

# NEW07

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Nick Devlin, *Within you, without you*, 2007, television monitors, CCTV cameras, dimensions variable, *Apartment*, 2007, digital video, monitors, dimensions variable, courtesy the artist, Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney, and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Photograph John Brash.

The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's (ACCA) 'NEW' exhibitions feature commissioned works by contemporary Australian artists. Juliana Engberg, ACCA's Artistic Director, made this year's selection of Damiano Bertoli, Christian Capurro, Nick Devlin, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Anastasia Klose and Brendan Lee. The 'newness' of this year's artists varied. Except for the Sydney duo Healy and Cordeiro, who currently live in Berlin, all have actively engaged with Melbourne's vibrant artist-run (ARI) sector, as members of, and/or exhibitors in, spaces such as Ocular Lab, Kings ARI, Conical, Seventh and West Space. Meanwhile, many of the artists have exhibited in national public galleries, some have exhibited internationally, and two-thirds now have commercial gallery representation.

Though not curatorially thematic, the works in 'NEW07' were like extracts from larger projects, and interrelated through devices such as fragmentation – of self/other – and the use of found materials. This discussion focuses on the materially tougher works of Devlin, Lee and Bertoli – those by Healy and Cordeiro, Capurro and Klose have received more attention of late.

An interesting context for the digital works of Devlin and Lee emerged with the survey 'Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965–2005', concurrently on show at Melbourne's Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). While Devlin's 'found'-television installations combine a grunge aesthetic with stylistic and methodological references to works by Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman and John Cage, Lee transcends modernist concerns with his high-production value narratives that synthesise contemporary issues and cinematic references, such as Isaac Julien's *Baltimore series*, 2003.

In Devlin's *Apartment*, 2007 – comprising a 3 by 2 metre stack of 1960s and 1970s television sets – each screen shows the window of a New York apartment block, observed and filmed by the artist during a 2006 visit to the city. Recorded at night, we observe both empty and inhabited interiors through curtains, blinds or flickering light; we watch the apartment dwellers walk, watch television, read and prepare food. This fragmented vision of New York apartment life hints at a voyeurism approximating today's reality television phenomenon, as well as the media's increasing invasion of privacy, especially with regard to celebrity culture, though Devlin's subjects may never discover their status as 'stars' in his work.

Opposite, the 3 by 4 stack of screens of Devlin's *Within you, without you*, 2007, contained closed-circuit cameras that showed the audience as they stood or walked in front of the work. Each body was fragmented so that different parts appeared on separate screens, sometimes upside down, sideways, or in new combinations. Where *Apartment* incorporates chance and voyeurism,



this work seems to continue the artist's playful critique of the viewer viewing self/other in a gallery environment.

Throughout the ACCA space alternating sounds of a rock band, of talking voices or screeching tyres were heard. These sounds emanated from screens at either end of Brendan Lee's *Proving ground*, 2007. Amongst piles of car tyres, the first screen showed a toothless young man walking into a western-style 'saloon bar'. On ordering a beer, the 'locals' tell him he can't take a seat. After a 'stare-off' through beer glasses, a technique used by John Maybury in *Love is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon* (1998), the young man leaves, walking into a bright light that suggests *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). Behind more tyres, arranged atop a protruding car bonnet, the second screen continues the narrative from outside the saloon bar as the same toothless man emerges to watch a car doing burn-outs in a parking lot. Underpinned by the artist's acquaintance with the car culture of Melbourne's western suburbs, this combination of cinematic language and real life plays with notions of the 'west', while continuing Lee's exploration of a particular kind of Australian masculinity.

In comparison, Damiano Bertoli's static work presents a fragmented, semi-autobiographical analysis of contemporary artistic practice. Bertoli is engaged in a continuous process of revisiting art/cultural history and theory, a concern implied in his title, *Continuous moment* – an appropriation of *Il Monumento Continuo*, 1969, a project by the 1960s Italian architectural collective, Superstudio. Though sometimes difficult to decipher, each element of Bertoli's installation is an aesthetic proposition that reference cultural moments from around 1969, the year of Bertoli's birth. *Does my brain look big in this?*, 2007, a large black-and-white self-portrait, shows the artist advanced in years, wearing glasses and smoking a cigarette, appropriating the first self-portrait Chuck Close sold to a museum and exhibited in 1969. Another work, *Clear light*, 2007, a large piece of mirrored metal contorted so it fits into its Perspex box, faced a series of photographic works with shiny spheres, referencing the 1969 moon landing and the shaven-headed females of the Manson family (responsible for the murder of Sharon Tate in 1969). The women's monk-like appearance relates to the plastic Buddha in Bertoli's mixed-media assemblage *Analysing the transaction*, 2007. Bertoli's playful but rigorous complexity acknowledges that, like many of the artists in 'NEW07', his work is a continuous process of becoming.

NEW07: Damiano Bertoli, Christian Capurro, Nick Devlin, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Anastasia Klose, Brendan Lee, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne, 17 March – 20 May 2007.