

Wade Marynowsky

Nostalgia for Obsolete Futures

Exhibition wall texts

Wade Marynowsky: Nostalgia for Obsolete Futures

Wade Marynowsky is a self-described 'anti-disciplinary' artist who creates robotics, immersive and interactive installations, performances, music and videos. His practice typically draws on technology and embraces unnerving themes to intriguing effect.

Through his practice, Marynowsky critiques the way in which audiences engage with new technologies and with media art. In some works he utilises artificial intelligence – making technology respond within a system of programmed parameters – while in others he allows for chance effects, or for works to continually unfold and evolve through interactivity and audience responses.

Marynowsky has created a number of new artworks for this exhibition, including *Stairway to heaven*, a performance-based work that makes use of The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia's grand staircase. This is the latest in a series of video and sound works in which Marynowsky combines his interests in music, performance and autonomous improvisation.

Nostalgia for Obsolete Futures provides an insight into Marynowsky's remarkable and extraordinarily diverse artistic practice.

The Hosts: A masquerade of improvising automatons

2009

calico, lace, silk (cord, fringing, ribbons), cotton (thread), plastic (buttons, lamp housings), transparent synthetic polymer resin, LEDs, steel, composition board, customised interactive software, sensors, electrical wires, power supply, wheels

electrical engineering by Aras Vaichas,

programming by Jeremy Apthorp,

costume by Sally Jackson

Collection of the artist, Sydney

The Hosts was partly inspired by E. T. A Hoffman's short story 'The Sandman' (1817), in which a man falls in love with a feminine automaton. The Sandman is a key feature in Sigmund Freud's essay 'The uncanny' (1919), the title of which has come to designate a key theory in robotics, outlined in Masahiro Mori's article 'Uncanny Valley' (1970).

The theory posits that as robots become increasingly humanoid they are viewed with greater fear and disbelief. In this work, Marynowsky tests whether an unnerving effect can still be achieved using robots with abstracted human-like forms.

Blue horizons

2014

colour video, customised software, sound, endless

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Blue horizons allows viewers to travel through time as live video is mixed with computer-generated imagery.

Fish and Chips

2013

programmed micro-controller, servomotors, plywood, aluminium, opaque synthetic polymer resin, battery (stabiliser), electrical wires, colour video, 13 mins 36 secs
a collaboration with Michael Candy

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Fish and Chips is a study of seagulls in flight, and in fight for hot chips. The work turns a famous Australian pastime into poetry in motion, allowing us to see beauty in everyday moments through use of the freeze-frame video technique. 'The chipper', a modified and automated version of a catapult designed by Leonardo da Vinci, hurls chips into the air and into the mouths of competing seagulls, and a camera mounted to the device records the animal-robot interactions. The video was shot at Clovelly, Sydney.

Idol

2014

24-carat gold-plated polyurethane, ed. 1/3

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Created in the 1970s, the 2-XL eight-track cassette player is an educational toy in the shape of a robot. Marynowsky found one in a thrift shop in Montreal during an international Arts NSW residency. A mould was made of the robot, which he cast in resin and then electroplated in 24-carat gold to resemble the Golden Idol from the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). For Marynowsky, 'The gold robot is a religious effigy for contemporary society'.

Remote tribe 1 – Sweet poison

Remote tribe 2 – Cherry poison

Remote tribe 3 – Cherry poison

Remote tribe 4 – Sweet poison

2012

Rock Maple (*Acer saccharum*), Cherry
(*Prunus serotina*), Camphor Laurel
(*Cinnamomum camphora*)

Collection of the artist, Sydney
Artbank Collection, Sydney. Purchased 2012

Marynowsky describes a 'universal remote' as a device with which you can control the universe, or at least your own universe. These works were inspired by totem poles the artist saw in Canada. He comments: 'Remote controls are the talking sticks of my generation; the person in control of the remote holds the power to speak ... or choose what we all watch. The work speaks of how the natural world is no longer a place for solitude, as it was in the past. Our technologies have allowed us to constantly monitor our environment and to be continuously connected via the phone, internet, etc.'

Minima tech

2012

synthetic polymer paint on plywood, opaque

synthetic polymer resin (arcade buttons)

Collection of the artist, Sydney

The discreet charm of the bourgeois robot 2

2010

vinyl, cotton damask, tulle, lace, sequins, mirror glass, cotton (thread, embroidery), silk (embroidery), plastic (lamp housings), transparent synthetic polymer resin, LEDs, steel, calico, foam, composition board, customised interactive software, sensors, electrical wires, power supply, wheels
electrical engineering by Aras Vaichas, programming by Jeremy Apthorp, costume by Sally Jackson

Collection of the artist, Sydney

With this work, Marynowsky pays homage to Luis Buñuel's 1972 film *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. The film's plot concerns six friends whose attempts to dine together are repeatedly interrupted by bizarre scenarios. Marynowsky's bourgeois robot is dressed in a costume that recalls women's fashions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period when human-like, clockwork automata were highly popular. Marynowsky is conscious of the human-like performance of robots being a form of drag, mimicking human characteristics without ever achieving humanity. He describes this work as the 'decadent disco diva of doom'.

