

Akil  
Ahamat

Brian  
Fuata

Yhonnie  
Scarce

Julie  
Rrap

# After Technology

Tega  
Brain

VNS  
Matrix

Roslyn  
Helper

Grant  
Stevens

Patricia  
Piccinini

Robert  
Andrew

**Curated by**  
Stella Rosa McDonald  
and Eleanor Zeichner

26 February  
– 18 April 2019  
UTS Gallery



Technology's promise—as a tool for connection and efficiency, as an evolutionary cheat sheet, as proof, as a salve for an idle mind, as a lens, as a means and an end—is also its problem. To summarise cultural theorist Paul Virilio, *the invention of the ship* was also *the invention of the shipwreck*; that is to say that for every solution offered by technology a new problem is offered in return.<sup>1</sup>

*After Technology* explores the bind of progress, charting the anxieties, opportunities and costs of emerging technologies. The centrality of the body in the works shown here is not accidental; there is a frail boundary between us and the technologies we build, and these artists underscore the human heart that beats at the centre of the technological corpus.

The exhibition takes a local perspective on the question of technology, considering how Australian artists have registered the rise of technologies since the 1990s; from the emerging science of genetic testing and the effect of military technologies on civilian life, to the bleed between life online and IRL created by technologies of representation and information.

Whether we use technology to shape our own bodies or build new ones, make connections or disengage, the problem of technology remains a

human one. Since the 1990s VNS Matrix, Julie Rrap and Patricia Piccinini have used emerging digital technologies to model paths of resistance for the female body. Cyberfeminist art collective VNS Matrix saw the internet as a space of consciousness raising, using it to distribute their *Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) which reflected the networked culture of the emerging online space and harnessed the potential of new technologies to disrupt the patriarchy.

Key works by Rrap and Piccinini housed in the UTS Art Collection and made at the advent of the digital age, interrogate the role of technology in the formation and disassembly of cultural identity. These artists evidence the twin advances of medical and digital technologies, whereby the cellular body modification of genetic engineering is matched by the ability to manipulate the body by digital means. In a post-reality age where life online has superseded everyday experience, these once prescient representations now appear to have coalesced with our contemporary reality.

As tech companies like Google and Facebook act increasingly like sovereign nation states, governed by an emerging code of values and ethics, the social fabric of our lives has been permanently altered. Roslyn Helper and

Brian Fuata use the traditions of writing and performance to address the personal in the information age, subverting the data economies of The Big Four in the process. By restaging private acts in public both artists reveal (in somewhat forensic detail in the case of Helper's excruciating restaging of a break-up) the impact of digital information on our intimate emotional, sexual and social lives.

Recent works by Tega Brain and Grant Stevens explore the relationship between technology and nature, revealing the ways in which technologies rapidly establish new environmental conditions and experiences of being. Stevens' work uses the language of the digital to reimagine the sublime, asking whether it is still possible to have an experience of nature that is unmediated by technology. Conversely, Brain's 'eccentric' Wi-Fi networks demonstrate the ways in which the architectures of networked worlds relate to systems in nature. Brain's installation uses conditions in the natural world—lunar cycles, photosynthesis and heat—to reclaim digital environs. Audiences are invited to connect via their devices and consider how our behaviours are now shaped by the invisible topographies that surround us.

Technology has long been wielded as an ideological tool, the colonial,

capitalist and military dimensions of which cannot be underestimated. Yhonnie Scarce's practice bears witness to the violence and dispossession inflicted on Indigenous lives in the race for resources in the Industrial age. Scarce's delicate work in glass belies an intensity of subject that leads us to consider the real-world impact of future progress in the Information Age. Akil Ahamat's nuanced video installation explores the politics of human capital and the paradox of late capitalism in the sports and entertainment industries. Ahamat's critique of capitalism and close reading of contemporary brown identity demonstrates the ways in which technological progress risks the commodification of humans as a resource to be reaped, stored and traded.<sup>2</sup> But the impact of technology is perhaps most obvious in Ahamat's hypertextual mode; from Looney Toons to Nike to Frantz Fanon, Ahamat's work demonstrates a sticky mode of cultural production facilitated by the proliferation of cultural material online.

At once a record of loss and a regeneration of cultural identity, Robert Andrew's machine-driven sculpture gradually inscribes Yawuru language on the wall of the gallery over the course of the exhibition using burnt wood, ochre and oxides. Andrew's research-based practice combines ancient and modern

technologies in order to critique systems of knowledge that privilege the West. Andrew's language machine refutes the righteous expectation of access to information, instead sanctioning Indigenous knowledge from the colonising culture's reach.

