

An aerial photograph of the Dubai skyline at dusk. The Burj Khalifa is the most prominent feature on the right side, its spire reaching towards the top of the frame. The city's lights are beginning to glow, and the sky is a deep, dark blue. The overall mood is serene and modern.

the surface of the world

ARCHITECTURE AND THE MOVING IMAGE

ARTISTS

TACITA DEAN
JOHN GERRARD
DIONISIO GONZÁLES
ISAAC JULIEN
COCOY LUMBAO
SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS
ELIZABETH PRICE
JÓZEF ROBAKOWSKI
JULIA ROSEFELDT
ZBIGNIEW RYBCZYŃSKI
JOHN SMITH
APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL

MCAD

MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY
ART & DESIGN

Video art uses the concept of moving pictures to examine how built space and moving image interact with one another. It is a medium that can either accent other forms of art or stand by itself in installations at galleries.

It is a term used to describe art that uses both the apparatus and processes of television and video. It can take many forms: recordings that are broadcast, viewed in galleries or other venues, or distributed as tapes or discs; sculptural installations, which may incorporate one or more television receivers or monitors, displaying 'live' or recorded images and sound; and performances in which video representations are included.



(left) Isaac Julien's Playtime installed in NYC; (right) TV Magnet by the Father of Video Art, Nam June Paik

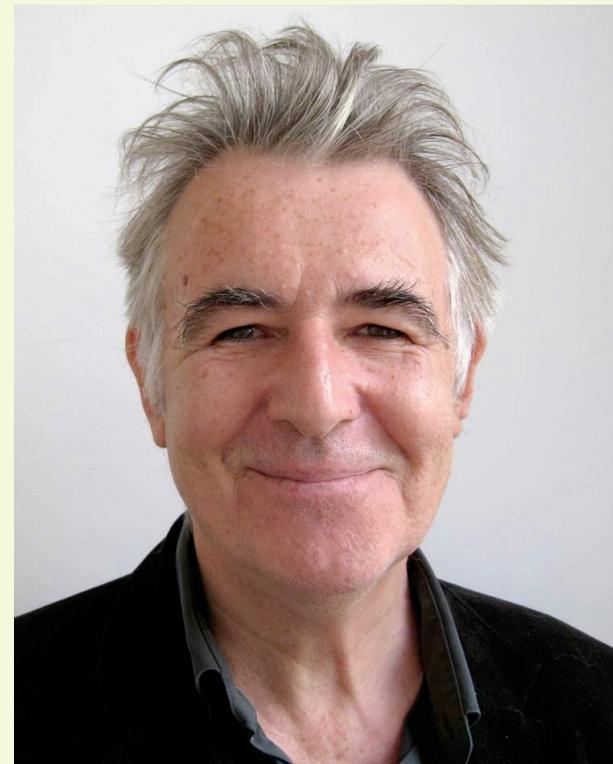
In the 1960s, Nam June Paik helped turn the moving image into a common tool for artists to use as a form of expression thus the birth of video art. He used his new Sony Portapak to shoot footage of Pope Paul VI's procession through New York City in 1965 .

1. There have been video installations shown in galleries and museums. Have you seen these installations? What was your reaction or response to these? Do you have the same response to the installations here at MCAD? Why or why not? How does the space of the MCAD enhance or hinder your experience of the works?
2. What are the similarities and differences between cinema (films and movies), television and video art in terms of the engagement with the audience as well as use of space?
3. Most of the artists that were chosen for The Surface of The World: Architecture and the Moving Image had knowledge of architecture. Look for other filmmakers who studied architecture, or had initial training as architects or related professions. List quotes from these artists on the relation between film and architecture. Examples:
 - a. John Smith – You see a lot of buildings in the world and they trigger ideas.
 - b. Apichatpong Weeraseethakul - When I plan my films, it (architecture) helps in terms of structure.
4. Have you taken photos or videos from the exhibit? Upload it in social networking sites and use the hashtags #MCADManila #TheSurfaceOfTheWorld. Search for more people who had been to MCAD. Compare and contrast your photos, videos and experiences with others' upload. Invite others to see the exhibit too.

