Experimenta and the Arts Centre present
EXPERIMENTA PLAYGROUND: International Biennial of Media Arts
Melbourne Premiere: 2007
National Tour: 2008 – 2009

A **STUDYGUIDE** BY EMILY CHEN

Introduction

Artist Guy Ben-Ner refers to Plato's book of laws when he says that the origin of play lies in the need for the young to leap, whilst the origin of creativity lies in the need for the mind to leap.

Experimenta Playground is a media art exhibition that invites you to leap into a world of innovative and playful artworks by Australian and international artists. A meeting place for technology and creativity, the exhibition comprises artworks that beckon you to touch, feel and interact in surprising and inspiring ways. Through the exploration of play, these artworks encourage us to consider social behaviour, identity, the real versus the imagined, the material versus the immaterial and the role of play in our lives.

This year, Experimenta celebrates twenty-one years as a leading Australian contemporary arts organization. Experimenta is dedicated to promoting media art through a vibrant program of exhibitions, screenings, commissions and tours. *Experimenta Playground* is the latest in a series of biennial media art exhibitions that are launched in Melbourne and then tour nationally. These exhibitions attract a broad cross-section of people and large audiences because of their engaging themes and inherent accessibility.
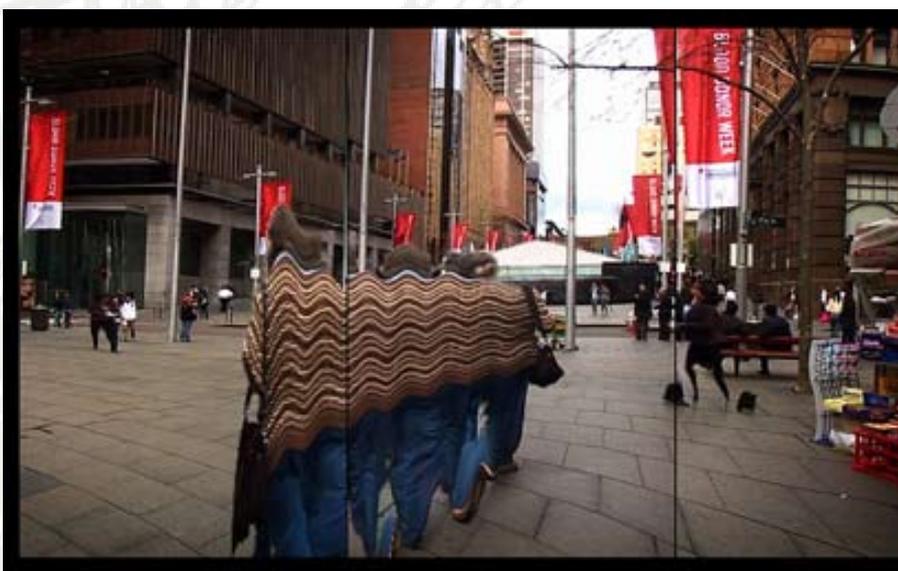
About this study guide

Experimenta Playground provides a unique opportunity for teachers of students in upper primary and secondary school and for tertiary groups to experience a major exhibition of artwork at the Arts Centre, one of Australia's key cultural centres. The exhibition and this guide draw upon the arts, media and technology to engage and connect young people; improving skills and outcomes including attitude to learning, literacy, communication, thinking, problem-solving and creativity.

The *Experimenta Playground* study guide has been developed to assist teachers to implement the principles of learning and teaching.

In particular, Experimenta:

– considers students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests

– builds on students' prior experience, knowledge and skills

– capitalizes on students' experience of a technology-rich world

– challenges and supports students to develop deep levels of thinking

– promotes substantive discussion of ideas

– uses strategies to foster imagination and creativity

Daniel Crooks, *On Perspective and Motion – Part II* (2006) Australia.
Still image from video. Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

– supports students to engage with contemporary knowledge and practice

Experimenta Playground can contribute extensively to the achievement of essential state learning standards in the interdisciplinary and discipline based learning strands.

Relevance to curriculum areas

Interdisciplinary Learning

Thinking Processes

– Creativity
– Reflection, evaluation and metacognition
– Reasoning, processing and inquiry

Communication

– Listening, viewing and responding
– Presenting

Information and Communications Technology

– ICT for visualizing thinking
– ICT for creating
– ICT for communicating

Design, Creativity and Technology

– Investigating and designing
– Producing
– Analysing and evaluating

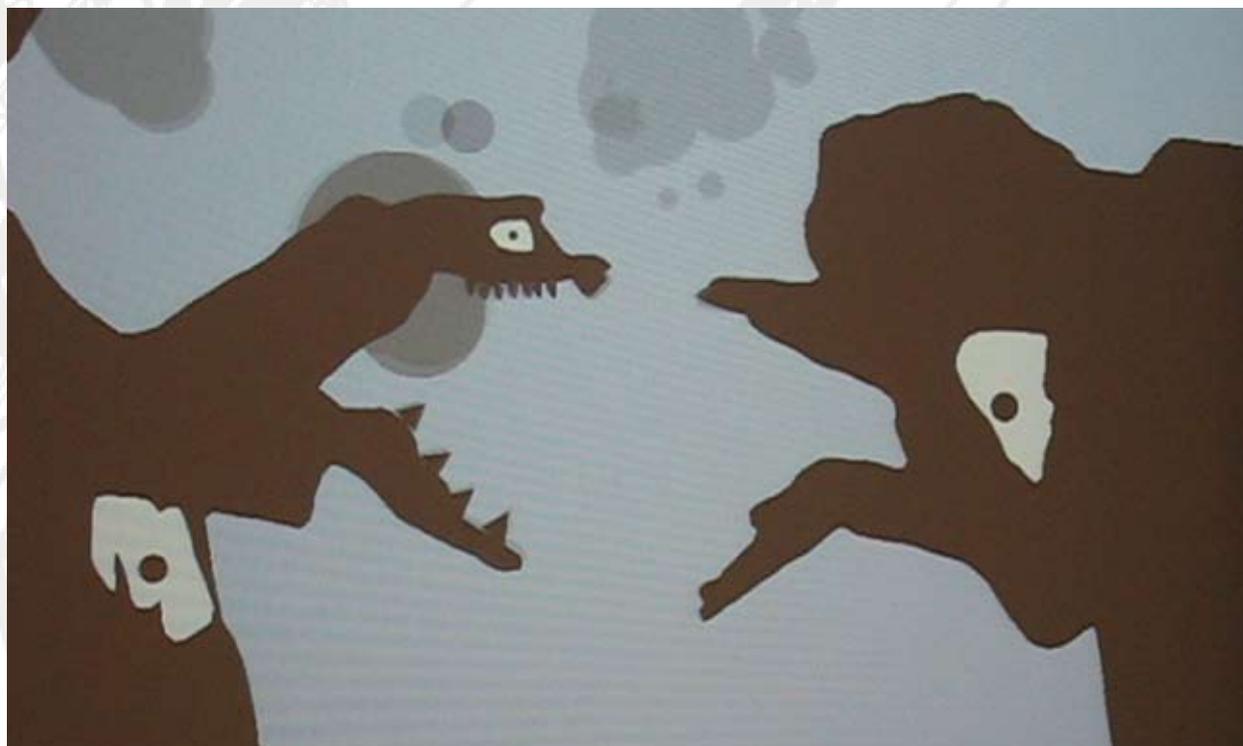### Discipline-based Learning

The Arts

– Exploring and responding
– Creating and making

English

– Reading and writing
– Speaking and listening

Teachers may choose all or selected artworks from *Experimenta Playground*. The suggestions that follow provide general introductory activities, ideas to introduce an excursion to the exhibition, focused activity sheets to assist students to explore and respond to particular works and general concluding and extension activities.

Philip Worthington, *Shadow Monsters* (2005) UK. Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artist.

Before visiting *Experimenta Playground*

Technology and creativity

For the past two decades, digital technology has been reshaping our lives, our culture and our industries. Experimenta's exhibitions showcase the work of artists who push the boundaries of technological innovation to create artwork that surprises, delights and creates wonder. These exhibitions demystify often complex technology, inspire audiences in the creative potential of familiar technologies and encourage them to engage with technology and the world around them.

– http://www.experimenta.org/ about.htm

• Discuss the above quote considering the impact of digital technology on our society and on art in the past twenty years. What is the value of demystifying complex technologies? What potential is there in familiar technologies for developing and expressing creativity?

• As a group, develop a rough timeline of important developments in media and communications technology over the past twenty years.

• Challenge pairs of students to present an innovative, creative and playful application of a familiar piece of technology such as an MP3 player, mobile phone or laptop.

