Battered, NYC, 1984, painfully records.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

Nan Goldin's photographs raise questions about the nature of photography itself. Goldin challenges the adequacy of the single image to fully represent the subject through her ongoing documentation of her friends' lives in her photographic series.

- Can a series of works be final? Can one image represent a person or situation? Are there any issues that might arise from constantly adding works to, or removing them from the series?
- Discuss the snapshot aesthetic that Goldin uses. Do you find it more or less relevant, in the depiction of contemporary life, than a more contrived and stylized aesthetic? What other medium might Goldin have used to document her friends and her own life?
- Discuss the artist's choice of title. Why do you think Goldin chose to refer to the work as a Ballad?
- Her photographs also raise questions about autobiographic work. Would the photographs be any less powerful if they were of models or were staged?

Some of the images in The Ballad of Sexual Dependency depict sexual imagery and subject matter in their exploration of relationships, sexuality and eroticism.

- What makes Nan Goldin's work different to the explicit images you see on television or in advertising campaigns that use similar imagery? Is there any signage to notify people about the content of Goldin's works? Do you think this is necessary? Why/Why not?

Goldin's work has been compared to that of fellow American artists such as photographer Diane Arbus (1923–1971) and photographer-turned-filmmaker Larry Clark (b. 1943).

- Compare the way these contemporary artists approach their subject matter with that of more traditional photographers (pre-1970s) such as Robert Frank, Julia Margaret Cameron or Max Dupain. Discuss technique and use of light, tone and composition.

This selection of 50 works from *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency* represents the largest number of Goldin works seen in Australia to date. Nan's works are displayed together with two Gelatin Silver Print photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and Barbara Kruger's digital print *Untitled (Your pleasure is short lived and spasmodic)*, 1983-2002

FURTHER RESEARCH

The Ballad of Sexual Dependency, Nan Goldin, (edited with Marvin Heiferman, Mark Holborn and Suzanne Fletcher) Aperture, New York 1986

An on-line exhibition and interview with the artist:

www.whitechapel.org/3exhibition/goldin/goldin-introduction.html

BARBARA KRUGER

Born 1945, Newark, New Jersey

After studying art and design Barbara Kruger worked at Condé Nast Publications as a designer on *Mademoiselle*. Later, she worked as a graphic designer, art director, and picture editor on a variety of publications.

This background in design is evident in the work for which she is now internationally renowned; provocative black and white photographic images, banded with red stripes of text bearing bold messages, delivered in her trademark Futura Bold Italic font. Kruger's artworks appropriate and assimilate images taken from television, film, newspapers and magazines. By juxtaposing these images from the mass media with powerful and aggressive text such as: 'Your body is a battleground,' 'We have received orders not to move,' and 'I shop therefore I am', the artist creates her own sexual, social and political messages.

Kruger's graphic and bold representations explore the dynamics of power, identity, sexuality and representation, and challenge stereotypes and clichés. Since 1980, her text/photo compositions have developed into a highly recognizable, consistent visual language. These signature images, produced in the 1980s, raise questions about values, taste, feminism, consumerism and the material world.

As well as appearing in museums and galleries worldwide, Kruger's work has appeared on billboards, posters, a public park, a train station platform in Strasbourg, France, and in other public commissions. Barbara Kruger's work has also been reproduced on items such as shopping bags, coffee cups and on t-shirts.

For ACCA Barbara Kruger has re-visited a work she made in 1988. The new work is considerably larger than the older work and is presented as a digital image rather than a collage.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

Many artists borrow or use images from other sources. Barbara Kruger's work makes use of appropriated and found imagery from the mass media. Susan Norrie has used imagery and film footage of environmental incidents and disasters sourced from television companies.

- The black-and-white images Barbara Kruger uses are culled from mainstream magazines. How are the composite photo/texts she makes, and their messages, different from those in magazines?
- Discuss notions of originality and appropriation. Research the legal and ethical considerations and requirements of reproducing the work of another artist in your own artwork. What legal requirements or regulations might have affected artists in these exhibitions?
- What is the difference between 'appropriation' and 'copying'? Why might galleries display artworks by artists whose work contains 'borrowed' imagery or references another artist's ideas or work?
- In 2000 in the United States of America a lawsuit was filed against Barbara Kruger for the alleged use of copyrighted material. Using the web links below research the case and its outcome.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Images of Barbara Kruger's works: www.varoregistry.com/kruger/

An article reporting on a lawsuit filed in 2000 against two museums, a university press and artist Barbara Kruger. The lawsuit raises questions about the legal consequences of making and exhibiting collages alleged to contain copyrighted material.

www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=4090

An article reporting on the outcome of the lawsuit: www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=10030



Peter Land,
Step Ladder Blues, 1995.
Courtesy of the artist and
Galleri Nicolai Wallner.

