Natural Digression brings together seven artists from a variety of disciplines, who all share an interest in the notions, tools and conventions of the rational sciences. The exhibition title plays upon a Eurocentric hierarchy of knowledge and mode of conceiving reality - the 'objective' scientific frame of reference at the front and centre of the Western understanding of the world. This polemic acts as a point of departure for the artists in Natural Digression as they make an epistemological migration to alternative interpretations, mock realities or whimsical outposts.

The scientific ‘real’, as defined in Cartesian rationalistic terms, is held up for re-examination by these artists. However, while it’s easy to discern a mutual fascination with observation, metaphor and transposition, as a group, their work also connects through a shared curiosity toward the visual narrative and its seductive ability to describe moments passing between fact and fiction. Collectively, the artists are determined to unpick the primacy of scientific rationality in our contemporary understanding of this world, rather than to illustrate an ideal ‘truth’.

While all seven artists have backgrounds in traditional modes of visual art practice, such as painting, print and sculpture, they employ a combination of high and low technologies in the creation of their work. Video, animation, and other digital based media are humanised by their pairing with needlepoint, hot glue and collage constructions, and the artist’s hand is made further evident through both drawing and paint. In this way, by ignoring convention, blurring divides and exploring diverse methods, together the works in Natural Digression set up a fascinating conversation between technique and idea.

Penelope Cain takes Darwinian notions of evolution, particularly in its applications to animal and human behaviour, as a starting point to reflect on the contemporary urban condition. Similarly poignant are the intricate paper constructions of Rose Montebello, depicting the timeless and intimate relationship between predator and prey. Ellis Huch has learnt non-verbal systems of communication, in this instance sign language, to develop video works that explore the intersections between sign form and function. Waratah Lahi reviews notions of perception with a focus on the interpretative experience of looking, through a series of painted cut-outs that hope in on people in the act of looking intently at something. Kirsten Farrell has developed a mathematically based system converting text to dynamic slices of colour while Al Munro renders painstaking 18th and 19th century scientific illustrations of crystal forms with the warmth of needlepoint and ‘drawn’ stitch. Erica Secombes uses high-tech imaging and video to review the existing primacy of scientific techniques in describing the physical world, and an irony whereby larger, more complex machines and processing techniques are being used to visually access increasingly smaller corners of our natural world.

Yolande Norris, 2011

Natural Digression
8 MARCH - 8 APRIL
Curated by Yolande Norris.

8 MARCH - 8 APRIL
Curated by Yolande Norris, Natural Digression debates the primacy of scientific rationality for describing the world. Through diverse materials and techniques the seven artists raise questions about codification and language, the impact of the built environment on human behaviour and gender dynamics in past scientific discoveries.

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Yolande Norris, 2011
Penelope Cain

She posits a co-determinism between human overlaying drawings and photographic images, Waratah Lahi leaves no stone unturned in her examination of the shifting roles that surround us.

Penelope is based in Sydney and most recently exhibited at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne. Penelope is currently undertaking the 2010-11 Power Institute residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris.

ERIKA SECOCM BE

Nanoplastica describes the physical world, larger, more complex machines and processing techniques are used to visually access increasingly smaller realities. Erica utilises high-tech contemporary scientific imaging techniques to explore the existing privacy of scientific techniques, creating digital animatons to represent the rendered 3D data in movement, colour and vision.

PENELOPE CAIN

Penelope Cain’s work explores Danish notions of evolution and its applications to human and animal behavioural science to reflect on the contemporary urban condition. By subtly overlaying photographs and drawings images, she posits a co-determinism between human social behaviour and the built urban architecture that surrounds us.

Waratah Lahi

Waratah is fascinated by the act of observation, particularly at that instant where a physical change is wrought through the mediated gaze of the camera; the human body twisting and contorting to capture the perfect shot. Recording of the camera; the human body twisting and changing, particularly at that instant where a physical change is wrought through the mediated gaze.

WARATAH LAHY

E RIC A SE CCOM BE

Erika is fascinated by the act of observation, particularly at that instant where a physical change is wrought through the mediated gaze of the camera; the human body twisting and contorting to capture the perfect shot. Recording of the camera; the human body twisting and changing, particularly at that instant where a physical change is wrought through the mediated gaze.

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