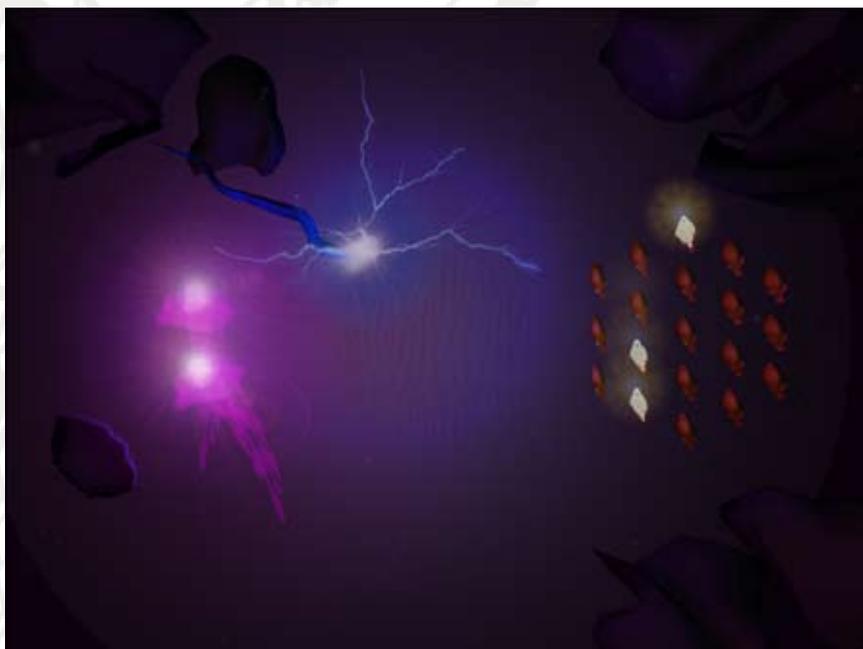The artists whose work is in *Experimenta Playground* see technology as a tool used to create art, and as such, the artworks in the exhibition encourage an emotional response from the viewer. These artworks are vaguely familiar, almost half known and understood and yet inspiringly innovative and different. Despite the impressive technology, what is most captivating about the artworks is that they play with our emotions, our impressions of the world and our state of being. They are intended to affect the way we think and feel.

• Encourage students to write or discuss which they see as more important in media art: the creativity or the technology.

What is the meaning of play?

• Brainstorm a class list or develop a basic web diagram around the concepts of play and playground.

• Use the 'Think, pair, share' learning strategy to form a class definition of 'play'. Ask students to first think about the meaning of play individually, then discuss their ideas with a partner. Finally come together as a group and share ideas to form a definition.

Angela Barnett, Andrew Buchanan, Darren Ballingall, Chris Mackellar, Christian Rubino, *Immersion* (2007) Australia. Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artists. An Experimenta New Visions Commission.

- Ask students to draw or sketch their idea of a 'playground'. Share and compare these images.

- Discuss the values associated with play. Contrast these with the values associated with work.

Play is increasingly being recognized as an educational tool for young children.

- Could it be argued that it is also a useful educational tool for adults? Have groups of students perform a mock TV interview with 'play' experts.

In this exhibition, the notion of play acts as a portal to exploring other complex and enduring themes such as identity, belonging, imagination, dreams, desires, memories and fears.

- Make a class list of familiar childhood games and the thoughts, ideas and themes that they provoke.

- What is it about our memories of play that evoke such powerful emotions?

Identity

Many of the artworks in the exhibition reinvent old games with a strong sense of nostalgia.

- Ask students why they think the games we play as children have such a strong influence on how we see ourselves, even once we are adults.

- How does play help to shape our identity and the way we see ourselves?

- Whilst asking students to consider this, have them form groups to investigate,

Julie C. Fortier, *Mechanical Rodeo* (2000) France. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

compare and contrast a range of factors such as: Team/independent games; structured/non-structured play; play in different cultures; gender difference in play and in commercially available toys; play as adults; play as children; play as childish and immature / liberating and freeing.

As children, when we play at dressing up and play acting, we are rehearsing and experimenting with the relationship between role and identity. *The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life*, by Kuang-Yu Tsui makes a statement about the differing roles that we fill in life.

- Discuss how these superficial roles affect our identity.

Belonging

Play helps foster a sense of belonging. Often play involves interaction with teams, friends and groups of people and can help situate us and strengthen our connections to a place.

- Have students write a reflective piece, produce a simple animation or draw a sketch about the relationship between play and belonging.

Imagination

Play transcends the boundaries of reality and the imagined and allows us to travel on flights of fancy, exploring and putting

expression to our greatest dreams and desires as well as to our worst nightmares and fears.

- How does interacting with a work like *Shadow Monsters* subvert the traditional concept of a monster? Introduce students to this work on the Internet at http://www.worthersoriginal.com where there is video of an early version of *Shadow Monsters*. Once students have been to the exhibition, have them compare the two versions. Which do they see as most engaging?

- Ask students to consider the following questions: Whose playground is it? Who actually does the playing in this exhibition?

- Is all playing, structured and unstructured, inherently a way into thinking and learning about big ideas?

Interactive artworks

Experimenta Playground is a celebration of interactive art, and as such, the artworks encourage the audience to take a central role, playing and acting to bring the exhibition to life.

Emma McRae and Liz Hughes suggest in their curatorial essay for *Experimenta Playground* that:

The light-hearted side of play brings a childlike sense of discovery through action that fills us with wonder and delight. That this sense of discovery is always so closely aligned with childhood is both telling and deceptive. It reveals that discovery and creativity come

through an open mind and open eyes, through the desire to understand, to know and to dream. Yet by relegating this experience to childhood it encourages us to consider this way of interacting with the world as immature, irrational and unsophisticated. Discovery and creativity is anything but!

- Write an argumentative article for the Arts section of a newspaper, agreeing or disagreeing with the opinion of the authors.

Preparing for an excursion to *Experimenta Playground*

- Reveal the *Experimenta Playground* logo and visual identity to the group. What initial reactions, thoughts and

impressions does it elicit? Brainstorm a list of keywords that it inspires. What does it imply about the central ideas of the exhibition.

- Ask students what they expect to see in the exhibition. How have these expectations been created? Read the introduction provided at the beginning of this guide. What suggestions does it create about the exhibition? Again what do students expect to see?

- Visit the website of artist Guy Ben-Ner at http://m--a--p.net/4.html Read his bio, explore his work and watch the clip from *Moby Dick*, his contribution to the exhibition.

Priscilla Bracks, Gavin Sade and Matt Dwyer, *Charmed* (2007) Australia. Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artists. An Experimenta New Visions Commission.

Guy Ben-Ner uses his home, family and particularly his children in his art. A quote from the website suggests that:

Ben-Ner has found a way to balance his roles as artist and father by creating video works that star his own children. In doing so, he implies, as critic Richard O. Jones put it, that parenting can contribute to artistic creation as much as artistic creation can contribute to creative parenting.

• Discuss students' reactions to this practice and write a PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) chart mapping the pluses, minuses and interesting factors of involving family members, particularly children in the making of media art.

Many of the artworks have some historical references, whether they be to the outmoded computer games *Pong*, *Space Invaders* and *Pole Position*, sequential sliding block puzzles, Buster Keaton's slapstick, old-fashioned optical toys, shadow puppets or the early cinematic effects of Georges Méliès and the Pepper's Ghost effect.

• Have students use the internet to research one of these and give a short presentation to the class before the excursion.

During your visit to *Experimenta Playground*

• Focus questions and activities relating to the themes, layout and aesthetics of the exhibition.

EXPERIMENTA playground

David Lawrey and Jaki Middleton, *What's Yours is Mine* (2007) Australia. Still images from installation. Courtesy the artists. An Experimenta New Visions Commission

• Ask students to draw or write about their initial impressions as they first see the entrance to the exhibition. If you are travelling by train, this may well be from Flinders Street station or the footbridge over the Yarra River.

• Before entering the exhibition, suggest that students pay particular notice to the placement and layout of the artworks. How does position affect your experience of individual works? Consider those outside, near the entrance, in separate rooms, and those grouped closely together.

• Does the placement of one work in relation to other works affect your experience of each piece? Do they enhance or detract from each other?

• Are pieces placed next to others with similar features? Do they have a relationship of some sort?

• How and why do you think the decisions were made about the placement and positioning of each artwork?

Exploring the artists and their work

• Provide students with a selection or all of the focused activity pages from this guide to assist them to explore and respond to the artworks.

En Juego / In Play (2006)

(Eugenio Ampudia, Spain)

Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New* has never seen so much action as it does in *En Juego*. In this video, Eugenio Ampudia digitally replaces the ball with a copy of the book in a 2002 World Cup soccer match between Brazil and Germany. In this dynamic context, the hard edges of the book take on both graceful and slightly dangerous qualities as it flies through the air, skids along the ground, becomes trapped between legs and is even headed by a player. On the field, the book becomes a fluid projectile as it spins, flips and bounces, seemingly liberated from the weight of its three dimensional form. Ampudia playfully parodies its authority by relocating *The Shock of the New* within a game. But whilst soccer stars kick around art theory, ultimately Ampudia doesn't allow it to score.