The balance of your account is reflected in your face

2012

mirror (sandblasted), wood

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Techno fetishism derives its potency from the speed with which one object of desire is superseded by the next. In this work, Marynowsky predicts that the Automatic Teller Machine will soon be an archaic relic, and renders it as such – as a museum piece. The work was partly inspired by Jeff Koons's *Vase of flowers*, 1988. Marynowsky was struck by the financial value of Koons's work and subsequently began to explore notions of value and significance in contemporary society. *The balance of your account is reflected in your face* comments on society's and the commercial art world's obsession with money.

Stairway to heaven

2014

4 channel HD colour video, sound, endless

Collection of the artist, Sydney

In this work, various objects were released onto The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia's staircase, creating a non-determinist composition. Multiple video cameras recorded the sequence of events, which reference the famous Odessa Steps montage in Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Eisenstein believed that film montage could create new ideas or have an impact beyond individual images. Marynowsky has extended this idea by allowing a network of computers to randomly montage video sequences to create an ever-changing composition. 'It's an exploration of chance operations in music, by selected objects to make music by coming down stairs, and then allowing computers to re-compose it', he says.

User generated C% ^ \$Head (Noughties)

2014

colour video, customised interactive
software, endless

Collection of the artist, Sydney

In the *User Generated C% ^ \$Head* works, Marynowsky allows the viewer to become a musician by interacting with programs that autonomously mix live and computer-generated content. Participants can take a trip in an acid-fuelled psychedelic flashback in *Sixties*, enjoy fifteen minutes of fame via a Warhol-inspired painting program in *Eighties*, and digitally traverse time and space in *Noughties*.

Mutant radio

2014

synthetic polymer paint and polyvinyl acetate
on radio

Collection of the artist, Sydney

In David Cronenberg's film *Naked Lunch* (1991), technological devices develop organic mutations. The film is an adaptation of William S. Burroughs's cult novel of the same name, in which a typewriter/bug speaks to the writer through an anus. Burroughs is famous for his adoption of the Surrealist 'cut-up' technique, in which words on a page are torn up, thrown down and then reassembled to form new meanings. The technique was also used in Burroughs's radio works. 'You can hear Burroughs's voice in this work as the radio slowly transforms', says Marynowsky.

One room, one button: Composition for padded room

2012

vinyl, opaque synthetic polymer resin (arcade buttons), LEDs, foam, plywood, wood, customised interactive software, electrical circuitry and wiring, sound electrical engineering by Aras Vaichas

Collection of the artist, Sydney

One room, one button: Composition for padded room was inspired by the notion of the 'smart house'. The work's title recalls the 'one button' design associated with the 'smart' branding fad, a marketing phenomenon promoted by computing giant Apple. The irony here is that this darkened installation is lit up by the numerous white buttons that cover the room. The crisp, uniform whiteness of the objects and the gallery walls recalls a space-age sci-fi aesthetic reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and its supercomputer character, HAL.

Gothic surfer

2014

HD colour video, 5 mins 56 secs

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Gothic surfer is a romantic video combining the aesthetics of Australia's black metal and surfing scenes. Its narrative concerns a failed relationship between a black metal musician and a surfer girl. The black metalist attempts to win the surfer girl's heart by learning to surf, but fails miserably. *Gothic surfer* utilises a GoPro camera, a device used to document extreme sports, to capture an emotional, anxious and unsuccessful attempt at surfing. The video features Glen (Glenn) Smith, an artist and musician from Orange, and was shot at Cronulla Beach, Sydney.

User generated C% ^ \$Head (Sixties)

2014

colour video, customised interactive
software, endless

Collection of the artist, Sydney

User generated C% ^ \$Head (Eighties)

2014

colour video, customised interactive
software, endless

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Black casino

2013

enamel paint on composition board, electric guitars, stainless steel, aluminium alloy (rim), steel, vulcanised rubber, concrete, speakers, leather, sound

Collection of the artist, Sydney

Black casino consists of five Flying V guitars mounted on a spinning wheel. The guitars form a pentagram, symbol of faith among Wiccans and neo-pagans. However, the pentagram in this work depicts *diabolus in musica*, the tri-tone musical interval associated with the Devil since the sixteenth century and appropriated by heavy metal bands. The brutal physical gestures and sound of the power chord normally associated with playing Flying V guitars are here transformed into a slow-spinning, meditative drone.

Bricolage disco

2010

acoustic guitar, mirror (broken), polyvinyl acetate, motor, wire

Collection of the artist, Sydney

The term 'bricolage' refers to the construction or creation of an artwork from a diverse range of materials available to hand. Disco music rejected the raw power of punk music before it, a transformation represented here by the mirror-ball guitar hanging frozen in time. Viewers 'play' the *Black casino* wheel by spinning it – composing music as leather strums the guitar strings – all the while vying for the prized yet elusive mirror-ball guitar. In Marynowsky's words, the work is 'a representation of God or something that's never attainable'.

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