




THE GHOST SHOW



Cover image: Hazelhurst Cottage c.1953.  
Courtesy of Local Studies Collection,  
Sutherland Shire Libraries



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4 December 2010 – 30 January 2011

Curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham

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Artists: Robyn Backen, Matt Glenn, Daniel Kojta,  
Wade Marynowsky, Kate Murphy, Eugenia Raskopoulos

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre  
4 December 2010 – 30 January 2011

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Matt Glenn's work was assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.

Kate Murphy thanks Dix Hawke and Jesse.

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# Introduction

I'm feeling a bit uncomfortable writing this introduction. It's as if there's something (or someone) in the room!

Encounters with paranormal activity, reported by staff and visitors alike, have regularly punctuated my time here at Hazelhurst. You shrug it off and reject such sensitivities, but the frequency and similarity of stories told do suggest that there are spooky forces at play.

Adding colour to my newfound belief in the hereafter are the many stories recounted by people from their childhood, of growing up in and around Gymea. With observations of a big house, an overgrown garden, of animals – particularly one large Alsatian – and of walking past quickly, clearly Hazelhurst was everyone's haunted house and home to a story that must be told.

*The Ghost Show*, curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham, presents the work of six artists generated through onsite residencies undertaken in the second half of 2010. The exhibition picks up on one of Daniel's own childhood close encounters with the site and further mines a rich vein of local stories – told by artists – connecting our audiences, in a familiar way, with the spirit world of contemporary art.

Robyn Backen, Matt Glenn, Daniel Kojta, Wade Marynowsky, Kate Murphy and Eugenia Raskopoulos all respond to a heightened awareness of Ben and Hazel Broadhurst's legacy. By producing works in response to 'Hazelhurst' they also present an engagement with their own substantial art practice. Each has their own tale to tell, all of which are vigorously presented, creating a sense of the afterlife, and/or déjà vu – both real and imagined.

In conclusion, I want to thank Sutherland Shire Council for its ongoing support and also recognise contributions made by the NSW Government, through Arts NSW towards our program and activities. I also acknowledge our sponsors, friends and volunteers and hope that you enjoy *The Ghost Show* as it uncovers some of 'the other side' of Hazelhurst.

**Michael Rolfe**

Centre Manager/Gallery Director





# THE GHOST SHOW

Hazelhurst Cottage c.1953.  
Courtesy of Local Studies Collection,  
Sutherland Shire Libraries

Do you believe in ghosts? Whether or not you do, many visitors to Hazelhurst's old cottage have been spooked by their 'presence'. Once described in local newspaper, *The Leader*, as a "house where things go bump in the night", the cottage was once home to an incident back in the 1960s where a pencil lifted itself from the table and wrote a message for its owner. The pencil unfortunately did not reveal the mysteries of the universe, as one would hope in such circumstances. Rather, and perhaps more practically, the clever pencil composed instructions for how to remove a particle of matter that had lodged in its owner's eye.<sup>1</sup>

In more recent times, the cottage has become the site of a thriving artist residency program that feeds into the activities and programming of the Gallery and Arts Centre. To my knowledge the levitating pencil hasn't returned, but strange encounters are reported to this day. Among them is the time a group of Tibetan Monks stayed in the cottage after performing a sand mandala ceremony at the gallery. Much to their horror the Monks encountered a "racist ghost" in the cottage, quickly left and never returned.

For *The Ghost Show*, six contemporary artists were invited to conjure the ghosts of Hazelhurst by undertaking a residency in this so-called haunted house. The artists were also introduced to the

story of Ben and Hazel Broadhurst, the couple who built the cottage and lived there until their deaths – Ben in 1990 and Hazel in 1994. Their generous property bequest to Sutherland Council in the mid-seventies led to the birth of Hazelhurst in 2000.

