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Today, Tomorrow.
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Screen Space

All images of works courtesy of the artist

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SCREEN SPACE

Today, Tomorrow.

Simone Hine



Gallery Work

Today, Tomorrow, a solo exhibition by gallery co-director Simone Hine, concludes Screen Space with a project by one of the gallery founders, and follows *Sign/Action*, the previous and penultimate Screen Space exhibition, which I curated, as fellow co-director of the gallery.

The work speaks to art-making at the periphery of the art-world; with most of its footage taken opportunistically 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 the remnants of a post-flood cleanup 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. Lights sit atop the wall and occasionally illuminate the space, while a few screen-based devices, looping short videos, are placed casually on the floor. The space is banal (white wall, lights, consumer devices) yet the overall effect is theatrical, with 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 it is a concept 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 one's art practice sits somewhere in the cracks between paid work, family, study, curating, writing,

volunteering (etc...). 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, notifying, ringing) to the screen as site of architectural immersion with 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, the non-place 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 generic road 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, not just white walls, but the eccentricities of Screen Space, its 19th century wooden joists, its mess of bluestone and red-brick walls. Amidst a functional desire for generic interchangeability these non-places (the gallery, the freeway, the screen) 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. Each film is part of a gradual mutation of cinema, 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 the production context of the artwork: 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.

Simone Hine and Kyle Weise founded Screen Space in 2010.