PETER LAND

Born 1966, Aarhus, Denmark

Lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark

Peter Land's work is characterized by the recording and repetition of people (usually the artist) in ludicrous and familiar staged acts. In one of Peter Land's earliest video performances, Peter Land 5th May, 1994, he filmed an amateurish performance of himself as a striptease artist. The video was an alcohol-fueled, and far from erotic, display of his own nakedness. The work was the second part of an experiment he conducted on himself, in the first he filmed several women performing a striptease with him walking in front of the camera. They were answers to his self-directed question: 'what would be the last thing in the world I'd be ready to do?', 'How could I put myself in doubt?' The answer was total exposure.

The video works following this experiment depict the artist in a variety of sequences (reminiscent of silent film and slapstick comedy) that go to extremes to illustrate the condition of self-exposure and failure. In these works Land says he is 'trying to reflect some basic conditions of my own existence and perhaps to fill some sort of apparent meaning into the meaningless of Life'.

Step Ladder Blues, 1995

His video projection Step Ladder Blues, 1995 shows a housepainter (Land) trying to fulfill his purpose in vain, constantly climbing a stepladder to perform the seemingly simple task of painting the ceiling and constantly failing at it. His fall is in slow motion, and loops endlessly. It is a comic fall from grace that reminds us that the happiness of most people we know is not destroyed by great catastrophes or fatal errors, but by the repetition of slowly destructive little things that keep us within the loop of failure.

Land's work can also remind us that our happiness is often obtained by watching the failure and fall of others. The universal appeal of television programs such as Funniest Home Videos, that encourage us to laugh at the misfortune of others, lies in our own recognition and memory of an embarrassment or injury that once experienced is now the problem of another. So we laugh out of an unconscious fear as well as a conscious relief that we are not the fall guys this time.

The artist's thoughts on Step Ladder Blues

The artist has spoken of his inability to adhere or engage with any religious or social systems that might give his life (and art) greater meaning. He says: 'I've always been deeply fascinated, and at the same time repulsed by people who seem to have a clear sense of purpose in their lives. People who can distinguish between what's important, and what's unimportant, and refer to their surroundings in terms of their place in the 'Big Picture'. I guess it's a kind of jealousy. I envy these people for their ability to focus themselves in this world. A world that to me seems utterly confusing and disorderly. A world in which any foundation for firm convictions or beliefs are transitory and untrustworthy.'

The use of music in Step Ladder Blues

The artist selected the overture of Wagner's (German, 1813-1883) opera 'Tannhäuser' as the soundtrack for the video both for its dramatic effect and for the added meaning it brings to Step Ladder Blues. The music is extremely 'heroic' and romantic. It seems to 'climb upwards' all the time, whereas the housepainter is anything

but heroic and is constantly falling down. Land says: 'the storyline of this particular opera is about a knight on the quest for divinity. At the end of the opera he finds it, but at the cost of his life. I see that very much as a romantic parallel to my housepainter'. In dying, 'the knight is still luckier than the house painter who is condemned to keep trying and falling.'

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

- Is analyzing a film or video-based work any different to analyzing a painting or sculpture? Discuss the use of film or video as a medium and the devices or effects an artist can use (i.e. sound, narrative, film-speed, composition, lighting, cropping, repetition) to contribute to your understanding of the work.
- What issues relating to display and presentation might there be in displaying and presenting video and film-based works in a gallery?
- Can you think of any issues related to conservation and preservation of the work? What about selling the work? Is selling a video or film-based work any different from selling a painting or sculptural work? Why? Are there any other issues related to the display and presentation of this work that you can think of?

FURTHER RESEARCH

'The fall guy', Peter Land Interviewed by Michelle Grabner: www.nicolaiwallner.com

'Dear reader - some notes about my work', Peter Land: www.nicolaiwallner.com

YOKO ONO

Born Tokyo Japan, 1933

Yoko Ono may be most famous for having been married to John Lennon, however she is an important and influential artist in her own right - whose art practice preceded and has sometimes been overshadowed by her personal relationship with Lennon. During the 1960s Ono was a key participant in many of the innovations of the New York, Tokyo, and London vanguards, including Fluxus (an avant-garde movement that developed in New York in the early 1960s; Conceptual Art; and the underground film and performance scenes.