- What is your initial response to this work?

- How does this exhibit appeal to people who wouldn't otherwise be interested in media arts?

- What audience demographic do you think Ampudia is appealing to?

- Use an internet reference site such as Wikipedia to research Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New*, with particular reference to its critique of modern art. Why do you think Ampudia chose to use this book?

- In what ways is this artwork playful and subversive?

- Visit Ampudia's website at http://www.eugenioampudia.net to find out more about the artist and his work.

Eugenio Ampudia lives and works in Madrid, Spain. Ampudia is interested in the presence of the spectator in the work as one of the keys to understanding the consumption of culture and modern art today. He is known for the actions and incursions that he has been performing since 1987, his internet-based activities via the web site http://www.eugenioampudia.net and his work as an independent exhibition curator and artist through digital art, video and installation works. He has exhibited internationally in Switzerland, Germany and Singapore, with a retrospective, *… sólo una idea devoradora*, at ARTIUM, Spain 2007. Ampudia is represented by Galeria Max Estrella, Madrid.

Eugenio Ampudia, *En Juego / In Play* (2006) Spain.
Still image from video. Courtesy the artist and Galeria Max Estrella, Madrid

Immersion (2007)

(Angela Barnett, Christian Rubino, Darren Ballingall, Andrew Buchanan and Chris Mackellar, Australia)

An Experimenta New Visions Commission

An underwater scene projected onto the floor invites us to step into the ocean and interact with vibrant animated sea creatures. With *Immersion*, the seascape projected presents an interactive, 3D, real time experience where we can connect with a range of animated creatures from the deep. The movement of our shadows causes schools of fish to scatter and individual sea creatures to transform in shape and colour. Responding to shadows, electric eels generate lightning bolts, jellyfish glow and puffer fish swell. Virtual contact also produces an underwater symphony as each sea creature is distinguished by a specific sound. *Immersion* provides an imaginary experience of descent to three levels of the sea, including a shallow rock pool, an underwater cave and the dark depths of the ocean. As we descend towards the dimly lit ocean floor, creatures become increasingly vibrant and captivating. *Immersion* offers an interactive oceanic experience without getting wet.

- What is your immediate reaction to *Immersion*?

- Explore the meanings of the word 'immersion'. In what ways are we being immersed?

Angela Barnett, Andrew Buchanan, Darren Ballingall, Chris MacKellar and Christian Rubino, *Immersion* (2007) Australia. Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artists. An Experimenta New Visions Commission.

- What do you think are the central messages inherent in this work?

- How is the body integral in this work? What makes installation art successful?

- Read the artists' bios below. What do their occupations tell you about the hybrid nature of media arts?

Angela Barnett is a multimedia artist and film-maker.

Andrew Buchanan is a 3D animator, artist and filmmaker.

Christian Rubino is a 3D animator, game developer and digital artist.

Darren Ballingall is an animator and interactive media artist.

Chris MacKellar is a sound artist, composer and audio engineer.

The *Immersion* team live and work in and around Melbourne. They all studied together at the Centre for Animation and Interactive Media (AIM) at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2005.

Moby Dick (2000)

(Guy Ben-Ner, Israel)

With *Moby Dick*, Guy Ben-Ner and his daughter Elia shift the proscenium arch into the kitchen, extending the home video into an enchanted realm of dress-ups and play as they recreate Melville's novel. Kinship is identified early as father and daughter address the camera directly, revealing similar smiles complete with blacked out teeth. As a *bricoleur*, Ben-Ner is ultra-resourceful in updating trick cinematography inspired by George Méliès. Ben-Ner creates an illusion of turbulent seas by using a rocking camera to shoot a plate that perilously skids from left to right across a table. Father and daughter enact cycles of love, guilt and punishment as Elia repeatedly slams the fridge door on her father, kicks out his peg leg and smashes a bottle across his head. Inspired by Buster Keaton's boyish slapstick, Ben-Ner shaves his chest hair to delineate his heart, attaches pegs to his skin and, in the darkest vision of all, fantasizes about cannibalizing Elia. *Moby Dick* combines the attractions of early cinema with classic literature to explore the vicissitudes of paternity and creation.

- How does this artwork re-invent, re-imagine and re-create our understandings of imaginative and creative play?

- Write and illustrate a short story about an imaginative and creative play experience from your childhood. In small groups, chose one of these stories to make into a short film.

- What is the artist saying about parenting, family and the father–daughter relationship?

- What special effects and camera tricks are used to create the illusion that the kitchen is at sea?

- Research early trick cinematography and George Méliès in books and on the internet at http://www.earlycinema.com/pioneers/melies_bio.html and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/georges_M%C3%A9li%C3%A8s Present your findings as a PowerPoint presentation to your class.

Or:

- Research more information about Guy Ben-Ner and *Moby Dick* by visiting http://www.cca.org.il/guy-ben-ner/ for reviews and an artist bio and http://m--a--p.net/4.html for a Quicktime excerpt of his work. Present your findings as a PowerPoint presentation to your class.

Guy Ben-Ner is a video artist based in New York and Berlin. Ben-Ner's video works since 1999 are centred on his own performative presence and his relationship with his family. He studied art at Hamidrasha B.E.D. art school in Tel Aviv, and at Columbia University (MFA Program). In 2001, he relocated from Tel Aviv to New York. Ben-Ner has taken part in the 4th skulptur projekte münster (2007); represented Israel at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005); and won the Main Prize in the Oberhausen International Competition (2005).

Guy Ben-Ner, *Moby Dick* (2000) Israel. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist and Postmasters Gallery, New York.

Charmed (2007)

(Priscilla Bracks, Gavin Sade and Matt Dwyer, Australia)

An Experimenta New Visions Commission

The touch-sensitive screens of *Charmed* offer intimate views into a virtual world accessed via three glowing resin pods. Each pod provides an entry point to inhabitants of suburban neighbourhoods, apartment buildings and city spaces. Within these highly evolved snow domes, a black and white linear aesthetic depicts a world populated by mesmerized figures carrying out the routine tasks required of their environments. Haptic gestures, like touching or tapping, provide a pathway into the spaces and a connection with the cultures, uncovering the diminutive details of the lives of these animated figures. Touching the screen can break the spell and provoke change. Repeated tapping can cause chaos, disrupting lives, forcing computers to malfunction and causing traffic accidents. Tapping can directly impact inhabitants, even causing a man to drink so much that the inevitable happens and he wets his pants. In *Charmed*, each portal offers an impression of omnipotence as private lives and public spaces are exposed and controlled by our touch.

- Write down some words that describe how you feel when you engage with this work.

- What does omniscience mean? How does it feel to behave omnisciently?

- What do you think the artists are saying about urban spaces?

- Compare and contrast the works that deal with identity. Why do you think the curators have located these works in the gallery space in the way they have?

- Write a letter or an email to the artists expressing how *Charmed* affected you. Did it encourage you to see the world in new or different ways? Did it raise questions or issues about identity for you?

- Research a computer game such as *The Sims*. If you had the power to control the world, what are some things you would change?

- For more information about the artists, visit:

- http://www.priscillabracks. com/ for information on

Priscilla Bracks, http://www. kuuki.com.au/about/people/ for information on Priscilla Bracks and Gavin Sade or http://mattdwyer.com.au/ about.html for information on Matt Dwyer.

Priscilla Bracks, Gavin Sade and Matt Dwyer all live and work in Brisbane.

Priscilla Bracks is a visual artist practicing in photography, illustration, installation and new media. She has had solo exhibitions of her work in Melbourne and Brisbane and has participated in exhibitions in Dubai, Lille and St Tropez, France. Gavin Sade is an educator, researcher and designer in the field of interactive computational media, with a background in music and sound. He teaches interaction design and new media at the Queensland University of Technology. Matt Dwyer is a jewellery, lighting and object designer. Matt has exhibited his work nationally, and internationally in exhibitions in Barcelona, Shanghai, Bangkok and Singapore.