As they draw our attention to the political, personal, cultural, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of technology, these artists emphasise our individual desire to be seen, to be understood and to endure. The lasting critical impact of technologies (ever evolving and always imperfect) is that they force us to confront for better or for worse what makes us human—a condition that still remains, however changed, *after* technology.

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Stella Rosa McDonald  
& Eleanor Zeichner, 2019

1. Paul Virilio, *The Museum of Accident*, Art Press no. 102, April 1986
2. Boris Groys, "Art, Technology, and Humanism", *E-Flux Journal #82*, May 2017 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/82/127763/art-technology-and-humanism/> Accessed September 25, 2018

## List of works

Akil Ahamat, *Muscular Dreams*, 2016  
Single channel 21:9 video, parabolic speaker, concrete, steel mesh, Air Jordan V, autopole  
Courtesy the artist

Robert Andrew, *(re)scribing language*, 2018  
burnt branches, ochres, oxides, string and electromechanical components  
dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist

Tega Brain, *Being Radiotropic*, 2016  
Open WRT wifi routers, wooden boxes, peace lily, candle, moon rock cast in concrete  
Courtesy the artist

Brian Fuata, *The Public Body: an email performance*, 2014  
archival pigment print on 300 rag paper  
841 x 1189mm  
Private collection

Brian Fuata, *Troy's Response I Have Codified For The Obvious Reason – A performance in three parts*, 2014  
archival pigment print on 300 rag paper  
841 x 1189mm  
Private collection

Brian Fuata, *Dying: an email performance*, 2014  
archival pigment print on 300 rag paper  
841 x 1189mm  
Private collection

Brian Fuata, *A performance for all the men in my address book*, archival pigment, 2014  
print on 300 rag paper  
841 x 1189mm  
Courtesy the artist

Roslyn Helper, *36,000 Words Under a Gemini Moon*, 2019  
3-channel video with sound  
Duration: 41:28  
Developed and performed with Keren Leizerovitz. Filmed and edited by Peter Fitzgibbon and Steven Lattuca.  
Special thanks to Stephanie King

Supported by UTS Gallery, Artspace and the Brunswick Mechanics Institute

Patricia Piccinini, *Sacrifice*, 1996  
C-type photograph, 130 x 130cm  
Patrick Corrigan collection,  
on loan to UTS ART Collection

Patricia Piccinini, *Romance*, 1996  
C-type photograph  
130 x 130cm  
Patrick Corrigan collection,  
on loan to UTS ART Collection

Patricia Piccinini, *Elegance*, 1996  
C-type photograph  
122.5 x 122.5cm  
Patrick Corrigan collection,  
on loan to UTS ART Collection

Julie Rrap, *Overstepping*, 2001  
C-type photograph  
122.5 x 122.5cm  
Patrick Corrigan collection,  
on loan to UTS ART Collection

Yhonnie Scarce, *Strontium-90 (Fallout Babies)*, 2016  
blown glass, acrylic, found hospital cribs  
variable dimensions  
Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY

Grant Stevens, *The Mountain*, 2018  
Real-time simulation with sound, LCD screen  
3840 x 2160  
Courtesy the artist, Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney and Starkwhite, Auckland


This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australian Council, its arts funding and advisory body

VNS Matrix, *All New Gen (remix 01)*, 2007  
Video with sound  
Duration: 22:06  
Courtesy the artists

## Events

**Exhibition Opening**  
Tuesday 26 February  
6-8pm

**Curators' Talk**  
Wednesday 6 March  
1-2pm

**Audio-described Tour**  
Thursday 7 March  
1-2pm 

**Golden Age Screening: Videodrome**  
**Dir. David Cronenberg**  
Wednesday 13 March  
8.30pm

Paramount House,  
80 Commonwealth Street,  
Surry Hills

**Art Month Sydney 2019 Performance: Giselle Stanborough**  
Thursday 28 March  
4-8pm  
LX.lab

Level 4, Building 6, UTS  
702 Harris Street, Ultimo

**Reading Group**  
Wednesday 3 April  
6-8pm

For information on Events  
visit [art.uts.edu.au](http://art.uts.edu.au)

UTS ART 

## UTS ART Staff

**Curator**  
Stella Rosa McDonald

**Assistant Curator, UTS Gallery**  
Eleanor Zeichner

**Assistant Curator, UTS Art Collection**  
Janet Ollevou

**Coordinator, Learning and Projects**  
Alice McAuliffe

**Marketing and Audience Development Officer**  
JD Reforma

**Curatorial Assistant, Collection and Special Projects**  
Felicity Sheehan

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**Monday – Friday** 12 – 6pm  
**Saturday** 12 – 4pm