After her marriage to John Lennon in 1969, she collaborated with him on a number of projects in music, and art. Their happenings; 'Bed-Ins' for Peace; and the billboard campaign War is Over! If You Want It, were landmark projects created to promote world peace, a continuing theme in Ono's work. Ono is a prolific artist who continues to work in a wide and diverse range of media including interactive installations, site-specific works, Internet projects, concerts, and recordings. Ono's more recent work has addressed themes of change, survival, and time.

An invitation to participate

Throughout her career and across media, Ono has always invited the viewer to participate in completing her works, many of her paintings and sculptural works coming with a set of 'instructions'. She has often compared her own process of making art to writing a musical score for others to perform. Ono has said: 'I was a war child. Life was transient, and often with sudden changes... Static life seemed innately false to me. It was a fact, that statues and paintings deteriorated in time, or were destroyed by political considerations. I knew that no matter how much you wanted, the work never stayed the same. So, as an artist... I wanted to make "change" into a positive move: let the work grow- by asking people to participate and add their efforts.'

Yoko Ono is represented by two artworks in A History of Happiness, Cleaning Piece (River Bed), 1996/7 and Box of Smile, 1967. With the installation Cleaning Piece visitors encounter three mounds of pebbles on the gallery floor at ACCA. Visitors are invited to move pebbles from place to place in accordance with their feelings; they can pick up a stone from the centre mound and put it in the 'Mound of Joy' or in the 'Mound of Sorrow'.

The act of picking up the stone and placing it in the chosen mound makes a lasting impression. People speak of being strongly affected by moving the stones to the 'Mound of Joy'. One visitor to the Walker Art Gallery in the USA, where Cleaning Piece was exhibited in 2001 said: 'Even though there are things in my life that bring me sadness almost everyday, I wanted to direct my energies to the Joy side of the piece. Thinking, "I am experiencing joy" is a positive affirmation. But the physical action of picking up the stone and moving it over to the Joy pile seems to create an even greater power within. On the other hand, if someone is experiencing great sorrow that they cannot express or share, perhaps picking up a stone and setting it with the Sorrow stones would relieve a tension or make that person feel less burdened by their sadness.'

The other Yoko Ono work in A History of Happiness is Box of Smile, 1967 a piece that again depends on the visitor completing the work and finding that happiness is contained within their own actions and choice, and is an act of self-reflection.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Information on the Fluxus movement: www.fluxus.org

Yoko Ono at the Walker Museum of Art: www.walkerart.org/programs/vaexhibyokoono.html

An interview about Yoko Ono's 'instruction' works and involvement with an on-line exhibition at www.e-flux.com go to: www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/notes.html

FELIX GONZALEZ-TORRES
Born 1957, Güaimaro, Cuba
Lived and worked in New York
Died 1996, Miami, Florida

'I tend to think of myself as a theatre director who is trying to convey some ideas by reinterpreting the notion of the division of roles: author, public and director.' – Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Throughout his short career, Felix Gonzalez-Torres created works of relatively simple construction that indicated a direct connection with the Conceptual and Minimal art of the 1960s. Using everyday and readymade objects, works have included strings of light bulbs strewn across the gallery floor or hung from the ceiling; spills of 'candy' displayed like colourful confectionery carpets; 'paper stacks' (printed multiples on paper); two clocks displayed side by side on the gallery wall. His work deals with themes of transience, ephemerality and solitude. Following his partner's death from AIDS he dealt directly with his own grief by placing an intimate image of an empty, recently slept-in bed on billboard posters around New York. By transferring a normally private emotion into the public arena his works make us aware of the universal relevance of such themes as illness, death, love and loss.

Interactivity and audience participation

Referring to the display of his artwork in the artist said: 'I don't necessarily know how these pieces are best displayed. I don't have all the answers - you decide how you want it done. Whatever you want to do, try it. This is not some Minimalist artwork that has to be exactly two inches to the left and six inches down. Play with it, please. Have fun. Give yourself that freedom. Put my creativity into question; minimize the preciousness of the piece. It is much easier and safer for an artist to just frame something. There is meaning, as we know, in everything we do.'

