

PRESS RELEASE

A R T I F I C E

ADAM CHODZKO
TACITA DEAN
GRAHAM GUSSIN
SIOBHAN HAPASKA
STEPHEN MURPHY
SIMON STARLING
JANE & LOUISE WILSON

20 June – 16 September 2000

Curator: Ann Gallagher

Artifice defines all artistic creation. It has also come to be associated with the contrived, the constructed, the inauthentic and the unnatural. In this exhibition an exploration of the status of the artificial as the antithesis of 'nature' or 'truth' is central to the approach of the artists included. Using very different strategies and techniques they focus on the complexity and uncertainty of perception, on the differences and affinities between what is perceived as 'natural' and what is perceived as 'artificial'. The tension between these two states has indeed been fundamental to the history of image making. At a time when the implications of genetic modification and cloning have become a real issue, it is not surprising that the blurring of distinctions between illusion and reality should be a subject for consideration by artists.

Narrative provides the framework within which reality and fiction merge in many works within this exhibition. In the large-scale blackboard drawings by **Tacita Dean**, in which allusive links to actual histories are created, these almost abstract images function as storyboards for films. In **Simon Starling's** film 'Short Story, Brief History' a narrative unfolds in which a silver fork is transformed into its natural material and then metamorphoses into another form of artifice. Truth and fiction mingle easily through the mediating device of the camera lens. The limitless potential for digital falsification in film is exploited by **Stephen Murphy** in his short sequences derived from photographic or fictional sources. We are apt to confuse actual experience with that mediated through fictional creation or documentary footage, but equally simulated images have now become entirely part of our reality. In **Adam Chodzko's** double screen projection 'Nightvision' lighting technicians have been used to create a composite vision of heaven. The mechanics of filmmaking are dismantled and its methods used to produce a fleeting moment of wonderment in the fusion between reality and artifice.

Many of the works examine the illusions created through the effects associated with film and the stage, such as the use of props and sound effects. **Graham Gussin's** 'Studio (Dry Ice)' shows the artist surrounded by swirls of dry ice, suggesting a scene of mystical occurrence or potential transformation, while the associations of his 'Vista Platform' are created by the eerie echo of the visitors own footsteps and movement. **Jane and Louise Wilson** use props or architectural elements to convey the impression of some real incident or location. Always rooted in an authentic setting – an abandoned loft or the deserted corridors of institutions – their films and related photographs feature occasional appearances by the artists, not as themselves, but dressed to suggest a role or identity, and engaged in actions that provide clues to a mysterious and inconclusive narrative.

The dynamic between the natural and the artificial exists in the combination of materials in the sculptures and assemblages of **Siobhan Hapaska and Simon Starling**. **Hapaska's** juxtapositions of the organic with the synthetic – grass, stone or water with fibreglass, acrylic paints and even sound and light components – only serve to confound the associations the materials propose, preventing distinct interpretation and provoking a sense of dislocation. These hybrid forms serve as allegories for the complexity of definition and communication.

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