Priscilla Bracks, Gavin Sade and Matt Dwyer, *Charmed* (2007) Australia. Still image from interactive installation.
Courtesy the artists. An Experimenta New Visions Commission

Traffic (2001)

(Roderick Buchanan, UK)

Roderick Buchanan's digital video offers a mesmerizing montage of tiny figures floating across the miniature backgrounds inside souvenir pens. *Traffic* highlights the charm of these souvenirs as tiny vehicles are transported across miniature panoramas by the fluid inside the pen. Ships, cars, buses, even a gondola, travel across these imagined landscapes. The traffic seems to sail against the forces of gravity, as the souvenir pens in this film remain horizontal. Many of the souvenir pens contain cities depicted as a miniature panorama of attractions. Cities are represented as a condensation of urban attractions, historical architecture, entertainment spaces and sight-seeing destinations. Stuck inside the souvenir pens, the cities become a miniature pastiche of iconic signifiers. In Buchanan's video, the notion of traffic is extended to include imagery of the Last Supper and even Tweety Bird sailing beyond the clutches of Sylvester the cat. *Traffic*'s montage of scenes inside kitsch souvenir pens highlights the charming connection between the floating figures and their static backgrounds.

- The links between play, travel, memories and nostalgia are strong. Does Buchanan's use of kitsch souvenirs trigger memories of childhood play, holidays and travel? Create a short narrative film on mobile phone camera based on these memories.

- What does *Traffic* say to you about travel, tourists, souvenirs and the places represented in the pens?

- Why do you think Roderick Buchanan chose to call this work *Traffic*?

- For further insight into the work of Roderick Buchanan visit http://www.iniva.org/archive/person/109

- If the ideas generated by thinking about travel interest you, read Alain de Botton's *The Art of Travel*.

- Research art history to find landscape painters who used their travels as inspiration for their work. Why might artists use unfamiliar environments in their work?

Roderick Buchanan lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. Buchanan is an artist who works with video and whose practice often investigates issues of race, nationality and cultural identity through formal sports and informal games. He has exhibited extensively internationally. His solo exhibitions include *Histrionics*, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2007); *Inside Out*, Lisson Gallery (2001); and *Players*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Scotland (2001/2000). His work has appeared in *We all Laughed at Christopher Columbus*, Stadelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam (2006); Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul (2006); *Words and Pictures*, National Gallery of Victoria (2006); *Game On*, Ian Potter Museum, Melbourne (2006); and the 49th Venice Biennale 2001. Roderick Buchanan won the Becks Futures Prize and The Spirit of Scotland Prize (2000).

Roderick Buchanan, *Traffic* (2001) UK. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

Baby Love (2005)

(Shu Lea Cheang)

In Shu Lea Cheang's *Baby Love*, giant mobile wifi teacups offer an invitation to ride alongside dummy-sucking cloned babies. Together, babies and riders glide through space, gently colliding with other teacups, shuffling and exchanging love songs with the bump. The music is sourced from a Memory-Emotion database, constantly updated with love songs uploaded by the public and wirelessly transmitted to the babies. Set in 2030, *Baby Love* references both past and future as teacups evoking the nostalgia of amusement park rides create a contrast with the futuristic vision of cloned babies. Cheang's clones were inspired by scientific research into the development of biobots. The cloned babies of *Baby Love* are an updated version of the central figures in Ryu Murakami's *Coin Locker Babies*. In the novel, twins born from lockers at a Yokohama Station spend their lives haunted by the sound of their mother's heartbeat. *Baby Love* offers a complex kinetic and sonic experience where romantic nostalgia collides with the futuristic fantasy of cloned babies holding the key to emotion and memory.

Shu Lea Cheang, *Baby Love* (2005) Taiwan/France.
Still image from interactive installation. Photo courtesy Florian Kleinefenn.

Baby Love (2005)

(Shu Lea Cheang)

...continued

- What was your initial response to *Baby Love*?

- What does *Baby Love* remind you of? What familiar popular culture features does it incorporate?

The tea cup ride is a historical reference to fairground rides. The love songs evoke feelings of nostalgia.

- How do these features connect us to the exhibit emotionally? Do they help you feel a connection or to have an understanding of the artist's intention?

- What do you think is the meaning behind the dummy-sucking babies?

- What is the effect when the cups collide? What does it say to you about emotions, love, chance and memory?

- Is it effective to have the audience participating in the actual exhibit? Does it make it more engaging for you?

The babies are inspired by cloned 'biobots' in Ryu Murakami's *Coin Locker Babies*.

If this exhibit intrigues and inspires you, you might want to read the book.

- Use an MP3 player or computer to make a compilation of music that makes you feel either or both a sense of romantic nostalgia or futuristic fantasy. Share these with your class.

- For more images of *Baby Love*, visit: http://www.babylove.biz

Shu Lea Cheang is a media artist who is based between Paris and New York. Cheang regards herself as a mobilized digital artist working in net-based installation, social interface and film production fields. She has a distinctive embrace of art and technology, interweaving social issues, aesthetic concerns, interaction and collaborative modes of production. She explores modes of subversion, collaboration, and collectivity. Her work has been permanently collected by the Guggenheim Museum; NTT[ICC] Tokyo; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and has appeared in the Venice Biennale (2003); the Taipei Biennale (2000) and the Whitney Museum Biennale (1995) and (1993). Her film work has been shown at the Sundance Film Festival (2000) and the Berlin Film Festival (1994) among others.

On Perspective and Motion - Part II (2006)

(Daniel Crooks, Australia)

In *On Perspective and Motion – Part II*, Daniel Crooks produces a digital panoramic installation that effectively reconfigures the time/space continuum. Thin slices are excerpted from a moving image stream depicting Sydney's Martin Place, which are then recombined to highlight temporal displacement across space. This meticulous experiment with time and motion refuses the seamless illusion of space and time conventionally depicted on film. Instead, the panorama creates a magical sense of distended time by depicting warped movement and blurred figures, some who appear to float magically across the screen. This installation also distorts time as figures in transit appear and disappear within the frame. The elaboration of varying types of movement reveals an underlying temporal and spatial complexity, highlighted by multiple viewpoints, creating a polyocular perspective. Within a larger context, *On Perspective and Motion – Part II* reveals an underlying temporal and spatial complexity, developing new ways to perceive continuity and creating innovative ways to imagine the world.
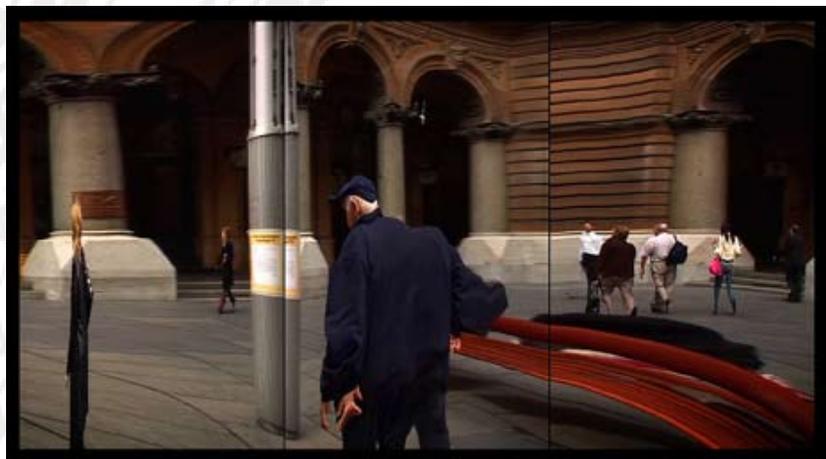
- List words that describe how this work made you feel.

- What do you think is the artist's intention?

- What are some of the questions, ideas and meanings this work raises for you?

- How do you think *On Perspective and Motion – Part II* is created?

- Compare and contrast this work with Shaun Gladwell's *Guide to Recent Architecture: Fountains*. What do they say about urban landscapes and our actions within them?

- Write a proposal for a media art exhibition based on the theme of urban landscapes. Use the internet to find and research artists whose work could be included.

- For more information on the work of Daniel Crooks, visit http://www.shermangalleries.com.au/artists/inartists/artist_profile.asp?artist=crooksd or http://www.dlab.com.au

- Alternatively, refer to past Experimenta exhibition catalogues, available online from http://www. experimenta.org Hard copies can be purchased from the Experimenta office.

Daniel Crooks lives and works in Melbourne. He practises across a range of time-based media including digital video, photography and installation. Crooks has undertaken residencies nationally and internationally, including at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam (2004-05); and at the Australia Council Studio, London, UK (2005). He has had solo exhibitions at Remo, Osaka (2006); Level 2 Project Space; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2005); and was included in *Experimenta Under the Radar*, UK (2006); and *Experimenta Vanishing Point* (2005-2007). Daniel Crooks is represented by Sherman Galleries, Sydney.

Daniel Crooks, *On Perspective and Motion – Part II* (2006) Australia.
Still image from video. Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney.