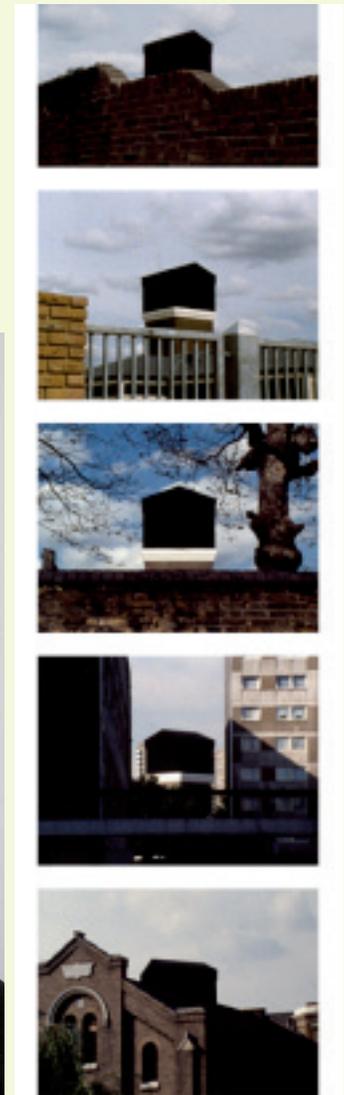
STUDY GUIDE

John Smith's Work

1. Compare and contrast the look of the black tower as the narrator sees it in different locations. Does the angle, size or shape give you an idea of how near or far the narrator is from the black tower?
2. Rene Magritte's work *Empire of Light* looks similar to some of the images in *The Black Tower*. Look closely at both works. Do they create the same atmosphere? What is the effect of the voice-over on how you perceive the work?
3. What do you think will happen to the female narrator whose voice we hear at the end of the work?

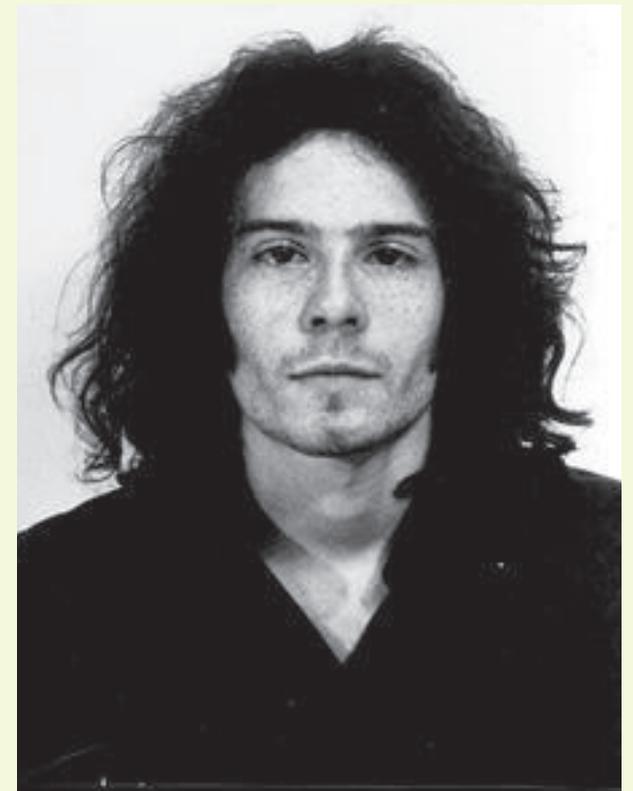


John Smith;
Stills from
The Black Tower (1987) (right)



4. Smith's works make the audience not only look at the film but to take a closer look at the environment with a combination of humor and dry wit. His works can be compared to the works of George Landow (also known as Owen Land). Land's films usually involve word play, humor and wit. Landow is famous for his film *Wide Angle Saxon* (1975) which presents a complete in-depth critique of his religious beliefs, his own film aesthetics, and the larger context of the experimental and structural films to which these relate . What are the similarities and differences of Land's and Smith's films?
5. Aside from including humor and dry wit, what are other notable characteristics of *The Black Tower*? What are other themes that were discussed in *The Black Tower*?

