OURSelves
OURSELVES

Presented by Melbourne Festival & the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

Laurie Anderson
Eleanor Antin
Edgardo Aragon
Sophie Calle
Alan Currall
Rineke Dijkstra
Valie Export
Omer Fast
Dan Graham
Mako Idemitsu
Joan Jonas
Robert Morris
Bruce Nauman
Joao Penalva
Yvonne Rainer
David Rosetzky
Martha Rosler
Gillian Wearing
Rachel Perry Welty
Hannah Wilke

Eleanor Antin
The Little Match Girl Ballet, 1974
colour, sound, 26:30 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Cover image:
Martha Rosler
Martha Rosler Reads Vogue, 1982 colour, sound, 24:45 min
courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York
OURSelves is an investigation of the inter-subjective strategies of mutual exchanges, para-egos, stand-ins, avatars and masquerades. This major international survey exhibition presents a gathering of works, commencing with experimental film projects by artists such as Joan Jonas, Mather Rosler and Hannah Wilke who saw video as a kind of mirror for investigating the ‘self’ while questioning the status of women in media and artistic representations.

The exhibition then travels into the strategies of inter-subjectivity developed by artists such as Dan Graham and exchanges established between artists and invented personas by Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris and Eleanor Antin.

These concepts are then taken up by more recent contemporary artists like Gillian Wearing, Rachel Perry Welty, Alan Currall and Joao Penalva. They investigate these ideas in a range of projects that expand upon the self and the other, the inter-subjective and the mirror, the persona and the invented self.

Laurie Anderson makes a clone of herself, Cate Blanchett is ‘revealed’ and ‘concealed’ by David Rosetzky and school children speak about the ‘other’ whilst being observed by another in Rineke Dijkstra’s captivating project. Lovers communicate through the mediation of the camera in Sophie Calle’s diaristic Double Blind and Omer Fast shows the dislocation and disassociations of the ‘other’ in surveillance.

OURSelves explores empathy, exchange, mirroring, and inter-subjectivity. It studies the existential ‘us’ present in ‘them’ who are reflected back to ourselves.

Juliana Engberg, Artistic Director
“I knew I didn’t want to present the portrait as a definitive representation of Cate Blanchett – but rather an exploration of shifting identities and interchangeability. The location of the Sydney Theatre Company workshop – where they make all of their sets – added to this idea as it represents a site of construction and potential.”

DAVID ROSETZKY

David Rosetzky’s acclaimed video portrait of Cate Blanchett was commissioned by The National Portrait Gallery in Canberra in 2008. Filmed within the set design workshop of the Sydney Theatre Company, the actress slowly moves in to focus in a choreographed sequence, beginning with deft hand gestures and concluding with a lighthearted dance routine. Meanwhile, in a voice-over she muses about her performance roles, public personas and self-identity. Rosetzky initially interviewed the actress and created an edited script that she read and recorded, however the artist does not attempt to reveal the true identity of the actress. Instead, consistent with the more anonymous subjects in his other works, he suggests that identity is fluid and constructed, always dependent on others.

Think about different times when your identity and behaviour changes, such as when you are with friends or family. Is it possible to have a fixed identity?

What are the essential characteristics of people? Should a portrait attempt to express the ‘true essence’ of the sitter?
In Rineke Dijkstra’s three channel video installation, I see a Woman Crying (Weeping Woman), commissioned by the Tate Liverpool, a group of school children contemplate Picasso’s Weeping Woman. The painting itself is never visible; instead Dijkstra presents the children as a portrait, documenting the uninhibited and emotional responses they give and drawing attention to the nuances of their attitudes and behaviours.

Initial observations such as “I think she looks a bit scared,” progress to invented narratives such as “I think she was at a wedding and she stole the cake” and “Maybe she’s crying because she’s happy because someone bought her a sports car.” The children respond and build on each others’ comments. To film the scene, Dijkstra set up three cameras on tripods and a reproduction of the painting attached to the middle tripod. The children gaze towards, but just past the viewer. Situated in the gallery, the audience then perhaps, becomes the artwork that the children are observing. Mining their own emotional history, the childrens’ observations and comments are reflections of their feelings about themselves. “She might just be lonely anyway,” suggests one little girl. As they try to make sense of the Weeping Woman, they express fears of death, loneliness, betrayal, and unhappiness that the viewer recognizes in themselves.

“My videos look best in an installation. You can watch it at home on your computer, but that is very different than when you view it as a large projection. I think it’s important that the viewer is able to relate to the people portrayed. You should almost feel that you can walk around it, that it has depth. That has a very different impact.”