Perhaps the ghosts are Ben and Hazel? Maybe it's the same spirits the Broadhurst's communicated with during their lifetime? Perhaps their son Jimmy, who died at the age of four, is among them? Aside from running a shirt-manufacturing factory in Newtown and their farm at home on the Kingsway in Gymea, the Broadhursts championed psychic phenomena, with Ben particularly interested in astrology and theosophy and Hazel a student of numerology. Throughout the 1950s, Ben was the President of the Sydney Psychic Research Society and lectured widely on spiritual phenomena to public and private groups. At home, he communicated to the dead through his daughter, who discovered she was a medium at the age of 17.

Ben recalled in a 1974 newspaper exposé about his paranormal talents that one night in bed he felt a tug on his pyjama sleeve. Ben turned to Hazel and said, "We have one of our spirit friends with us tonight". The incident was forgotten about until a few days later when a stranger approached him at the library and said: "I have been asked to tell you that it was your son Jimmy who tugged your sleeve the other night".

Though he died at four, Jimmy maintained contact with his father assuring him how happy he was on “the other side”.

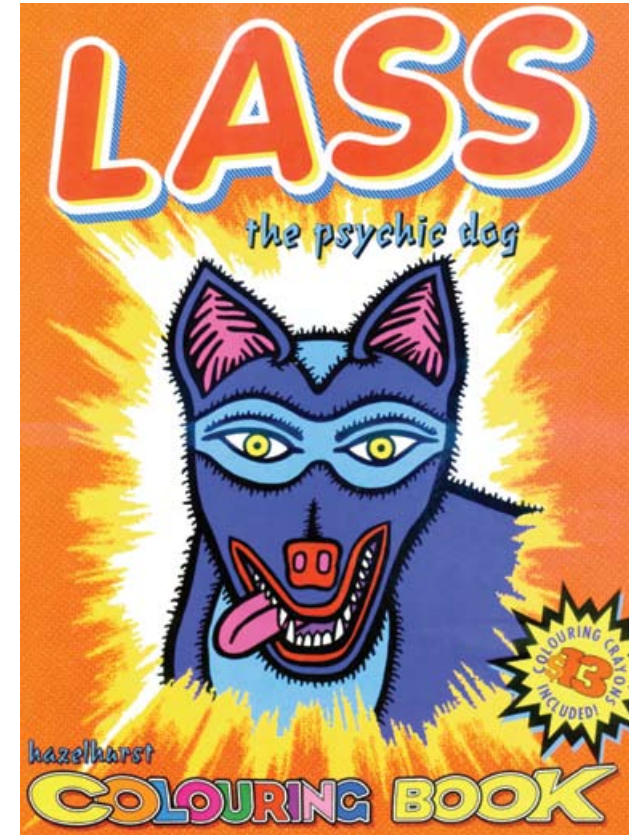
When asked in the same article about “the other side”, Ben claimed to have been given first-hand accounts by the dead of what it’s like in the afterlife: “There are flowers and trees and all kinds of beautiful things,” he said. “When people first cross over they spend some time relaxing and looking at the sights and then they take up a vocation – usually something they had always wanted to do on earth but had never got around to, like learning a language for example”. At this point the journalist “without trying to sound flippant” asked Ben if you could “take up, say swimming” on the other side. “Yes, there are swimming pools there,” Mr Broadhurst said.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile on earth, the Broadhursts earned a kind of ‘crackpot’ reputation for some, with the cottage being regarded by suspicious locals as a den of iniquity. Ben and Hazel’s niece, Dix Hawke, recalls that false rumours ran rife about Hazelhurst being “a gambling den, a brothel and a sly grog shop”.<sup>3</sup> Long before curating exhibitions at Hazelhurst, my own encounter with Hazelhurst dates back to the 1980s when I grew up in the Shire/St George region. My brother had a girlfriend, Sue, who still lives on Gymea Bay Road. One time we walked by the property and shuddered

as Sue told us that a witch lived inside. By that time Hazelhurst was run down, overgrown and a paradise for possums and stray cats, so it was no surprise that such rumours had become so embedded in the collective consciousness of the Shire community.