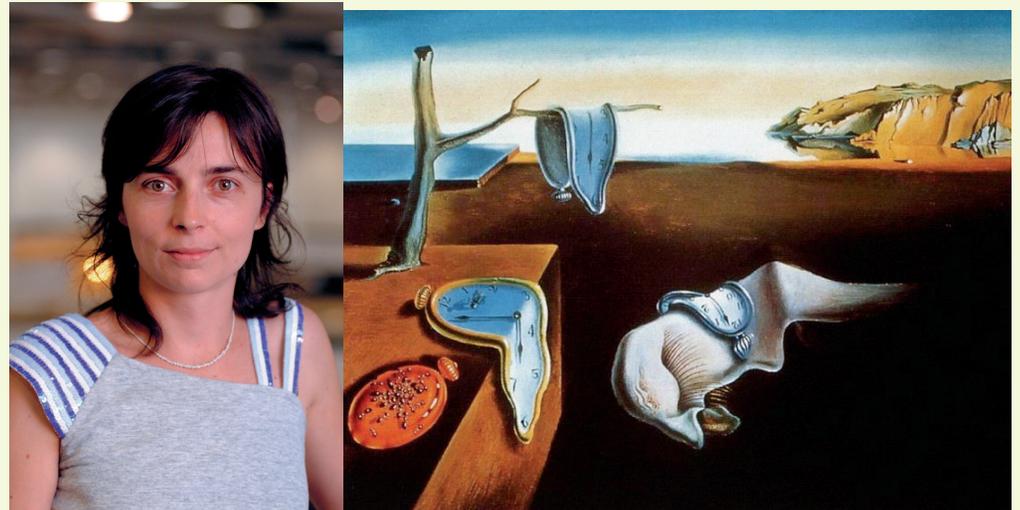
(right) Owen Land;
(below) stills from *Wide Angle Saxon*



STUDY GUIDE

Saskia Olde Wolbers' Work

1. Olde Wolbers has been developing fictional documentaries that hover somewhere between illusion and reality. Her surreally bizarre narratives are driven by a combination of dream-like imagery – meticulously handmade model worlds – and the apparent inner monologue of the voiceover in the audio book-like soundtracks . According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “surrealism is a 20th-century art form in which an artist or writer combines unrelated images or events in a very strange and dreamlike way.” What is the relationship between Olde Wolbers' works and surrealism? Do you think Interloper is surreal? What items/objects in her film seem related to surrealism?



(right) Saskia Olde Wolbers;
Famous surrealist painting by Salvador Dali,
The Persistence of Memory



(left to right) Video stills of handmade model set from Trailer, Deadline and Pareidolia

2. Since the mid-1990s Olde Wolbers has been working in video, combining analogue imagery with first person fictional narration. Instead of computer-generated or digital images and effects, she uses handmade model sets. These are dipped in paint and then shot underwater to result in images that are not reality but at the same time completely analog environment . In her film entitled Trailer, she used small parts of mineral water bottles to create a cinema; in Deadline, she used cod-liver oil capsules for the yellow beaded curtain; and for the animatronic bird in Pareidolia, she used polyester woven crin from a cyber-goth hair extension shop in Ohio (images below). What is the effect of her use of analog visuals instead of digital builds or special effects in her works? Dissect her film Interloper in terms of its sets. Analyze the models and hypothesize on the materials used to make the sets.
3. Experiment with creating your own handmade models as sets. Compare and contrast your output with the works of Olde Wolbers. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using handmade model sets instead of digital images and effects.

STUDY GUIDE

Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Work

1. Apichatpong's works deal with memory, subtly addressed personal politics and social issues (war, violence, oppression, abuse, etc.) How do these show in his film? Site specific incidents in his film A Letter to Uncle Boonmee.
2. Apichatpong holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from Khon Kaen University, then a Master of Fine Arts in Filmmaking from The Art Institute of Chicago. He started making films and video shorts in 1994 and completed his first feature Mysterious Object at Noon in 2000 . How is his study of architecture evident in his film A Letter to Uncle Boonmee?
3. List at least three filmmakers who have a background or have studied architecture. Make a table, comparing and contrasting their most notable works to the works of Apichatpong. Are there some common themes and styles among them? Why?
4. Research on the history of Thailand cinema. Cite specific events in the history of Thai cinema that you think influenced Apichatpong's chosen themes in his works.