RINEKE DIJKSTRA

Divide the class in half. Show one group a famous portrait and ask them to describe it. The other group must not see the portrait, but draw their own version, based on the other groups description.
BRUCE NAUMAN

Born 1941 Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA
Good Boy Bad Boy, 1985
2 monitors, 2 videoplayers,
2 videotapes, colour, sound
edition 25/40, 60:00 min, looped
Courtesy Friedrich Christian Flick
Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof

In ‘Good Boy Bad Boy’ two actors, Joan Lancaster and Tucker Smallwood, are presented in close-up, like newsreaders, on two television screens. The pair are contrasted by their gender and ethnicity. Smallwood is a young black man; Lancaster an older white woman. Both speak the same one hundred phrases about the human condition, such as “I was a good boy/You were a good boy/We were good boys.” Although they begin their recitations concurrently, each actor’s techniques of delivery are quite different, and result in their proclamations shifting out of sync. Each sequence of phrases features conjugation of the verb ‘to be’ and as they go through the sequences their tones change from neutral to angry. Nauman draws our attention to the different levels of reading experienced by the viewer, who, while con-fronted by a barrage of contradictory accusations, create assumptions about the identities of these two characters based not only on gender, ethnicity and class but also on intonation and body language.

Nauman incorporates the viewer into the conversation by using ‘I,’ ‘You,’ and ‘We,’ however we cannot talk back.

What would you say back to the actors?
Can you think of examples of this happening in the media?
How does it make you feel to have a conversation but aren’t able to respond? Describe how you would direct the actors to go from nuetral to angry using either body language or intonation/voice.

‘Because they are actors, it’s not autobiographical, it’s not real anger, but pretending to be angry and they are pretty good at it, but maybe not really convincing.’

BRUCE NAUMAN
GILLIAN WEARING

Born 1963, Birmingham, UK
2 into 1, 1997
colour video for plasma screen with sound,
4:30 min, courtesy Gillian Wearing and Mau-
reen Paley, London. Private collection

Gillian Wearing’s ‘2 into 1’ reveals emotional conflicts and complex family dynamics, exploring how identity is shaped and affected by our closest relationships. A mother and her twin 10 year old sons candidly describe each other, then switch roles, lip-synching the words of the other. The mother discloses, in the boyish voices of her sons, that she is “intelligent and sophisticated,” yet that she has also failed her GCSE’s, drives too slow and “she doesn’t dress too well”. The camera then switches over to the boys, speaking in their mother’s kind, but fatigued voice. “I think Lawrence is absolutely adorable, he’s gorgeous, I love every inch of him. But he’s got a terrible temper.” As Juliana Engberg explains, “Each need to listen as they perform their function, and so we become aware of the extent to which opinions that are demeaning, cruel and calculated to hurt – expressed by the sons – must first be registered by the ‘speaker’ mother. In turn, we register, the satisfied smirks and collusive looks, and the sometimes uncomfortable twitching and squirming of the sons’ bodies as they listen to and acknowledge what their mother says about them. We recognise too, the transference and projection taking place, both psychoanalytically and actually. This is one of Wearing’s hardest hitting projects: simple but deadly.”

Imagine you were writing an honest description about a family member. If they read the description, do you think they would agree with it, or be hurt by it?

How well could someone in a close relationship with you describe you? Does their description reveal more about you or themselves?
“What you mean we?” begins with Laurie Anderson introducing her clone in an interview session. She explains that, due to her recent success, she created a clone to share some of her responsibilities, and ultimately, to take care of the tasks she doesn’t want, or feel comfortable to do. The clone is a pocket sized male version of herself, with a moustache, bushy eyebrows and a large head. Not only has Anderson’s image been distorted in the clone, she has also altered her voice, a recurring motif in her work that she describes as “voice drag.” At first the clone seems self-conscious and hesitant, but soon he begins to gain confidence in his creative abilities and own identity, increasingly belonging less and less to Anderson. The work concludes with the clone admitting that he too has become so busy that he’s decided to clone himself.

Interviewer: So you’ve been pretty busy for a multi-media performance artist. Let’s see, I hear you make records, films and books, and you’ve been on the road a lot, too.

Anderson: Just got back from a concert tour, Japan and Europe, [and] Australia… Lately I’ve been so busy… I don’t have the time anymore to do the actual work.

Interviewer: Well, you can’t be in two places at once.

Anderson: Right. I mean you wish there was another you. So I talked to a design team about it — cloning is still in very early stages, but I think we did a pretty good job. We were dealing with duplicating speech, and a certain musical ability and logic, and a few things came up sort of strange. It’s always strange to see some kind of reflection of yourself. And anyway, we do work together and sometimes he’s on his own, but I think it’s working out really well...