As such, the Hazelhurst cottage continues to this day to be inextricably linked – whether we believe it or not – to a family history haunted by what appears to be a friendly and welcoming spirit world, however much we regard it with fear and suspicion. The art deco cottage has retained most of its idiosyncratic features (such as the famous sunken bath situated next to a toilet that is equally famous for being the first in the Shire) despite undergoing numerous renovations since the Broadhursts crossed over to the other side.

Ben and Hazel designed and built the cottage with assistance by local architect Harry Smith after World War II in 1946-47. The Shire was semi-rural farm country back then with metropolitan Sydney ending at Tom Uglys Bridge, which was still a toll way until 1952. The Broadhursts built their ‘farmlet’ home among the sylvan scrub of Gymea when the area was populated with very few dwellings – a stark contrast to the rapid development of houses and units that proliferated in the 1960s and ‘70s.



Redback Graphix  
*Lass the Psychic Dog*, 2003  
Hazelhurst colouring book  
Courtesy of Michael Callaghan

Despite the growing industrialisation and suburbanisation of Gymea, and by extension the Shire, Ben and Hazel remained committed to their land, warding off pressure from aggressive property developers. Dix has described the property in its heyday as a thriving orchard of fruit trees cultivated amongst a well-tended garden of roses, dahlias, gladiolus, snapdragons, marigolds and pansies to name a few. Over 200 chooks, two goats, a cow called Ruby, and ponies Skipper and Gurrabah Nancys McKenna (Chickanee for short) lived there too. According to Dix, Chickanee often walked through the local shopping centre and “was probably the only pony to have gone into the Commercial Bank of Gymea!” When Skipper died, a larger Shetland pony named Chilawee joined Chickanee at the Hazelhurst farm.<sup>4</sup>

More famous than Skipper however, was the Broadhurst’s beloved Alsatian Lass, who allegedly had psychic powers that manifested when she found lost property – rings, keys, petrol caps, you name it, Lass would find it. The spirit of Lass permeates Hazelhurst to this day and has been acknowledged through various artistic precursors to *The Ghost Show*.

For instance, in 2003 Hazelhurst commissioned Michael Callaghan of Redback Graphix to illustrate and design a children’s colouring book called *Lass the Psychic Dog*, which was packaged with

a box of crayons. In 2006, Christopher Bruce was commissioned to create a permanent installation called *Hall of Fame – The Trophy Room*, in which a portrait of Lass is sculpted from wire and hung in the café/community gallery area alongside wire portraits of various other famous dogs. Sydney artist Nana Ohnesorge was curated by Ron and George Adams into the Hazelhurst exhibition *Our Lucky Country (still different)* in 2007. After her residency at the cottage she produced a stunning painting inspired by Lass and the Broadhursts called *Secret Garden* (2007).

The group of artists selected for *The Ghost Show* were asked to respond in some way to this specific local haunting as a starting point for the development of an artwork that also reflects their concerns and methodologies as artists. Known for an accomplished video practice that encompasses documentary and portraiture, **Kate Murphy** made contact with Dix during her residency at the cottage. A dedicated dog trainer and palmist, Dix came to Australia from Canada in the mid-1960s. The initial six-week stay extended into permanent residence with Dix settling and forming a family in the Shire. A close bond developed with Ben and Hazel which resulted in Dix retiring to nurse the Broadhursts in their late years so they could die at Hazelhurst. In a way Murphy's video portrait of Dix and her beloved dog Jesse acts as a ballast for *The Ghost Show*, by giving voice to Dix's



Nana Ohnesorge  
*Secret Garden*, 2007  
 Acrylic, pigment pen and oil on canvas  
 213 x 167 cm  
 Private collection  
 Courtesy of the artist  
 Photo: Silversalt Photography

knowledge, experience and insight about Hazelhurst, psychic phenomena and dogs.

**Eugenia Raskopoulos** brought her own dogs to Hazelhurst during her residency, hoping they would sniff out the spiritual energy of the cottage. The video *Waiting for Lass* depicts standard poodles Astro and Stellar nosing around, mapping out 'dog choreography' of to and fro movement in the space. Raskopoulos 'ghosts' the image in the editing process, suggesting the dogs are just as trapped by the time warp of the dwelling as its 'real' ghosts are. Astro and Stellar's search for Lass becomes a claustrophobic, infinite waiting game – just like a dog chasing its tail.

