

# Curatorial Text



Installation view: Daniel McKEWEN, *Untitled (after Steven and John)* 2012, single-channel HD video with stereo sound, infinite loop, courtesy of the artist. Photo: Llewellyn Millhouse.

*Motion Picture* considers art's relationship to the cinematic through the work of six contemporary Australian artists. At first glance, the content and style of these works are seemingly familiar, however any initial sense of recognition is quickly undermined as narratives are confused or completely dismantled, well-known scenes are removed from their intended contexts, and common tropes are obscured and subverted.

Each artist in the exhibition engages with the cinematic in a different way. While some cut and rearrange existing footage to create new sequences, others construct their own, based on familiar tropes and scenes. Despite their differences, the works are drawn together through commonalities such as repetition, subversion and anticipation. Cinematic moments are heightened, extended or repeated but reach no climax.

Grant Stevens' *Sky* (2016) is an epic cloudscape that rolls on eternally, complete with meditative soundtrack. Anita Holtsclaw's *The Waves* (2013) depicts an isolated, possibly washed up protagonist by the ocean, in haunting and melancholic scenes. Using existing footage, Llewellyn Millhouse presents us with an almost exhaustingly repetitive loop of a climactic fight scene from *The Matrix* (1999, directed by the Wachoswskis), while Benjamin Crowley isolates and repeats moments from *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968, directed by Sergio Leone), making a character live forever on the brink—continually taking his last gasp of breath but never dying. Like Millhouse and Crowley, Daniel McKewen uses existing footage which we see as distorted glimpses in *Untitled (after Steven and John)* (2012). He frustrates our ability to recognise familiar scenes and faces from Spielberg favourites by blurring the footage and obstructing our view of the protagonist's faces, Baldessari-style. Equally disorienting is Simone Hine's *11:35am* (2010), which offers us loops of what we assume to be a chase scene, a looming sense of dread grows as we watch a woman try to find safety but there is no resolution or respite.

While the works disrupt expectations, showing them together is not intended as a critique to cinema as much as a consideration of how we consume imagery in popular culture and how pervasive the influence of popular films is in our understanding of the moving image.

*Motion Picture* extends from *Matinee*, a curatorial project we presented in conjunction with Current Projects and Boxcopy in 2013. In the original project, the works were viewed as a screening program in an old cinema space.<sup>[1]</sup> This iteration at Parer Place expands the original selection of artists and features some different works from the original screening. The context of the Parer Place screens gives a new dimension to the project: the screen size is similar to a wide screen cinema format, and an outdoor screen conjures an association with a drive-in. In this sense, Parer Place heightens the ambiguity of the work's relationship to the cinema experience. As curators, we are interested in what is brought to the works when viewed in this screening context, which is neither a gallery space nor a cinema space.

Watching these videos on a loop on the big screen, the non-linearity of the works becomes increasingly evident. In fact the non-linearity might be considered the prevailing theme of the show. Abandoning the traditional setting-conflict-climax-resolution storytelling routine, the works are either all-setting or all-climax. The viewers find themselves constantly questioning the scenarios playing out before them; the experience is disorienting, almost punishingly so. And then the loop starts again.

—Katherine Dionysius and Amy-Clare McCarthy

[1] Specifically the old cinema at Metro Arts, which was the original home of Dendy in Brisbane.