Der Lauf Der Dinge / The Way Things Go (1987)

(Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Switzerland)

Peter Fischli and David Weiss dramatize the laws of gravity, chemistry and physics as the artist's studio becomes a science laboratory in *The Way Things Go*. This classic video captures the charm of a backyard science experiment using a range of everyday objects like ladders, chairs, buckets, kettles and broomsticks. Household objects are combined with natural and unnatural elements including water, fire, light and air alongside acid, fuel, explosives and even fireworks. Objects and elements combine to create elaborate sequences linked by cause and effect. Ingeniously, Fischli and Weiss rely on gravity, weight and synchronicity to force movement and create change. Everyday objects become animated as ladders appear to walk down ramps, balloons fly through the air, a pivoting stick forces a carpet to unfurl and knife-wielding roller skates are propelled through space. Science also creates beauty as a spinning fiery ball trails a comet tail and fragments of metal light up, erupting into small volcanic explosions. Experimentation with the domino effect in this kinetic sculpture tests the limits of control and reveals our fascination with images of destruction.

- Why do you think Fischli and Weiss may have created *Der Lauf Der Dinge*?

- What relationship between

Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Der Lauf Der Dinge / The Way Things Go* (1987) Switzerland. Still image from video. Courtesy Monika Sprüth Philomene Magers, Cologne / Munich / London. Copyright: Peter Fischli / David Weiss

cause and effect does the work highlight? What other constructions make use of the principles or laws of nature?

- What laws of physics and chemistry does this work employ?

- What is it that makes this work so engaging?

- Research other kinetic sculptures.

- Research Leonardo da Vinci. List some of the concepts that this artist, scientist and inventor incorporated in the drawings of his famous machines.

- Visit http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/fischliandweiss/ for further information about the artists.

Fischli and Weiss live and work in Zurich, Switzerland. Their work explores the poetics of banality and the sublimity of the objects and events constituting everyday life. They have been working together since 1979 and had their first solo exhibition in 1981 in Zurich. Solo exhibitions include *Flowers & Questions: A Retrospective*, Tate Modern, London (2006); Le Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2006); Kunsthalle, Zürich, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; exhibitions organised by the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2000); and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1992). Their work was included at the Venice Biennale in 2003 and 1995 and at Documenta in 1997 and 1987. In 2003, their work was awarded the Leone d'Oro in Venice.

Emergency Exit (2003)

(Naoto Fukasawa, Japan)

Naoto Fukasawa's video focuses on the familiar symbol of the running figure caught in mid movement, signifying the direction for escape in emergency exit signs. In *Emergency Exit*, this pictogram is given a surprisingly new form. In green and white light, the figure breaks free of his static pose and springs to life. He moves around in space, creating entertaining and unexpected micro narratives. He runs, jumps, dances and finally sits down to take a rest. This figure not only develops mobility, but also expresses personality, desire, even fatigue. The movement of the figure functions to erase our preconceptions and to expand the possibilities of this pictogram beyond conventional symbolism. The animation reveals an uncanny shift from static to mobile, attracting our gaze and creating a sense of wonder. In this ironic play, Fukasawa's design redefines the familiar figure as a potentially magical presence just waiting to spring to life within emergency exit signs.

- Naoto Fukasawa is also a very successful designer. What do you think are the differences between art and design?

- Naoto Fukasawa created *Emergency Exit* to improve on an everyday, functional item and make it more engaging. How do you interpret the artist's intention?

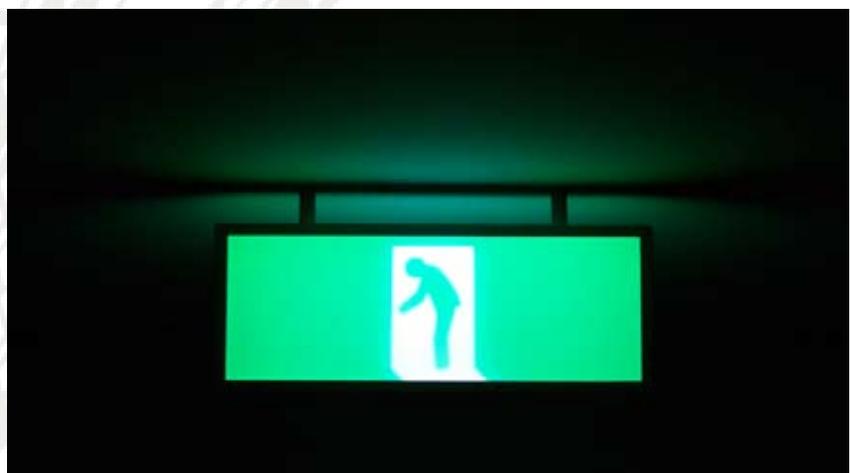- How would you improve the design of an everyday object such as a computer mouse, electric toothbrush or a train platform information screen? Design your invention on paper or using software such as Adobe Photoshop.

- The actions of the figure tell a story. Write a short synopsis of the narrative.

- Using Flash or a similar animation program, work in pairs to create your own simple figure animation inspired by *Emergency Exit*.

- Research the art and design work of Naoto Fukasawa by visiting http://www.plusminuszero.jp/about/designer_e.html or http://www.shanghaibiennale.org/english/6th/artists/naoto%20fukasawa.html

- Listen to an interview with Fukasawa in which he discusses his design at http://www.designboom.com/eng/interview/fukasawa.html

- Write a short report on his thoughts about art, design and his success.

Naoto Fukasawa lives and works in Tokyo. Fukasawa is an esteemed product designer and Design Director of the ±0 product range. He lectures at Musahino Art University and Tama University. He has designed for companies such as MUJI, B&B Italia, Driade, Magis, Artemide, Danese, Boffi and Vitra. One of his works, MUJI's CD player, is part of the permanent design collection at MoMA, New York. He has won over fifty awards, including the American IDEA Gold Award, the German if Gold Award, the British D&AD Gold Award, the Mainichi Design Award and the 5th Oribe Award.

Naoto Fukasawa, *Emergency Exit* (2003) Japan.
Still image from video installation. Courtesy the artist.

Guide to Recent Architecture: Fountains (2007)

(Shaun Gladwell, Sydney, Australia)

Filming his travels across Sydney on a skateboard, Shaun Gladwell produces a video that presents a challenge to traditional cartography. In *Guide to Recent Architecture: Fountains*, maps of Sydney's urban spaces are created through movement and performance as Gladwell re-imagines architectural surfaces experienced through the wheels of his skateboard. Black and white cinematography highlights the play of light across surfaces, defamiliarizing and transforming architecture. Slow motion is used to detail textures, highlighting the beauty of their design. Through Gladwell's skateboarding, fountains become surfaces to experience kinetically. The impression of Sydney's recent architecture is rebelliously re-imagined as spaces, textures and angles for the skateboarder. Curved surfaces become slopes to ride, rails become edges to slide across, water spouts become obstacle courses and steps become launching sites facilitating flight through the air. Gladwell's movement across public spaces results in the creation of 'psychogeographic zones', a sensory, kinetic mapping of urban spaces and surfaces experienced on wheels.

- How does this work make you feel? What words help describe your reaction to it?
- What is your interpretation

Shaun Gladwell, *Guide to Recent Architecture: Fountains* (2007) Australia. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney.

of the artist's relationship to his skateboard and the urban environment?

- Draw some of the forms and patterns that strike you as you watch this video.
- Sketch a quick response to the video as you watch it.
- Before Gladwell made video art he was a sculptor and a painter. Research some of his paintings and write a short article explaining how *Guide to Recent Architecture: Fountains* could be called a 'video painting'.
- Explore art history. Research painters whose work reflects their relationship with a particular landscape.
- Visit the following website for a profile of Shaun Gladwell http://www.shermangalleries.

com.au/artists/inartists/artist_ profile.asp?artist=gladwells and the *Experimenta Vanishing Point* catalogue for an example of his past work.

Shaun Gladwell lives and works in Sydney. Shaun Gladwell critically engages personal history, memory and contemporary cultural phenomena through performance, video, painting and sculpture. His work has been exhibited in numerous national and international exhibitions, including the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007); the Sao Paolo Biennale, Brazil (2006); *Experimenta Vanishing Point* (2005-2007); and the Yokohama 2005 Triennale of Contemporary Art, Japan (2005). Shaun Gladwell is represented by Sherman Galleries, Sydney.

What's Yours Is Mine (2007)

(David Lawrey and Jaki Middleton, Australia)

An Experimenta New Visions Commission

What's Yours Is Mine is a sculptural installation that creates an illusion of a forest scene to explore the intersection between physical and virtual space. Inspired by childhood mythology, a hyper-real magic faraway tree holding portals into a simulated forest sprouts from a patch of Astroturf. Peering into the windows captures the attention of a bear at the centre of the forest who begins jumping up and down, yelling 'no, no, no'. This is a homage to Bruce Nauman's nihilistic, anti-art performance video *No, No, New Museum* (Clown Torture series, 1987) depicting the artist dressed as a knave, furiously jumping up and down, yelling 'no, no, no'. Like Nauman's work, *What's Yours is Mine* initially confronts and later evokes an empathic relationship with the figure expressing fury. This installation uses absurdist humor to create a complex connection to illusory worlds. Using glass and light, *What's Yours Is Mine* combines the magical Pepper's Ghost technique with motion sensing equipment. New and old technologies combine to expose the slippage between the illusory forest environment and the real world.