Video stills from A Letter to Uncle Boonmee
Apichatpong Weerasathakul



STUDY GUIDE

Zbigniew Rybczyński's Work

1. Zbigniew Rybczyński is the first filmmaker to use High Definition television technology. He is an innovator and experimenter in the technical field. He holds several US patents, most of them for innovative ideas in film and video making, including the "Zbig" software for matting. He earned great popularity in his nickname of "Big Zbig" authoring video clips to music by Simple Minds, Mick Jagger or John Lennon, and creating his Steps (1986), Fourth Dimension (1988) and Orchestra (1990), acclaimed for their innovativeness and striking virtuosity by critics and audiences around the world. From 1987 to 1994, he was running his own studio, equipped with hi-tech HDTV technology. What are the impacts on Zbig's works? What are the contributions of Zbig's innovations to the technology used today?
2. Off-screen space is the imaginary area beyond the edge of the screen, and in front of or behind the camera. It is the space that can be seen by the audience but is not accessible. What is the effect of the use of off-screen space (the room, the window and the door in the back wall, the doors on either side of the room, and the cupboard) in his film Tango? What did you experience when all of the characters were moving all at the same time? On this day of age, did you still find the effects used amusing? Why and why not?



(top to bottom) Zbigniew Rybczyński;
(left; B) video stills from Simple Minds' All
the Things She Said;
(right; B) Mick Jagger's Let's Work; and
John Lennon's Imagine

3. Choose one character in Tango, and track the motion and direction of his/her movement when all of the characters are all present and moving at the same time. Did you have a hard time doing so? Why or why not? You can also take note of the order in which the 36 characters come into the room.
4. Tango alludes to dance and is translated as 'to touch'. It is also a partner dance. Who among the characters have partners? Do any of the characters touch? How does the space help or hinder their contact?



(right) Rybczyński on the set of Tango;
(left) Video still from Tango

STUDY GUIDE

John Gerrard's Work

1. Research on what a virtual world is. Look at the work – is there any detail that gives away the fact that it is a simulation? What makes it seem real to you? Describe the concept of the virtual world in Cuban School. What did you find most interesting in his work?
2. Have you seen movies or videogames that use this kind of digital simulations? Cite them here and compare it to Cuban School in terms of the movement of the image.
3. Gerrard's works typically take the form of digital simulations displayed using real-time computer graphics. His works are constructed as simulations or virtual worlds, using 3D real-time computer graphics - a technology originally developed for military use, and now used extensively in the videogame industry. Is this the first time the said technology was used for art?



(left) video still from Cuban School; (right) John Gerrard

STUDY GUIDE

Julian Rosefeldt's Work

1. Rosefeldt frequently has his films projected onto several screens simultaneously, carrying the viewer off into a surreal, theatrical world whose inhabitants are caught in the structures and rituals of everyday life. This technique creates a panoramic effect. In his film *Stunned Man*, he used two screens simultaneously. What is the effect of this technique to you? What are the similarities and differences between films using panoramic effect and films with non-panoramic effect? What are its advantages and disadvantages?



Julian Rosefeldt (left); *Stunned Man* exhibited at the Maximilians Forum in Munich, Germany (April 2013)

2. Rosefeldt's work investigates the rituals, structures and absurdities of everyday life. Looking at the ritual done by the protagonists in both frames, what part of their day would the work be depicting? Rituals are specific not only to time and persons but also to space. Note the rituals that happen in the different spaces depicted in the work. Is there a possibility of deviation or variation? Why or why not?
3. Rosefeldt has an MA in Architecture. His work attempts to understand society as a machine and questions, 'How does it work, what is the structure?' What other elements did you notice in his works that have an architectural influence?



Video stills from Stunned Man

Study Guide

Tacita Dean's Work



1. Tacita Dean's is best known for her work in 16mm film. With the dominance of digital technology, what is the future of analog film as a medium for artists? Do you think film is becoming passé? What do you think is the edge of digital technology over analog technology and vice versa?
2. What do you think is the significance of obsolescence in Dean's works?
3. How does the viewpoint/angle taken by the artist (street view and use of reflective surfaces) affect your perception of the structure which is the Palast?
4. The Palast der Republik is a big building with its bronze mirrored windows as its defining architectural feature. Do you see this and other architectural features in the work? List down the details that you see.