Would you like a clone of yourself? Do you think the clone would have exactly the same personality as you? What would you get your clone to do?

“Having an alter ego means you can escape yourself once in awhile, to see the world through other eyes”

LAURIE ANDERSON
ELEANOR ANTIN
Born 1935, New York City, USA

The King, 1972
black and white, silent, 52:00 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

The Little Match Girl Ballet, 1974
colour, sound, 26:30 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

“When I became a feminist, I was interested in knowing, if I were a man, what kind of man I would be. I figured I’ll put hair on my face, have a beard – I’ll be a man. I discovered I was a king and started taking on aspects of a king, politically. Then I said, ‘Well, that’s my male self. What’s my quintessential perfect female self?’ I became a ballerina, and the ballerina is an artist, so that was my artist self.”

ELEANOR ANTIN

Since the late sixties performance artist Eleanor Antin has invented characters and narrative to explore the idea of the representational self. With the rise of the women’s liberation movement, feminist artists started to explore not only what women could do, but how women might think of themselves. Antin felt that the limits of self could be as expandable as one’s imagination allowed, and that these inventions were reflections of Jungian archetypes, and representations of our unconscious experiences.

“I am interested in defining the limits of myself. I consider the usual aids to self definition – sex, age, talent, time and space – as tyrannical limitations upon my freedom of choice.”

ELEANOR ANTIN

In 1972, Antin created ‘The King,’ her ideal male self by transforming her outward appearance with facial hair and a costume. In a later performance, ‘The King’ wanders around his community, going to the bank, shopping and unsuccessfully attempting to rally his subjects into a resistance against a property development. Antin has described the character as her ‘political self,’ explaining, “We were very much alike. He was a stubborn hopeless homeless romantic like me. He was a political loser like me.”

“Role playing was about feeling that I didn’t have a self. And I didn’t miss it. It’s not as if I suddenly was this pathetic person without a self; it was just fine. I just borrowed other people’s, or made them up. And it’s something that continued when I started working with personas because it was a very good way of dealing with a lot of the political and social issues that were of interest to me. And also particular intellectual interests that I had, like theatre and self-representation.”

ELEANOR ANTIN

Imagine what you would look like and how you would behave as the opposite sex. How much would this alter your sense of self? Is gender essential to identity?
CURRICULUM LINKS & ACTIVITIES

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSIONS

What is portraiture?
What should a portrait have?
What are the benefits of using time based medium for portraits and exploring identity?
How does video art differ from films we watch at the cinema?
What is identity?
How would you define your own identity?
What aspects of your life impact your identity?
What characteristics makes us ‘ourselves’?
What are personas?
What is the difference between subjectivity and objectivity?

AT ACCA

ACCA’s FREE education programs mean that students will engage in theory, language and practice while visiting the exhibition. For the OURSELVES exhibition, students may participate in the following programs:

TALK
Watch selected video works in the OURSELVES exhibition with a guided tour from ACCA’s qualified Education staff. Key themes are explained and tours are tailored to suit all year groups and subjects.

THINK
Use contemporary art as the stimulus for philosophical dialogue and search for meaning in our THINK workshop. Collaborative inquiry is used to investigate the concepts, symbolism and themes students have wondered about in the exhibition. Experience contemporary art as a mode of thinking, and ACCA as an ideas laboratory.

MAKE
Create an alter ego at ACCA, using masks, costumes, literacy and photography to explore and understand the themes and concepts in the exhibition. This fun and inspiring hands on workshop fosters deeper engagement with exhibition content through haptic learning approaches.
POST-VISIT

VCE ART
Use the *Personal and Cultural Framework* to interpret different works in the OURSELVES exhibition, considering:

Rineke Dijkstra, Bruce Nauman, Valie Export and Dan Graham are particularly interested in how mirroring can inform our sense of identity. How does the experience and background of the viewer affect the interpretation of the artwork? What can we find out about ourselves from these works?

Particular works in the OURSELVES exhibition by Eleanor Antin, Martha Rosler, Hannah Wilke and Joan Jonas were created during the feminist art movement in the 1970’s. How do gender values reflect the social context of the time the artwork was produced? How do these values compare to the values of today?

