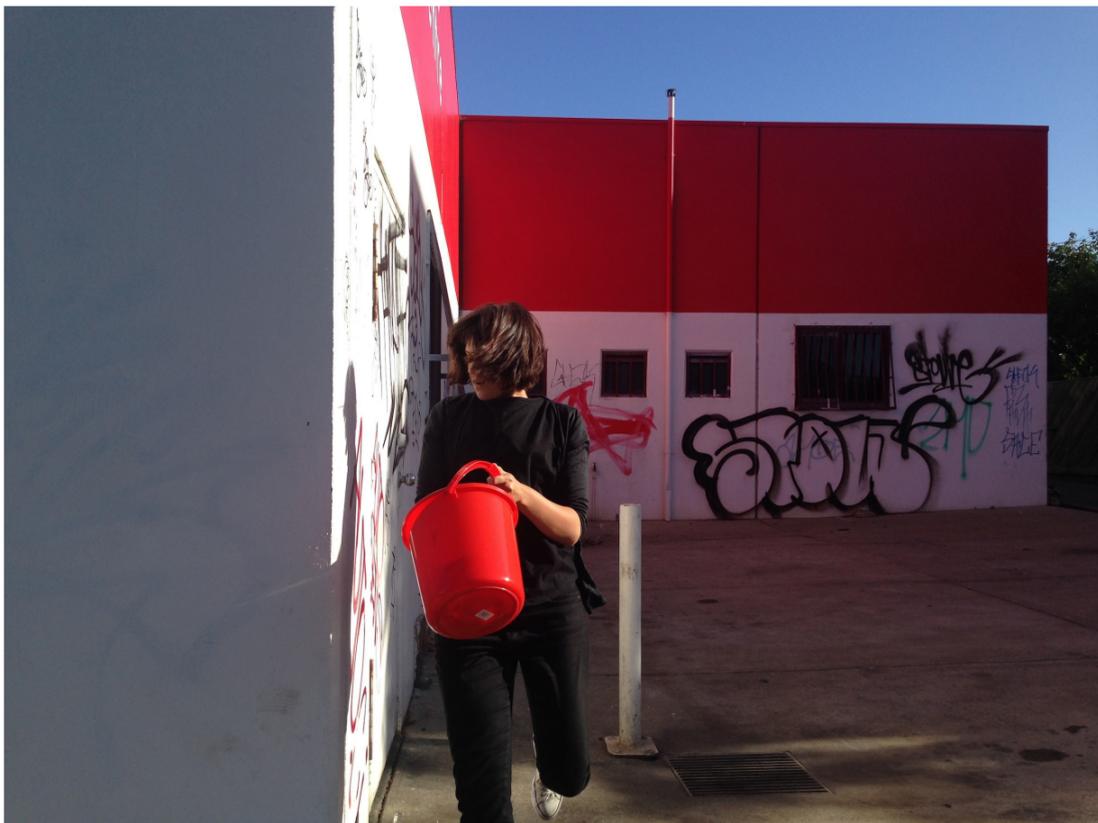


Screen Series: AUTONOMY examines the anatomy of contemporary video practice, considering the nature of technology, both within itself, and within the grander scheme of society. Featuring the work of five Melbourne-based artists, this exhibition focuses on video that refers to itself as medium, encompassing everything from the artist-performer to the camera apparatus itself. Together these new works reveal and critique the autonomous nature of video as a medium that continues to remain both technologically and conceptually self-aware.

'Autonomy', at its linguistic core, refers to 'one who gives oneself one's own law'. In a heavily monitored society such as ours, the autonomy of subject and technological object, as well as performer and spectator, must be called into question, begging, where does the power lie?

For Tania Smith, the power remains, at least temporarily, in the hands of the people. In a public performance, featuring the artist as performer, Smith further defaces an already graffiti-covered building with bold red marks, returning soon after to carefully remove her handiwork, though despite her efforts, residue remains. The work, which contemplates the 'revolutionary gesture', considers the ability and responsibility of the individual as part of the mass, pondering, as artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles stipulates, 'After the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?'¹



In contemporary society, technology simultaneously graces and suffocates both public and private domains, as computer screens, mobile phones, and televisions dominate idle and leisure time. Fast paced technological advancements have altered the urban experience as almost every interaction has become mediated with new technology. Marita Lillie's *Panopticon Project* (2013-2014) considers the positions of photographer and subject in a media drenched world, where everyone is watching and everyone is being watched. Toying with ideas of surveillance and spectatorship, Lillie's work aims to highlight the problematic nature of photography today, its limitations, ethics, and legalities.

While it is easy to damn technology for its overwhelming ubiquity, it is equally difficult not to marvel at its ever-expanding set of capabilities. Alex Cuffe, in his *Triscopic Contemplation & Perspective Machine for Lifestyle Agglomeration* (2014), takes advantage of the capacity of video as a medium, capturing live kinetic loops with cumbersome camera apparatus to create a kind of haphazard shrine. The work, which functions as an autonomous trinity perspective machine, alternating independently between three cameras, draws together a variety of psycho-spiritual imagery.

Channeling similar aesthetics of psychedelia, Linda Loh's experimental practice explores ideas of elusiveness and ephemerality. By exploiting the medium of light, the backbone of all analogue video production, Loh, in her work *Lure* (2014), conjures a highly seductive and vividly colourful image, which morphs gradually, roping the viewer into a meditative zone of sensual abstraction. This work offers points of reflection beyond visual and perceptual experience, hinting something of the mechanics that lie at the heart of the video medium. The circular whirlpool of colour evokes the portal gaze of the camera lens, while the morph transitions reminds us of the trickery of film in creating movement and motion with static imagery.

Filmic conventions and cinematic tropes are further laid bare with the work of Simone Hine, *Transfer (Production Still)* 2014. Displayed together and across multiple screens, fragmenting and unpacking the video narrative, this work is formed with photographs, stitched together into a seamless loop to depict a running figure (the artist). With frames missing throughout, the animated images flicker in a way reminiscent of the effect of early cinema. Juxtaposing moving imagery of a train in motion gives a further nod to cinematic history. The experience of train travel was seen to offer various parallels to the cinema experience and served as a reflexive device for cinema.

To consider the autonomy of contemporary video practice is, in many ways, to reflect on the technological underpinnings of the medium. While the inherent technical and mechanical dimensions of video art provide parameters for creativity, it also inspires critical self-reflection and playful self-reference that push and breakdown those parameters. The result is one of 'artistic autonomy' — one which embraces rather than rejects contemporary technological life.

Xanthe Dobbie and Raymonda Rajkowski

¹ Mierle Laderman Ukeles, 'Maintenance Art Manifesto' 1969, viewed 10 March 2014, <http://www.feldmangallery.com/media/pdfs/Ukeles_MANIFESTO>.

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SCREEN SERIES: AUTONOMY

Alex Cuffe, Simone Hine, Tania Smith, Linda Loh and Marita Lillie

Opening: Thu 3 April, 6-8pm

Artist Discussion led by Melbourne video artist and curator Jessie Scott: Sat 5 April, 2.30pm

Exhibition Dates: 1-5 April 2014

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