(above) Tacita Dean; (below) stills from Palast

STUDY GUIDE

Dionisio González's Work

1. Dionisio González often combines existing urban structures and digitally drawn architecture. In his Favelas Series (2004-2007), he created a photo mash-up of slum houses in Brazil. He incorporated glass, angles, and modern facades creating a surreal photo series. The series features both large and small panoramic images of the different favelas, each ranging from meager to surreal in terms of construction and structure? Did it have an effect on your perception on poverty? Why?
2. The work combines different favelas. Are you able to distinguish one from another? Why?
3. Compare the verticality of this work with the horizontality of Isaac Julien's work.
4. About two million Filipinos, which made up 16 percent of the city's population in 2010, dwell in slums



(left) Dionisio González;

(right) video still from Pauliceia Desvairada

in Manila. Research on local as well as international artists that have art works which incorporate the concept of poverty in the Philippines. One example is Vicente Manansala. His painting Madonna of the Slums, reflected the poverty in postwar Manila.



Madonna of the Slums by Vicente Manansala, 1950

STUDY GUIDE

Elizabeth Price's Work

1. After seeing the materials in the house, was there or were there anything that caught your eye? Which one/s? Why?
2. Do you think the materials go with the space? Why or why not? What would you put in the house if it was your own?
3. Take note of the names of artists as well as make-up products and tag lines. Are you familiar with any of these? What do these tell you of the owner of the house?
4. What is the effect of the music played along with the video? What is the effect of the crisp claps and clicks that you hear in every transition?
5. What is the effect of the music played along with the video? What is the effect of the crisp claps and clicks that you hear in every transition?



(above) Elizabeth Price
(right) video stills from The House of Mr.X;



STUDY GUIDE

Isaac Julien's Work

1. Time-lapse cinematography is a technique in which a changing scene is captured in a series of frames shot at set intervals. This technique is most often used to briefly show the progress of changes taking place within a long period of time . Are there changes that are occurring in Dubai as seen in the work?
2. Look for other works that deal with time-lapse cinematography. Compare and contrast them to Enigma.



(from left to right)
Isaac Julien;
Still from Enigma

3. What is the impression of Dubai given to you by the use of the time-lapse cinematography?
4. Capture several photos of a certain thing or event and make your own time lapse. Show it to your friends and ask them what they think about your work.
5. Playtime tells the story of six characters – an artist, fund manager, auctioneer, house worker, art dealer, and a reporter – all of whom are significantly affected by the financial tides of the global economy . It was set in three different locations – Iceland, Dubai and London. What do you think is common among these three cities?



Video still from Playtime

STUDY GUIDE

Cocoy Lumbao's Work

1. Research on what optical illusions are. Make your own optical illusion by experimenting on mirror images and videos. Compare your output with Lumbao's work. What are the similarities and differences?
2. The train ride is from the LRT station in Pasay until Vito Cruz. What impression of the City of Manila do you get from seeing all the structures that you pass through? Why do you think the artist chose to use the idea of the mirror image?
3. There is a black and white version of this work in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila. See the work and compare the experience of viewing the two.



Video still from Index (Elevated Train)

STUDY GUIDE

Józef Robakowski's Work

1. Józef Robakowski is a pioneer of independent Polish film . In his film, From My Window, he lets the world unfold itself while he films from his flat's window from 1978 to 1999. What significant events did happen in Poland within this time frame? (e.g Pope John Paul II was the first Polish pope who was elected in 1978 by the Vatican and martial law was also declared in Poland in 1981.) Do you get a hint of these events in the work? How so?
2. What do you think is the effect of filming in just one specific place? What are its advantages and disadvantages?



(left) Józef Robakowski;

(right) still from From My Window

The international selection of 12 artists and filmmakers consists of John Smith (UK), Saskia Olde Wolbers (Netherlands), John Gerrard (Ireland), Apichatpong Weeraseethakul (Thailand), Elizabeth Price (UK), Cocoy Lumbao (Philippines), Zbigniew Rybczyński (Poland/USA), Józef Robakowski (Poland), Julian Rosefeldt (Germany), Isaac Julien (UK), Dionisio Gonzalez (Spain) and Tacita Dean (UK).



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Image Sources:

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q. Cocoy Lumbao

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cc. Enigma video still
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