Untitled (Fortune Cookie Corner), 1990

With *Untitled (Fortune Cookie Corner)* visitors to the gallery are invited to select a cookie and receive their enclosed message. Much of Gonzalez-Torres' work involves this sense of giving and direct audience participation. Begun in 1990, his 'candy spills' featured large quantities of colourful wrapped confectionery heaped in corners or spread out as 'carpets' on the gallery floor. These works have not only a formal sculptural quality, but as visitors are encouraged to take pieces of the work away, also the potential for change and transformation. Gonzalez-Torres' 'paper stacks' of printed multiples also involve direct audience interaction with the work; visitors are encouraged to take a sheet home with them. As long as the work is on show the paper is endlessly replaced by the gallery, copied from the original.

An on-going gift from the artist

The paper stacks and the arrangements of candy are described by the artist as having an 'ideal' height or weight, to be replenished as necessary from an 'endless' supply. In the work *Untitled (Placebo)* the amount of confectionery spread out on the floor represented the combined weight of the artist and his lover, referring to the AIDS epidemic and the artist's feelings about the lack of a cure or suitable care for those suffering from AIDS.

At ACCA 10,000 fortune cookies have been put out, all containing positive or 'happy' messages. The visitor to the gallery is invited to take a cookie home. If they are all taken before the exhibition is over, they will be replaced. By accepting the invitation to participate in both Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Yoko Ono's works the viewer is implicated in the work's realisation and future. As with the 'paper stacks' and 'candy spills'

Untitled (Fortune Cookie Corner) changes the usual museum rule of 'look but don't touch' and shifts the criterion for judging the work away from coveted uniqueness to intellectual or imaginative value.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

By engaging with the work in the present, and by removing an element from it, the viewer is made aware of the impending absence of the work. The placement of Gonzalez-Torres work in the gallery raises many questions about the commodification of art and objects. His works challenge the uniqueness and preciousness of the artwork.

- What comment does the work make on the metamorphosis (gradual change) of objects, architecture and other pieces of art in its vicinity? Should artworks be permanent? Is their value any less if they disappear or change over time? How do you value an artwork that is planned to be impermanent?
- Some of the works in *A History of Happiness* allow the audience to actively participate in the artwork, changing the representation and outcome of the work. You are invited to participate directly in the work of Yoko Ono (*Cleaning Piece*, 1996/7) and Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Even though you are not allowed to touch the other works in the exhibition are you still a direct participant? Do you feel that you have engaged with some works more than others? Why?
- There are no instructions near Felix Gonzalez-Torres' work advising the visitor to interact with the work? Why do you think this is? Could a gallery or museum keep a work like this on permanent display? What issues might there be as a result?

FURTHER RESEARCH

'Interview with Felix Gonzalez-Torres' by Robert Storr: www.creativetime.org/torres/storr.html

Born Sydney, 1953

Susan Norrie studied at the National Art School, Sydney, and the Victorian College of Arts, Melbourne. Susan has been exhibiting in Australia and internationally since the mid-1980s. Over the last decade her installations have incorporated a range of media including painting, film, video, photography and sculptural elements. Her work has dealt with feminine sensibility, colonialism, art and architecture and environmental issues.

undertow

Susan Norrie was commissioned by the Melbourne Festival and ACCA to create *Undertow* as a site-specific installation for the epic spaces of ACCA's new commission hall. Using the new hall space as a form of architectural origami, Susan Norrie has created a project rich in images of nature at her most uplifting and threatening, the work suggesting the hidden terrors and delights of a world in environmental flux. Norrie uses new materials and technology to make the walls of ACCA shift and pulse with volcanoes, blossoms, mud pools, oil spills and dust storms.

'Undertow' is a visual essay concerning our mounting sense of foreboding regarding a world that is in the process of being destroyed by man's intervention. Norrie's project reminds us that art has always been powerful tool for political commentary and that it continues to provoke thoughts about the world in which we live and indeed what we might strive for in continuing to change the world for the better.

Much of the film footage in 'Undertow' has been sourced from Greenpeace and various television networks; it is shown with footage the artist commissioned, other sourced footage and some that she shot herself. Copyright permission was obtained and the agencies were advised that changes (during the editing process) would be made to the works.

