



LIFE AFTER WARTIME

BYSTANDER

Bystander is a 5-channel interactive video installation by artists Ross Gibson and Kate Richards. **Bystander** is installed in a 7-metre-wide pentagonal frame comprised of five projection-screens and surround sound audio which visitors enter – up to 12 at once. All round them, a spirit-world of images, texts and sound gets composed in response to their movement, mass and attentiveness. The room is a kind of performative story-generator haunted by Sydney's recent past. Depending on the behaviour of visitors, a variable and volatile world of audiovisual narrative evolves endlessly but cogently. **Bystander** exhibits emergent behaviours - complex narrative, aesthetic and semantic patterns emerge out of simple, elegant rules and interface.

The central premise of **Bystander** is that the more quiet and attentive the audience, the more aesthetically coherent and semantically divulgant the 'world'. Ideally visitors can gain the 'trust' of the space and perform a dance of intimacy with the 'world' and its complex narrative matrix.

Funded by the Australian Research Council, **Bystander** is an immersive feedback environment for exhibiting and dramatically interacting with semiotic, emotional and aesthetic patterns in archived environments. With **Bystander** we are creating a 'world' environment that is both interface and display surface. The rules and parameters that inform the 'world' enable audience interactivity to create narrative and aesthetic behaviours, semantic sense and the potential of aesthetic choreography and pattern making. Like an environment buffeted by spirit weather, **Bystander** is flow and affect rather than a space of signification. The result is a compelling, sensual and kinaesthetic affect, combining with the photographic and text material to create an intellectually intriguing witnessing of a complex metanarrative played out in a blustery harbourside town. To enter the space is to witness simultaneous fragments of multiple Sydney histories. It demonstrates a fascinating and very contemporary shift from territorial, tangible and object-oriented museology to an interactive, patrimonial ecology of flux, emergent behaviours, disturbances and audience affect.

Bystander is developed and produced in Sydney, Australia during 2004-2006 using metadesign techniques, including personas and scenarios; Laban movement theory and user interaction scripts; iterative single and multi-channel prototypes; and agile programming. The software itself is designed in such a way that it can be populated with other databased collections. It has a front-end property manager for tweaking the display aesthetics, system sensitivity and database call-up rules. **Bystander** is part of a suite of projects called **Life After Wartime**, created by Ross Gibson and Kate Richards. In a range of different digital media, the suite of works is a series of interrogative responses to an archive of 3000 crime scene photographs from Sydney, 1945–60. see www.lifeafterwartime.com.

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Written in C++ and MaxMSP. Bystander comes complete with

- Aluminium framework for screens, projectors
- Front projection screens x 5
- Projectors x 5
- Speakers, 5:1 amp and subwoofer
- Mac computer, monitor, m-audio box for sound
- PC for data collection
- PC x 3 for server and client
- Network hub, KVM switcher, all cables
- Data collection kit including camera, IR illuminators, firewire.

TEAM

Kate Richards – artist, producer

Kate Richards is a Sydney-based media artist and producer working across multimedia, interactivity, visualisation software and time-based media. Recent multimedia projects include 'sub_scapePROOF-a machinima' at d.Art 06; 'sub_scapePROOF' at ACMI 2004-2005; sub_scapeBALTIC at ISEA04 Finland and Estonia (all with Sarah Waterson); Crying Man 4 (with Lyndal Jones), Artspace Sydney; Wayfarer, a participatory multimedia performance work with Martyn Coutts (residency at the Performance Space Sydney); Life After Wartime CD-ROM (with Ross Gibson) File, Sao Paulo Brasil.

Ross Gibson – artist, writer

Ross Gibson is an award winning writer and media artist whose installations, films and books have been distributed world wide. He also produces multimedia environments and IT systems for museums and public spaces. Between 1993 and 1996, he was senior consultant producer during the inaugural phase of the Museum of Sydney. Then, after a two-year term as the Australia Council's inaugural Fellow in New Media, he worked from 1999 till 2002 as the Creative Director and technical systems overseer during the establishment of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) at Federation Square in Melbourne. He has taught and researched in several Universities, including Latrobe, Boston, Dijon, and London. He is now Research Professor of New Media & Digital Culture at the University of Technology, Sydney. A Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities, he is also a Board Member of the NSW Film and Television Office and the Western Sydney Information and Cultural Exchange.

Aaron Seymour – graphic design

Greg White – interactive sound design

Daniel Heckenberg – senior programmer

Jon Drummond – sound programmer

James Hudson – optimization programmer

Tim Gruchy – Installation design

Toni Robertson, Lian Loke, Tim Mansfield – participatory design

FUNDERS

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