

Art Matters

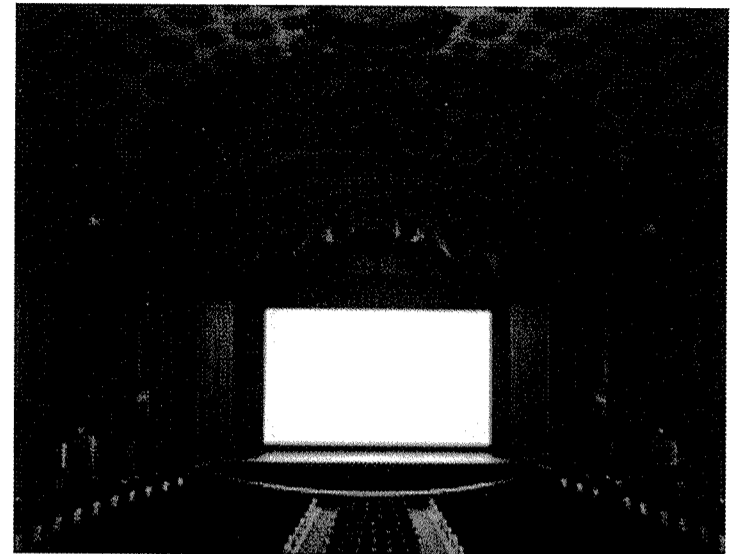


Wednesday, 31 October 2007

Cinema Paradiso

**Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 111 Sturt Street,
Southbank
Until December 2**

Cinema Paradiso is a thoroughly engaging exhibition that draws together artists who have been influenced by cinema. For some this takes the shape of photographic or filmic homages; for others it is the recreation of the cinema itself.



Both international and Australian artists are included in this tour de force of celluloid inspired art, with the first work that you see as you walk through the exhibition space being Andy Warhol's 1964 film, Empire. This piece has a hypnotic quality, drawing you in as you watch a static shot of the Empire State Building that begins in day and ends at night.

Modernist photography, such as that by Edward Weston, has been read and understood in terms of technical innovation and mastery. Only certain individuals were considered master practitioners and accepted into the canon. In the mid 70s, what we now call postmodernism challenged this hierarchy by opening up the meaning of photography to other considerations. This included understanding the reception of the photograph, the reproducibility of the photograph and the authorship of the photograph.

American artist Cindy Sherman is one of the most recognised photographers whose work embodies these postmodernist shifts. Sherman has seven of her iconic film stills from the 70s and 80s in Cinema Paradiso. In these pieces, Sherman has drawn on her memory of film stills and re-created - through iconic mannerisms - characters that are familiar to us all. The artist herself is present in all her photographs. She dons wigs, makeup and costume to appropriate or borrow from generic visual images. Sherman invites the viewer to experience visual pleasure through recognition and narrative. The manner in which Sherman codes the female characters in her work relates directly to the construction of identity. In film this is a given. People play a character, dressing up and acting accordingly. In Sherman's work, femininity becomes something that is put on, constructed by stereotypes.

Australian artist Tracey Moffat has created two pieces for Cinema Paradiso that also investigate constructions of identity and the acting-out of emotion. On a TV monitor, two films play. In one, Moffat has cut a series of disaster films together; showing ships sinking, earthquakes, fires and floods. In another piece, titled 'The Artist', Moffat shows snippets of artists as they have been portrayed in film – think tortured, emotional creatures who succumb to their madness.

There are so many other artists in this exhibition that I enjoyed, including Callum Morton, Edward Ruscha, Janet Cardiff, George Bures Miller and Ugo Rondinone. Put aside an afternoon to immerse yourself in Cinema Paradiso.

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