The film footage has been de-saturated of colour, as a result a cold blue-toned light emanates from the works and an air of melancholy pervades Norrie's installation. The process used has given the work the semblance of archival film footage. This factor, combined with the way that the artist has edited the footage means we are never really certain of what we are watching. Is it an environmental disaster, an act of terrorism, the aftermath of an atomic explosion or a petro-chemical war?

The work contains six separate projections that the artist refers to as 'elements'. As you enter and leave the space there is a small work that you can almost miss of an elderly woman and man pushing/pulling a box up a hill, 'Undertow' (Element 6), 1997-2002. The image is taken from the 1963 film *The Trial* directed by and starring Orson Welles and based on Franz Kafka's novel about an ordinary man caught in a nightmarish legal labyrinth.

Susan Norrie
Undertow (Element 5), 2002
Rotorua, New Zealand
courtesy of the artist and
Mori Gallery, Sydney



The floor-based projectors (encased in slated wooden containers mounted on thin metal legs) serve to break up the expanse of the gallery. All are painted in a petrol-coloured polyurethane coating that mimics the reflective surface of an oil painting.

'Undertow' (Element 3), 2002 spans the end wall of the gallery and reaches eight metres high, totally dominating the space. The work combines footage of environmental disasters and events that have occurred in Russia, Scotland, France and Melbourne.

'Undertow' (Element 1), 2002 depicts birds that have been incapacitated through damage done to the environment, in this case the Exxon oil spill. We witness the almost clinical procedure of their being cleaned.

'Undertow' (Element 4), 2002 is footage of latex balloon being inflated by workers at the Bureau of Meteorology in Laverton, Victoria. The balloon (filled with highly flammable Helium) is used to monitor changes in the atmosphere due to the hole in the ozone layer.

In 'Undertow' (Element 5), 2002 we witness the instability and volatility of nature as the earth's surface ruptures and boils over. This footage is of the seething mud pools at Rotorua, New Zealand.

The multiple elements in Norrie's 'Undertow' combine to present an image of the world as a strange, ominous and foreboding place. As we leave the space we see a small work contained in the large sculptural form in the entrance. 'Undertow' (Element 2), 2002 shows footage of the cherry-blossom festival celebrations in Tokyo, Japan. Norrie followed the child held aloft on a parent's shoulders through the crowds. The blossom and the child appear here as symbols of hope and renewal. The artist draws our attention to the fragility and beauty of nature. The cherry blossom holds a special place in the heart of Japanese people it is their national flower and a symbol of the spirit of Japan.

POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

New media art

New media artworks can present challenges to conventional art galleries and museums. Traditionally galleries have been oriented towards the display of static art, while new media work is constantly changing. New media art requires different methods of display and presentation, lighting and technical requirements and can pose concerns for curatorial and installation staff. Just as sculptural works may require plinths (supports) and works on paper reduced lighting levels, gallery staff need to consider power supply and access; Internet access; how sound and light components might affect other works in the gallery; installation requirements and on-going maintenance.

The commission by the Melbourne Festival and ACCA offered Susan Norrie an opportunity to explore working with film-based technology on a previously unrealized scale and the chance to take advantage of sophisticated equipment and assistance.

Discuss the different requirements of curating the exhibitions: 'A History of Happiness' and Susan Norrie – 'Undertow'.

- What different types of media have been included? What equipment and technical requirements might have been needed to install the exhibitions? Consider how have they been displayed? Where have the works come from? Are they from private collections or galleries? Are they for sale? What other requirements might there be?
- ACCA is a public gallery and does not have a collection. How might this affect the type of work the gallery exhibit? Do you think a commercial gallery would show work like you have seen at ACCA? Why/Why not?
- Discuss the notion of originality and the 'one-off'. With the availability of multiple copies of an artwork (such as multiples or editions of DVDs, video, sculptures or photographs) there is greater access to the work (i.e. works can be viewed simultaneously in different locations). This raises the question of originality and authenticity. Who owns the original? If works are sold how many copies should be made? Who should make these decisions? Does this make you consider them any differently to a work of which only one exists?
- Susan Norrie and Peter Land both trained as painters. Susan Norrie continues to paint and Land frequently exhibits drawings. In these exhibitions their work uses new media technology. How might the presentation and conservation of new media differ from more traditional media such as painting and photography?
- In relation to new media work consider the possibility that in the future hardware might not be able to run current programs. What happens to the works then?

Kit prepared by Kate Barber, ACCA