The barking dogs heard in Raskopoulos's video are not to be confused with what is heard in the work of **Robyn Backen**. Several Bakelite telephones are configured on the floor of the gallery space in front of a mirrored surface, suggesting a distinction between what is real and reflected. The world of reflections is a psychic territory for Backen which amplifies the dramatic, almost circular and séance-like arrangement of the phones. One of the vintage phones is left off the hook with a kind of 'dog talk' emanating from the receiver – a human approximation of an unknowable dog language that simultaneously conjures the spirit of Lass and the links between the telepathic and telephonic. Ultimately for Backen, the medium is the

message as much as the medium brings the psychic message from the "other side" of the mirror.

After learning of speculation that dead children haunt Hazelhurst, **Daniel Kojta** brought a medium to the cottage who verified their existence. Based on this experience, Kojta's video installation explores the burden of a buried past on the present, which by implication implies the relationship absence shares with presence. In *Dancing naked, with chance in the corner of my eye*, a viewer approaches a discrete space. Just before entering they could catch glimpses of a child merging with static on a vintage television monitor. Once the viewer is inside, the image cuts entirely to static. The haunting returns once the space is divested of human presence, suggesting ghosts are "a visual taste of absence" that is only visible from the corner of the eye.

**Matt Glenn** has created a three-panel work *A Secret History (Self, Other, Passage)* that mixes supernatural and religious themes with Edmund Burke's idea of 'the sublime' as psychological state teetering on the precipice of this world and the next. In the first panel, the viewer is confronted with their 'wounded' reflection in a mirrored surface, distorted by the exit holes left by .38 calibre bullet holes. The reflected self is obscured in the black photograph of the second panel, ironically revealing the black photo as an object

marked by an excess of light, image and colour, yet muted in its reflection of the world. The neon Gothic arch of the third panel acts as a passage to what the artist describes as “the hinting of an infinite space beyond our understanding, defining our smallness yet inviting the exercising of faith”.

The passage to the sublime hereafter is channelled for **Wade Marynowsky** through sound. *Phantom of the rock eisteddfod, the tri tone* is a darkly humorous installation of plywood shards painted in glitter caked black gloss enamel and ominously scored to the sonic frequencies of the ‘tri tone’. Since the early 18th century, the Devil has been associated with this musical interval – an association happily exploited by metal bands such as Black Sabbath. The Devil is summoned in Marynowsky’s work, suggesting His sinister powers have left a trail of destruction in the wake of a satanic earthquake. Like coal before it turns to diamonds, the seductive look of Marynowsky’s installation co-opts the tri tone’s supernatural energy to evoke the kind of transformation only a fallen angel like Lucifer could make possible.

By organising an exhibition like *The Ghost Show*, Hazelhurst has made possible an opportunity to creatively address through contemporary art the significant and unconventional role the Broadhursts have played in the community.

Importantly, an exhibition like this connects with Hazelhurst’s ongoing programming agenda to address local stories of significance. Ultimately, the artists in *The Ghost Show* bring to the Shire artworks that tune into the strange frequencies of paranormal, spiritual, real or imagined hauntings that continue to fascinate and compel over time.

**Daniel Mudie Cunningham**  
Curator, *The Ghost Show*

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1 Ian Chandler, “House Where Things Go Bump in the Night”, *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, Wednesday, October 22, 1969, p.3