- How did you feel when you first encountered *What's Yours Is Mine*?

- How do you think *What's Yours Is Mine* works?

- What does this work have to say about personal space and privacy?

- Research the reference to Bruce Nauman. Why is Nauman important to the evolution of media art? Who are other contemporary artists who utilize absurdity in their artwork? How does understanding the reference to Bruce Nauman enhance your appreciation of *What's Yours is Mine*?

- Investigate the Pepper's ghost effect. Visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peppers_Ghost for a clear description of the effect and its history.

David Lawrey and Jaki Middleton live and work in Sydney. They have been collaborating since 2005. Their collaborative practice draws on popular culture, art history, childhood mythology and vintage optical phenomena. Their work has been included in *Vertigo*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth (2007); *Eyes, Lies and Illusions*, ACMI, Melbourne (2006-7); *Locating the Photographic*, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart (2006); *The Sound Before you Make it*, Wollongong Art Centre, NSW (2006); and *Phatspace*, Sydney (2005).

David Lawrey and Jaki Middleton, *What's Yours is Mine* (2007) Australia.
Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artists.
An Experimenta New Visions Commission.

Double Fantasy (2005)

(Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, USA)

The wonder of Jennifer and Kevin McCoy's *Double Fantasy* emerges from the exhibition, connection and projection of two tiny, disparate worlds fragmented and frozen in time. *Double Fantasy* incorporates miniature dioramas positioned back to back, surrounded by a matrix of flexible metal arms containing small cameras and pinpoint lights. One scene reveals a bloodthirsty medieval battle whilst the other features a tranquil, romantic kingdom of brides and grooms. These miniature worlds are an intricate recreation of each artist's childhood dreams suspended in time. The illusion is deconstructed and reconstructed by exposing sets, lights and cameras, showing the technology as well as its projection. The apparatus becomes as much a part of the spectacle as the effect in this exhibit. Concealed customized software selects camera angles and edits scenes to produce the 'live' montage. Exposed and hidden technologies create the illusion of movement and narrative, resulting in an enchanting dynamic fairy tale. *Double Fantasy* is presented courtesy of the Sara Torazzi Collection, Italy.

- Compare and contrast this exhibit with *Unseen Park*. Both use the 'miniature worlds' concept as a way to explore ideas related to children's play. How are they similar? How do they differ?

- How do our childhood dreams impact on our growing identities?

- What do the stereotypical fantasy scenes say about the toys and stories that we tell our children?

- Fairy tales usually contain a moral message. Write an outline for a fairy tale based on this work.

- Create an installation or act out a short play that represents your childhood dreams or fantasies to bring them to life.

- Compare and contrast the works that deal with identity. Why do you think the curators have located these works in the gallery space in the way they have?

- Visit http://moma.org/exhibitions/2007/automatic_update/subs_wrapper.php?section=mccoy_interview.html for an interview with the artists about their work and http://www.mccoyspace.com for images and descriptions of this and other works.

The McCoys are video and installation artists and live and work in Brooklyn, New York. In their artworks, various disjointed worlds represented in diorama form become interlaced as they are turned into filmic narratives. Their works have been shown in solo exhibitions including *Tiny, Funny, Sad, and Big*, the inaugural exhibition at BFI Southbank, London (2007); *Soft Rains*, Postmasters Gallery, New York (2004); and Galerie Guy Bartschi, Geneva, Switzerland (2003). Their works have been included in *Our Grotesque*, 5th International Biennial, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico, (2004); *Open House: Working in Brooklyn*, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, (2004); *Future Cinema*, ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany (2002). The McCoys are represented by Postmasters Gallery, New York and Gallerie Guy Bartschi, Geneva.

Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, *Double Fantasy* (2005) USA. Still image from electronic sculptural installation. Courtesy the artists, Postmasters Gallery, New York & Galerie Guy Bartschi, Geneva. Courtesy Sara Torazzi Collection, Italy.

Puzzle 3 (2006)

(June Bum Park, Korea)

Puzzle 3 is a screen-based installation that recasts sixteen students as two-dimensional, blue and yellow puzzle pieces. June Bum Park's video imagines the classroom as a hand held puzzle, requiring students to slide themselves and their coloured pieces into lines of similarity in order to achieve the optimal working arrangement. An aerial view captures students from above, framing them and erasing traces of their identity. As puzzle pieces, students begin to embody the mechanical aspects of routine activity. The accelerated speed of playback highlights the clash between the chaotic pace of youth culture and a desire for order imposed from above. *Puzzle 3* reflects an image of rigid social behaviour. In its subject and speed, it parodies the imposition of highly organized rituals, involving systems of repetition and problem solving, dominating the worlds of students. The result is a harmonious, but perhaps temporary, alignment of students according to matching patterns of colour and conformity.

• What is your immediate response to *Puzzle 3*?

• How does June Bum Park 'turn' people into the tiles on a sequential sliding block puzzle? Is this a successful technique? Compare this with the way *Game Over Project: Pong, Space Invaders and Pole Position* 'turns' people into pixels. Which do you prefer and why?

• *Puzzle 3* was created in Korea and has been described as a

June Bum Park, *Puzzle 3* (2006) Korea. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

culturally specific piece. What stereotypes of Korean culture are hinted at in the work?

• What messages or meanings do you see in this work about the everyday lives of people?

• What do you think the artist is intending about:

  • the dichotomy that exists between youth and order

  • society and the individual

  • certain behaviours which are dictated to us from above?

• What similarities are there between the characters in this work and your life? Write about a situation where you felt like you were 'a piece in a puzzle'.

• For more information about June Bum Park, visit http://

www.pilotlondon.org/artists/details.php?id=53

June Bum Park, lives and works in Seoul, Korea. In his video works, Park manipulates scale and speed to produce digital videos that play with perception. Exhibitions of June Bum Park's work include *Pascual Sisto & June Bum Park*, Bitforms Gallery, New York (2007); *Thermocline of Art New Asian Waves*, ZKM, Karlsruhe (2007); *Elastic Taboos*, Vienna Kunsthalle (2007); *New Generation*, ARCO '07, Madrid, (2007); the Busan Biennale, Korea, (2006); *A Tale of Two Cities*, Paris Cinéma, Entrepôt / Palais de Tokyo, Paris, (2006); *Experimenta Vanishing Point*, (2005-2007); the 3rd Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Korea, (2004/5); and the Shanghai Biennale (2004).

Help Your Self (2007)

(Narinda Reeders, Australia)

The 'Help Us Help You Help Centre' is an ATM-style kiosk that provides self-help for a convenience driven society. Lydia, a slick, corporate self-help guru with a short temper and strong opinions, guides you through this interactive installation with a series of questions, prompting you to respond by speaking into a microphone. As a voice-activated character, Lydia is prone to misinterpretation. She will probably get your name wrong and doesn't hesitate to berate you if she thinks she hears you swearing in a public place. She asks very personal questions, and her comments, assumptions and attempts to give you advice are not only unhelpful but also often amusing. *Help Your Self* parodies the potential for self-help gurus to prey on our vulnerabilities and plays with the increasingly blurred line between public and private in our society. Taking two ubiquitous ideals of our culture, self-help and self-service, to an absurd level, we are offered a particularly inconvenient convenience and some unhelpful and potentially damaging advice.

- How does *Help Your Self* make you feel?

- How do you think *Help Your Self* works?

- What does *Help Your Self* say to you about self-help gurus?

- What does *Help Your Self* say to you about self-service?

- In what ways does *Help Your Self* comment on popular culture? Research other contemporary artworks that also comment on popular culture. Draft a letter to the curators of Experimenta, proposing an exhibition based on this theme.

- Compare and contrast the works that deal with identity. Why do you think the curators have located these works in the gallery space in the way they have?

- Discuss the possibility of inventing a machine that dispenses good advice. What would it look like and how would it work? In small groups design a prototype for your ideal machine.

Narinda Reeders lives and works in Melbourne. Reeders' practice involves integrating digital video, photography, performance art, computer programming and electronics to explore urban dystopia and the increasingly blurred line between public and private. She was an artist in residence at Kola Art Institute in San Francisco (2006). Her work has been included in *Experimenta Under the Radar*, UK (2006); the Next Wave Festival (2006); and *Experimenta Vanishing Point* (2005-2007). Her photo-documentary series titled *Middle Managed* was selected for the Leica/CCP Documentary Award (2003).

