

# SCREEN SPACE

Simone Hine

## ***Today, Tomorrow.***

23 January – 6 February, 2016

(Downstairs Gallery)

*Today, Tomorrow* sees Simone Hine focus on the methodology of her broader practice, to create a multi-channel video installation. Pseudo-cinematic imagery is created using consumer-grade technology. Themes of the individual as flâneur are juxtaposed against the use of technology to navigate unseen networks and non-places.

### **‘Gallery Work’**

Following on from the previous and penultimate Screen Space exhibition, *Sign/Action* (which I curated), *Today, Tomorrow*, a solo exhibition by gallery co-director Simone Hine, concludes Screen Space with another project by one of the gallery founders.

The work speaks to art-making at the periphery of the art-world; with most of its footage taken, opportunistically, and over the space of a couple of months in late 2013 and early 2014. The video was captured quickly, fortuitously, amidst other activities during this brief period: mainly during a curatorial residency in Italy and a trip to Brisbane to visit relatives, with some audio components and one of the minor video elements recorded amongst remnants during a post-flood clean-up in Hine’s Melbourne house. Threaded together across three main video channels, the footage circles around generic cinematic tropes of surveillance and movement, but without narrative or resolution; instead there is an impressionistic loop, vaguely sinister and melancholic, yet also rooted in everyday activities: watching, waiting, walking, driving, typing.

The work connects to a broader thematic of Hine’s work, using consumer technology to create works that engage with industrialised moving image production; inspired by moments and gestures within

Hollywood cinema and popular television. Specifically, Hine has often explored the connection of these gestures to the construction of female identity. Within this, the technology and mode of production is always crucial: the works are often split across mediums and technologies, and are produced in a solitary mode, eschewing the division of labour and production infrastructure inherent to the cultural products that inspire them.

Though screens are a central component of Hine's work, the spatial specificity of the gallery space is also typically crucial to her practice. Here, in *Today, Tomorrow*, a standard white gallery wall confronts the viewer as they enter the space, but it is askew; constructed by Hine, the wall, is angled awkwardly across the usually open expanse of the gallery. Here, lights sit atop the wall, occasionally illuminating the space, while a few screen-based devices are placed casually on the floor, looping short videos. The space is banal: white wall, lights, consumer devices, yet the overall effect is theatrical, the intense light intermittently colouring the space yellow, and the wall draws attention to itself: not only awkwardly angled, it is also unfinished, open at each end revealing its structure of MDF and pine, and a tangle of cables and AV equipment.

Building walls, typing, shuffling SD cards between devices, erecting lights: these are all alluded to in *Today, Tomorrow*, and are also the typical activities of anyone involved in a contemporary DIY gallery. Though invoked ad nauseam in the artist-run context, bricolage, using what is at hand, is nevertheless crucial to the existence and ideology of alternative, not-for-profit art spaces founded and run by volunteers, such as Screen Space. The opportunistic capturing of the video components, mentioned above, parallels this, where using what is at hand is not necessarily what the artwork is 'about' but just a typical mode of production for most artists, in which practice sits somewhere in the cracks between paid work, family, study, curating, writing, volunteering (...). It is a context in which explicitly 'bricolage' work seems solipsistic, because this is the mode of almost all art-making. That Hine built and installed *Today, Tomorrow* while eight-

months pregnant is not particularly relevant to the work, but speaks to the contextual subtext, in which galleries and art practices co-exist somewhere amongst a raft of other experiences and activities.

On the other side of the wall, a more 'typical' screen installation confronts the viewer: a darkened space, three large LCD monitors mounted on a grey wall, with cables hidden from view. Here, the effect of the lights, previously rather mysterious, becomes apparent. Their illumination coincides temporally with one of the video segments, and emphasises and parallels the colour palette of this long tracking shot, moving through an empty motorway tunnel. The exhibition moves from the small screens on the gallery floor, the ubiquitous hand held object, always in need of attention (updating, charging, alerting, ringing) to the screen as site of architectural immersion, the viewer enveloped by the image. The freeway tunnel is exemplary of Marc Augé's oft-cited notion of the non-place: an abstracted place without explicit history or locality, it is understood only in terms circulation, of the time it takes one to pass through it. As the space is illuminated to match the colour palette of the footage of the tunnel, the gallery is linked to this non-place, reflecting a history in which this is exactly what the modern gallery has often strived to be: an invisible 'container'. Of course, any non-place does have a history, and in the context of the white cube gallery, this has been written many times. Amongst the ideological history of white walls, there are numerous individual and personal histories. The lights of *Today, Tomorrow* also illuminate the eccentricities of Screen Space, its 19th century wooden joists, its mess of bluestone and red-brick walls. These non-places, the gallery, the freeway, the screen: amidst a functional desire for generic interchangeability, they are all underwritten by personal labours and specific material conditions.

Similarly, Hollywood cinema is governed by generic codes, yet each iteration presents slight variations on normative and established themes, structures and visual languages, a gradual mutation occasioned by the specificity of both its producers and audience. *Today, Tomorrow* is, in many ways, a product of watching Hollywood

cinema, but one overcoded by the imbrication of this within the broader sphere of Hine's daily life, as well as its own production context: the multi-channel and looping conventions of video installation, DMX lighting, non-linear editing systems, and the white walls of the gallery. That my reading of *Today, Tomorrow*, is so focused on its contextual relationship to the gallery space is not necessarily linked to the intrinsic qualities of the work, but is a result of the personal significance of the exhibition, as the final exhibition in the gallery space that Simone and I opened six years ago.

Essay by **Kyle Weise**, Co-Director of Screen Space

**Simone Hine** is an artist and curator based in Melbourne. Her practice utilises performance, video and installation. As an artist Hine has been involved in numerous group and solo exhibitions and has presented work at the Queensland Art Gallery, the Institute of Modern Art, AEA, Metro Arts, PICA, QUT Art Museum, Boxcopy, Blindside, Kings ARI, Level ARI, George Paton Gallery and Gertrude Contemporary, among others. She has curated or co-curated exhibitions at the Counihan Gallery in Brunswick, Blindside, Beam Contemporary, Brenda May Gallery, Screen Space, Level ARI, Boxcopy and Careof (Milan). In 2014 Hine co-curated MAF Video, a new video program at the Melbourne Art Fair. Hine recently completed a PhD in Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne, where she was the recipient of an Australian Postgraduate Award. Previously, she completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) at the Queensland University of. Hine is a co-founder and co-director of Screen Space.

**Screen Space** is an independent not-for profit art gallery that opened in 2010. Screen Space is rent-free for artists and curators. The gallery has a curatorial focus on exhibitions that incorporate screen technology or which engage with screen culture, regardless of medium.