VCE STUDIO ARTS
Unit 1: Artistic inspiration and techniques
AREA OF STUDY 3: Interpretation of art ideas and use of materials and techniques

Visit the OURSELVES exhibition to examine how these artists have used video as a medium for investigating identity and portraiture.
Create a portrait in two contrasting art forms such as painting and video;
How will you convey identity through these art forms?
Document in written and visual form the development of the idea, focusing on a discussion of the materials, techniques and processes with attention to the use of dominant art elements and principles specific to that medium;
Consider how has this improved your understanding of portraiture and the chosen art forms?

VELS ACTIVITIES
Look at different alter egos created by artists and performers. Discuss why they create an alter ego, and what it reveals about themselves.
Draw a picture of your alter ego, designing an outfit and labelling their distinguishing features.
Write a description about the alter ego’s personality.
Write a story about the alter ego.
Create a puppet version of this alter ego.
Work with a partner and create a script and performance for the two alter egos.

Create a class list of questions you could ask that would help you learn about a person’s personality and identity, for example:
What advice would you give to yourself 3 years ago? Where do you see yourself in 10 years? If you had 1 million dollars, what would you do with it? What do you fear most in life? What bad habits do you want to break? Who is/are the most important person(s) to you in the world? What annoys you the most? Where would you like to travel? If you could only do 3 things when you got there, what would you pick? How old do you feel? What makes you laugh?
Ask the students to use these questions to write a paragraph about themselves anonymously. Give each student a different paragraph to read aloud. Ask some students to read in a particular intonation such as angry or cheerful. As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between the types of statements different students have written and the ways in which intonation and gender affect our understandings of identity.

VELS The Arts – Art: Creating and Making/Exploring and Responding
Level 2
Students develop two- and three-dimensional artworks that communicate concepts of self, family, home and community
Level 3
Students identify techniques and features of other people’s works that inform their own arts making.
Level 4
Students create a narrative structure with images in a variety of styles (for example, figurative or expressive) or from the point of view of another person or imagined character.
Level 5
Students express ideas and images that convey a sense of personal identity and examine different ways in which artists convey identity
Level 6
Students research art and compare works from differing periods and styles on selected themes such as portraiture and landscape, representations of and by women.
GLOSSARY

Avatar
In cyberspace or virtual reality graphics, an avatar is a movable icon representing a person, but is also generally describes an incarnation, embodiment, or manifestation of a person or idea.

Inter-subjectivity
A term is used in philosophy, psychology and sociology to describe a condition somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity. A phenomenon is personally experienced (subjectively) but by more than one subject.

Ego
The self that is conscious and in-touch with the external reality. The ego is in charge of self-perception and modifying behaviour.

Alter ego
A second self, another side to oneself or sometimes a very close/ongoing friend.

Para-ego
Existing simultaneously with the ego or self but operating on another level. eg. In psychoanalytic terms, a Freudian Slip aka ‘parapaxis’ is an error in speech considered an inference from the unconscious.

FURTHER READING

DAVID ROSETZKY
Art and Australia Vol 48/3 Autumn 2011 By Daniel Palmer

RINEKE DJIKSTRA
http://www.mariangoodman.com/artists/rineke-dijkstra/
http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/exhibitions/past/exhibit/4424
Women Artists, Published by Taschen, 2006

BRUCE NAUMAN
http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/bruce-nauman
http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-full/bio/?artist_name=Bruce%20Nauman
‘Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman’s Words’ Edited by Janet Kraynak, Published by MIT Press 2005

GILLIAN WEARING
http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/gillian-wearing-obe-2648
http://www.maureenpaley.com/artists/gillian-wearing
http://www.parkettart.com/books/70-volume.html
Gillian Wearing: Living Proof, Published by The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2006.

LAURIE ANDERSON
http://www.laurieanderson.com
Women Artists, Published by Taschen, 2006

ELEANOR ANTIN
http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/eleanor-antin
http://www.feldmangallery.com/pages/artistsrrfa/artant01.html

BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES

ACCA’s free education programs are available for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary groups between 10am - 4pm from Monday to Friday. Maximum 25 students per group for THINK and MAKE programs.

Bookings are required for both guided and self-guided School and Tertiary groups. School or Tertiary groups arriving without a pre-booking may be required to wait to see exhibitions. Please be considerate of other classes and the public in gallery spaces.