Narinda Reeders, *Help Your Self* (2007) Australia.
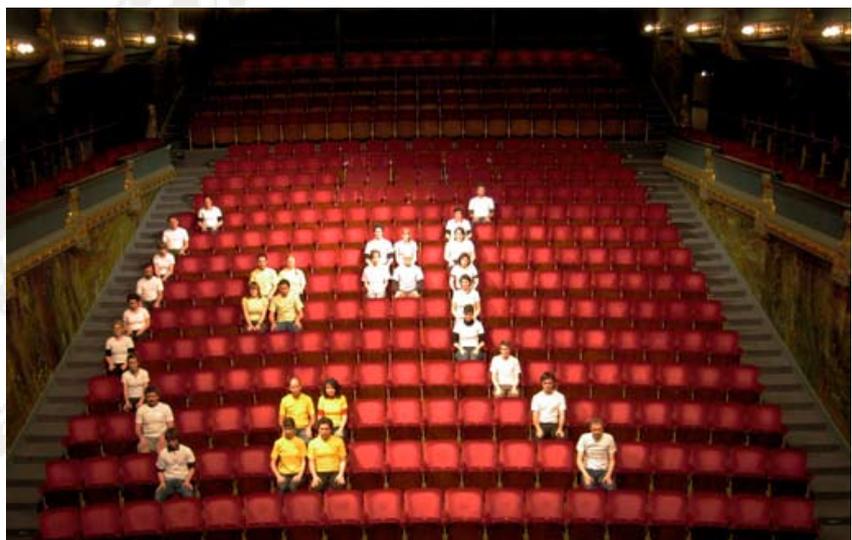Representational image courtesy the artist.

Game Over Project: Pong, Space Invaders and Pole Position (2005–2007)

(Guillaume Reymond, Switzerland)

Pong, Space Invaders and Pole Position originated as part of the *Game Over Project*, a series of live performances where video games were re-enacted by humans. Tiny game pieces dramatically increase in scale as humans form familiar shapes including: bats, balls, aliens, space ships, rockets, formula one cars, even the contours of the race track. Armed with the rules of the game, human pixels select their movements from one seat to another, participating in and advancing this interactive game. Whilst *Pong* took two hours to shoot and seven participants helped to create 277 images, *Space Invaders* required 67 players and *Pole Position* was played over six hours, producing up to 400 stills. Using human pixels and producing movement with stop motion animation synchronized to human vocal sounds, Guillaume Reymond creates a captivating illusion of games that appear to play themselves. The simulation of game environments offers a nostalgic parody of iconic video games as flesh recreates the virtual environment in this series.

- What is your initial response to the *Game Over Project*?

Guillaume Reymond, *Game Over Project: Pong, Space Invaders and Pole Position* (2006) Switzerland. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

Pong and *Space Invaders* are early computer games released in the 1980s. For adults now in their thirties these games were extremely influential in incorporating computers into their concept of play.

- Do you need to have experienced these games in order to appreciate the artwork?

- Is Guillaume Reymond successful in his attempts to 'turn' people into pixels?

- Design a human player version of your favourite game.

- Research music from the 1980s (eg. on YouTube). Select music that would accompany the works.

- If you were to create an audio track to accompany the *Game Over Project*, what sounds or music would you use?

- Investigate the stop-motion animation technique. How could it be used to replicate a modern computer game aesthetic?
  Go to http://www.notsonoisy.com/gameover/ the artist website for videos of the artworks and links to play the original games.

Guillaume Reymond lives and works in Vevey, Switzerland. He is a graphic designer, video artist and multimedia creator with a background in architecture. He is the Director of a multimedia and graphic design agency.

Unseen Park (2006)

(Sawatohwasi [Hiraki Sawa and Tomoyuki Washio], Japan)

With *Unseen Park*, Hiraki Sawa and Tomoyuki Washio collaborate with children from Taipei to create an apprehension of the world from a child's point of view. Fairgrounds, sea scenes, a sandpit and a valley constitute deserted backgrounds across which they layer strolling elephants, twirling birds, slithering snails, a spinning table, even a rocket ship that blasts off into the sky. The revolving movement of these charming hand drawn two-dimensional creatures transforms the desolate, impressionistic spaces. The mobile magical creatures represent the possibilities of imagined cyclic journeys. A fairground is a place of circular travel, where any ride only ever takes you back to where you started. This idea of a cyclical journey which always comes back is the basis for the rhythm and movement of *Unseen Park*. Fireworks light up the twilight sky and the tinkle of wind chimes on the soundtrack adds to the enchantment of spaces that come alive as if seen through the eyes of a child. The Sawatohwasi team adopt a constructivist approach, building spaces across which they layer miniature creatures, inviting us to look closely to realize the potential for microscopic detail to uncover the fantastic in otherwise ordinary worlds.

- Do you think that the collaboration with children was a successful approach for an artwork exploring the 'playground' theme?

- Draw a diagram to represent the cyclical representations in *Unseen Park*.

- Wonder, fantasy and the imagination are often depicted in 'worlds in miniature'. Investigate other miniature worlds such as *The Borrowers* (books and BBC series), *George Shrinks*, (ABC TV), *The Brambly Hedge* picture story books and *Sim City* (computer game) etc. What do they say about our fascination with miniature worlds.

- Why are miniature worlds such as dolls' houses, Matchbox® cars and Lego® or Meccano® sets so appealing to children?

- Why are miniature worlds such as dolls' houses, Matchbox® cars and Lego® or Meccano® sets so appealing to some adults who have extensive collections of these objects?

- Research objects in museum collections. How are these different to the objects you have in your collections at home.

Hiraki Sawa lives and works in London. Tomoyuki Washio lives and works in Nagoya, Japan. Hiraki Sawa uses video animation to create poetic visual dreamscapes that are meditations on ideas of time and movement, innocence and alienation, and dislocation and displacement. His works have shown internationally since 2003 appearing in numerous solo and group exhibitions, such as *Six Good Reasons to Stay at Home*, National Gallery of Victoria (2006); the Seoul International Media Art Biennale (2006); and *Experimenta Vanishing Point* (2005-2007). Tomoyuki Washio is an illustrator and graphic designer. His work has been exhibited in venues in Germany, Japan and Taiwan including the Adidas Flagship store in Berlin.

Sawatohwasi (Hiraki Sawa and Tomoyuki Washio) *Unseen Park* (2006) UK / Japan. Still image from video. Courtesy the artists and Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo.

The Manual Input Station (2004–2006)

(Tmema [Golan Levin and Zachary Lieberman], USA)

The Manual Input Station presents a series of audiovisual vignettes which probe the expressive possibilities of hand gestures and finger movements. These interactions take place on a combination of custom interactive software, an analogue overhead projector and a digital video projector. The analogue and digital projectors are aligned so that their projections overlap, resulting in an unusual quality of hybridized, dynamic light. During use, the visitor's hands are analysed by a computer vision system as they move across the glass top of the overhead projector. In response to these postures and gestures, the software generates synthetic graphics and sounds that are tightly coupled to the forms and movements of the performers' actions. The synthetic responses are co-projected over the organic, analogue shadows, resulting in an almost magical form of augmented-reality shadow play.

- List words that describe how this work makes you feel.

- This exhibit relies on both new and old technologies. Which elements are old and which are new?

- How do you think *The Manual Input Station* works?

- Shadow puppetry is an ancient method of projecting images for performance and play.

- Research some examples of shadow puppetry and present your findings to the class.

Tmema (Golan Levin and Zachary Lieberman) *The Manual Input Station* (2004–2006) USA. Still image from interactive installation. Courtesy the artists.

- Shadow puppet theatre was often used to evoke strong feelings of fear, with horror stories being depicted. Does this work tell stories? If so, how?

- What is the impact of the use of sound and rhythm in conjunction with images?

- Visit http://www.tmema.org/ for detailed explanations of the artwork, photos and videos.

- Experiment with making your own shadow puppetry using an overhead projector.

- Compare and contrast this work with *Shadow Monsters*.

- In small groups brainstorm the elements that are real and visible and those that are virtual or invisible. Then as a class discuss the relationship between these elements.

- Establish a debate on whether or not technology should be used to enhance the capabilities of the human body.

Tmema is the collaborative team of Golan Levin and Zachary Lieberman. Golan Levin is an artist/engineer interested in the exploration of new modes of reactive expression. Zachary Lieberman's work uses technology to explore the nature of communication and the delicate boundary between the visible and the invisible. Working since 2002, Tmema develops interactive performances and museum installations, web-based information visualizations, reactive commercial environments, and experimental software systems that meld high-end computation to deeply-rooted sensibilities in human-centred arts and design.

The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life (2002)

(Kuang-Yu Tsui, Taiwan)

In *The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life*, Kuang-Yu Tsui recreates the notion of the *flâneur*, as he films his travels through Taipei's urban zones, changing his costume to adapt to the environment. Like a chameleon, Tsui camouflages his appearance to blend in and conform to the environment. His repeated changes of clothing and gesture reflect the degree of performance necessary to fulfill roles predetermined by consumer culture. Tsui becomes a postal worker, a parking attendant, even a convenience store assistant, roles that facilitate communication, movement and consumerism within the globalized cityscape. Tsui's camera tracks his transition across a variety of horizontal spaces, creating an ironic distance between the performer and his myriad social roles. Constant change exposes urban identity as fractured, whilst incessant movement emphasizes its plurality. Tsui's performance uses mimicry to critique implicit social imperatives that designate transformation, movement and adaptation as the shortcut to a systematic life.

- What messages or meanings do you interpret in this work about the everyday lives of people?

- How is the artist like a chameleon?

- What do you think Kuang-Yu Tsui is saying about the impact of the urban environment upon the individual?

- Write about or sketch a situation in which you would like to be camouflaged.

- Make a list of all the different situations in which you need to change your 'surface' to fit in.

- How does this work help you view the world through fresh eyes?

- As a class debate the comment 'people are social animals'.

Kuang-Yu Tsui, *The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life* (2002) Taiwan. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.
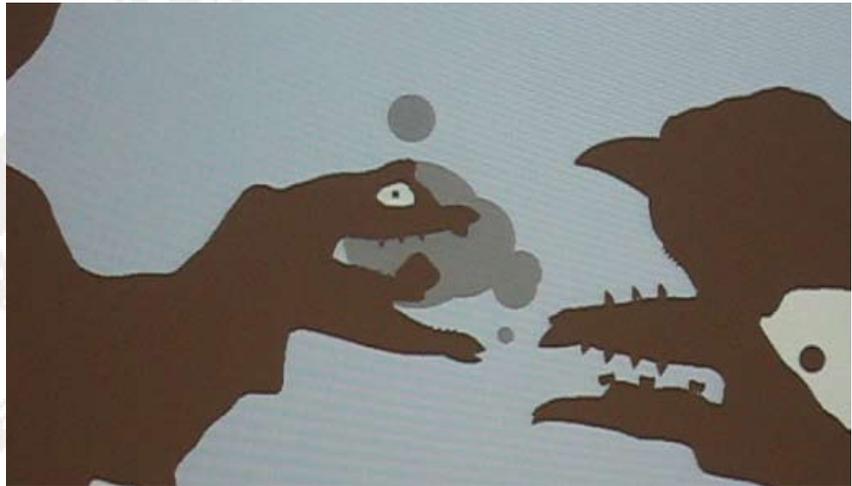
Shadow Monsters (2005)

(Philip Worthington, UK)

Shadow Monsters offers a platform for our imagination to run wild, using digital technology to update conventions of traditional shadow plays. This interactive exhibit invites us to step in front of a light box that immediately recognizes outlines cast from our bodies, gestures, clothing and accessories. These outlines metamorphose into monsters with the addition of horns, hair, scales, beaks, eyes, teeth, tongues and claws. Dynamic movement results in continually transforming monsters, some resembling wolves or crocodiles with razor sharp teeth, others taking on a more monstrous form. *Shadow Monsters* uses vision recognition technology, augmented by a soundtrack layered with animal noises to project an audio-visual impression of human shadows as monsters. In monstrous disguise, we are offered a temporary license to disregard social etiquette and become involved in intuitive play. This transformation invites competitive posturing and encourages narrative interaction. Happily, the monstrous dematerializes and order is restored as soon as the participant steps away from the projection box.

- What makes scary monster play so much fun?

- How do you think *Shadow Monsters* works?

- Compare *Shadow Monsters* to *The Manual Input Station*. How are they similar? How do they differ?

Philip Worthington, *Shadow Monsters* (2005) UK.
Still image from the interactive installation. Courtesy the artist.

- The monsters you create in this exhibit have a particular look and sound. How do they make you feel?

- Shadow play uses outlines and renders the participant fairly anonymous. How does this element contribute to the sense of play behind the exhibit?

- This exhibit is another example of melding traditional theatre and storytelling techniques with cutting edge technology. Investigate the art-forms related to traditional shadow puppetry such as wayang puppets in Indonesia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_play#Indonesia

- Establish a debate on whether or not technology should be used to enhance the capabilities of the human body.

- For photographs and a video of an earlier version of this work, explore Phillip Worthington's website http://www.worthersoriginal.com/

Philip Worthington lives and works in London. He is a designer whose practice focuses on creating large-scale tactile interactive installations. He completed his Masters in Interaction Design from the Royal College of Art, London. As well as founding his own interactive/branding design studio, he has been a visiting lecturer to art and design schools around London and done research with IBM's Collaborative User Experience group in Boston. Worthington's work has shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Design Museum, London as well as being included in international design festivals and industry publications.

After your visit to *Experimenta Playground*

Extension and concluding activities

- Ask students to share what they liked most and least about the exhibition.

- Did the exhibition fit with their expectations? If it differed, in what ways did it surprise them?

- Ask students to comment on the title of the exhibition. Was the title *Experimenta Playground* a good choice?

- Have students write a few sentences responding to questions such as:

- What surprised you about the exhibition? Why?

- What made you feel nostalgic? Why?

- What made you laugh? Why?

- Which of the works encouraged you to see the world differently? How?

- Which of the works do you wish you could take home with you?

- Give students the opportunity to respond to one or more of the works by writing a short story, poem or personal narrative, creating a drawing, painting or sculpture, creating an animation or sending an email to an artist.

Media art exhibitions transform galleries into spaces in which the gallery visitor can interact and play, be intrigued, challenged and enchanted. In this way, media art can change the way people see contemporary visual art and

make it more accessible, highlighting its relevance to contemporary life and culture.*

> – http://www.experimenta.org/about.htm

- Devise a brochure or other promotional material to bring attention to the interactive and accessible nature of media art exhibitions.

In Experimenta Playground*, the artists play and the audience plays. At times, it is us playing with the artworks, causing them to spring to life through touch or action, and at others it is the artworks playing with us, testing our preconceptions and daring us to confront our expectations head on. Either way, these artworks ask us to shrug off the wet blanket of seriousness and indulge in the adventures and potential misadventures of play.*

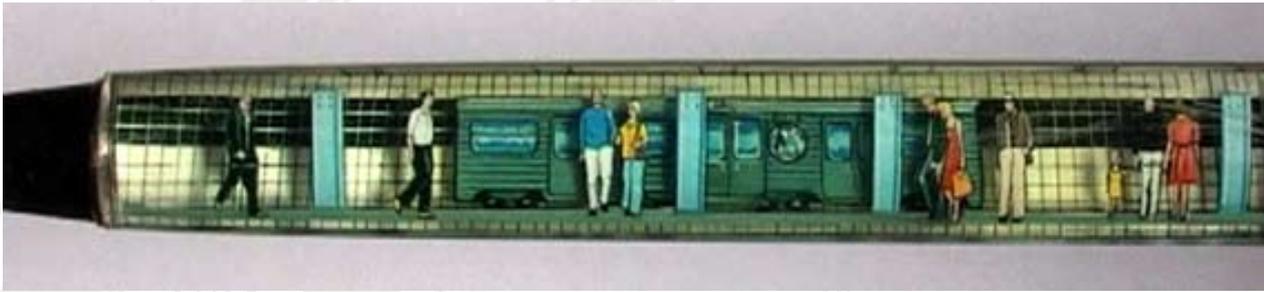> – Curatorial Essay,
> E. McRae & L. Hughes

- Draft a response to this quote in light of your experiences at Experimenta Playground. Reread your draft and, if necessary, rewrite it as though it is a review of the exhibition for a newspaper or blog.

Experience some of the most innovative and playful artworks by Australian and international artists. With interactive artworks, video installations, short films and extreme art on screen, this is art that steps out from the shadows of computer games and leaves mouse, keyboard and joystick behind.

> – Experimenta media release,
> 10 July 2007

Donna Conlon, *Coexistencia* (2003) USA.
Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

Roderick Buchanan, *Traffic* (2001) UK. Still image from video. Courtesy the artist.

- Discuss the ways in which *Experimenta Playground* has moved beyond simple button-pushing to become interactive art that draws the viewers attention to the nature of our social relations.

Some recent car advertisements have 'borrowed' heavily from two of the works in the exhibition, Fischli and Weiss' *The Way Things Go* (1987) and Kuang-Yu Tsui's *The Shortcut to the Systematic Life: Superficial Life* (2002).

- What are the positive and negative implications of advertisers taking ideas and aesthetics from the work of artists? Research copyright as it applies to video art. Should the artists sue for use of their concepts? Is it possible to own copyright on an idea? Develop a case for and against.

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EXPERIMENTA
where creativity and technology meet