Contact education@accaonline.org.au or call (03) 9697 9999 if you would like to bring a Primary, Secondary, Tertiary or community group.
EDGARDO ARAGON
Family Effects
(efectos de familia), 2007/2009
Bluray HD video,
26:00 min courtesy the artist and
Proyectos Monclova
Conaculta-FONCA
OURSLEVES

1 & 3
HANNAH WILKE
2
MARTHA ROSER
4 & 5
JOAN JONAS
6
JOAO PENALVA
7
MAKO IDEMITSU
8
LAURIE ANDERSON
9-13
ALAN CURRALL
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RACHEL PERRY WELTY
15-18
ELEANOR ANTIN
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YVONNE RAINER
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GILLIAN WEARING
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SOPHIE CALLE with GREGORY SHEPHARD
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DAVID ROSETZKY
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OMER FAST
31
EDCARDO ARAGON

acca education
LIST OF WORKS

LAURIE ANDERSON
Born 1947, Glen Ellyn, Illinois
What You Mean We?, 1986 Video, colour, sound, 20:00 min courtesy Video Data Bank, Chicago

ELEANOR ANTIN
Born 1935, New York City
Representational Painting, 1971 black and white, silent, 38:00 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York,
The King, 1972 black and white, silent, 52:00 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York,Caught in the Act, 1973 black and white, sound, 36:00 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York
The Little Match Girl Ballet, 1974 colour, sound, 26:30 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

EDGARDO ARAGON
Born 1985, Oaxaca Mexico
Family Effects (efectos de familia),2007/2009 Bluray HD video, 26:00 min courtesy the artist and Proyectos Monclova Conaculta-FONCA

SOPHIE CALLE with GREGORY SHEPALD-HARD
Born 1953, Paris
Double-Blind, 1992 colour, sound, 75:58 min English and French with English subtitles courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

ALAN CURRALL
Born 1964 Stoke-on-Trent
Jetsam, 1995 original SVHS, 3:46 min
Message to my Best Friend, 2000 original miniDV, 4:20 min

ALAN CURRALL continued
I know you’re there, 1995 original Video 8, 7:44 min
Come in like this, 2004 original, miniDV, 1:35 min looped
How I would probably do it, 2004 original, miniDV, 4:13 min courtesy the artist

RINEKE DIJKSTRA
Born 1959, Sittard, Netherlands
I see a Woman Crying (Weeping Woman), Tate Liverpool, 2009-2010 3 channel HD video, 12:00 min, looped courtesy the artist and Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris/New York
Ruth drawing Picasso, Tate Liverpool, 2009 1 channel HD video, 6:36 min, looped courtesy the artist and Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris/New York

VALIE EXPORT
Born 1940, Linz
Facing a Family, 1971 black and white, sound, 4:44 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

OMER FAST
Born 1972, Jerusalem
Five Thousand feet is the Best, 2011 digital video, colour, sound, 30:00 min courtesy the artist and gb agency

DAN GRAHAM
Born 1942, Urbana, Illinois
Performer/Audience/Mirror, 1975 black & white, sound, 22:52 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

MAKO IDEMITSU
Born 1940, Tokyo
HIDEO, it’s Me Mama, 1983 colour, sound, 26:49 min courtesy eai.og

JOAN JONAS
Born 1936 New York City
Duet, 1972 black and white, sound, 4:23 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York
Organic Honey’s Visual Telepathy, 1972 black and white, sound, 19:38 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

ROBERT MORRIS
Born 1931 Kansas City
Exchange, 1973 black and white, sound, 36.02min courtesy Video Data Bank

BRUCE NAUMAN
Born 1941 Fort Wayne, Indiana
Good Boy Bad Boy, 1985 2 monitors, 2 videoplayers, 2 videotapes, colour, sound edition 25/40, 60:00 min, looped Courtesy Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof

JOAO PENALVA
Born 1949, Lisbon
Men Asleep, 2012 35mm slides courtesy the artist

YVONNE RAINER
Born 1934, San Francisco
Trio A, 1978 black and white, silent, 10:30 min courtesy of Video Data Bank

DAVID ROSETZKY
Born 1970, Melbourne
Portrait of Cate Blanchett, 2008 high definition digital video, 9:56 min choreography by Lucy Guerin, sound design and composition by J David Franzke National Portrait Gallery, Canberra Commissioned with funds provided by Ian Darling 2008

MARTHA ROSLER
Born 1943, Brooklyn
Martha Rosler Reads Vogue, 1982 colour, sound, 24:45 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

GILLIAN WEARING
Born 1963, Birmingham
2 into 1, 1997 colour video for plasma screen with sound, 4:30 min courtesy Gillian Wearing and Maureen Paley, London Private collection

HANNAH WILKE
Born 1940, New York City
Intercourse with…, 1978 black and white, sound, 27:00 min courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

RACHEL PERRY WELTY
Born 1962 Tokyo
Karaoke Wrong Number, 2001-04 video on DVD, 6:52 min courtesy Yancey Richardson Gallery

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