2 Neil Q. Bonner, “Spirits, ESP – it’s all stern stuff for Ben”, *Shire Pictorial*, Wednesday, June 12, 1974, p.3

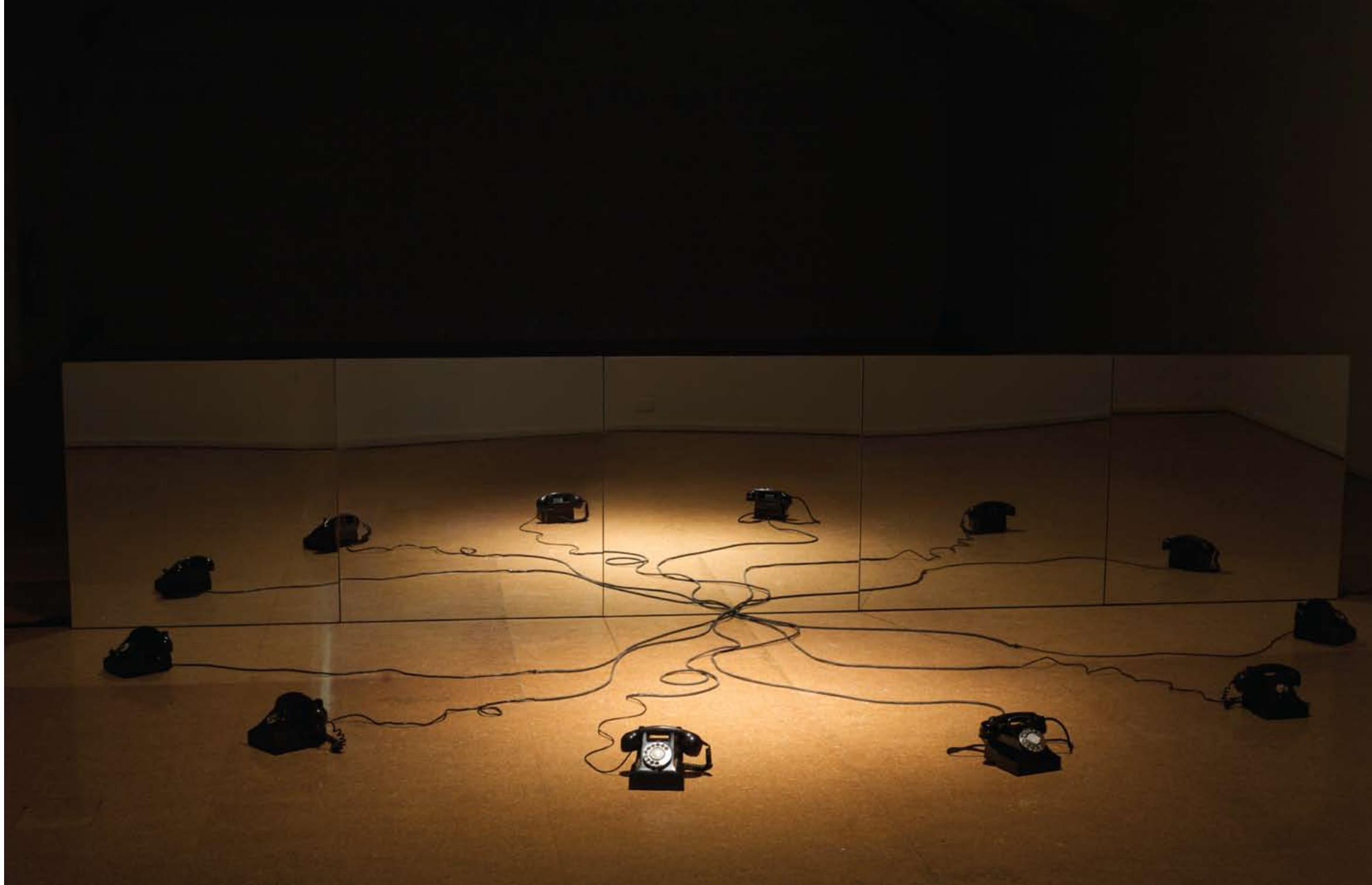
3 Dix Hawke, *Hazelhurst Cottage* [pamphlet], Sutherland Shire Council, p.15

4 *ibid.* pp.12-15

Robyn Backen  
Matt Glenn  
Daniel Kojta  
Wade Marynowsky  
Kate Murphy  
Eugenia Raskopoulos

## Robyn Backen

*End of the line*, 2010  
Bakelite phones, mirror, wood, sound  
500 x 100 x 50 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
Photograph: Ian Hobbs





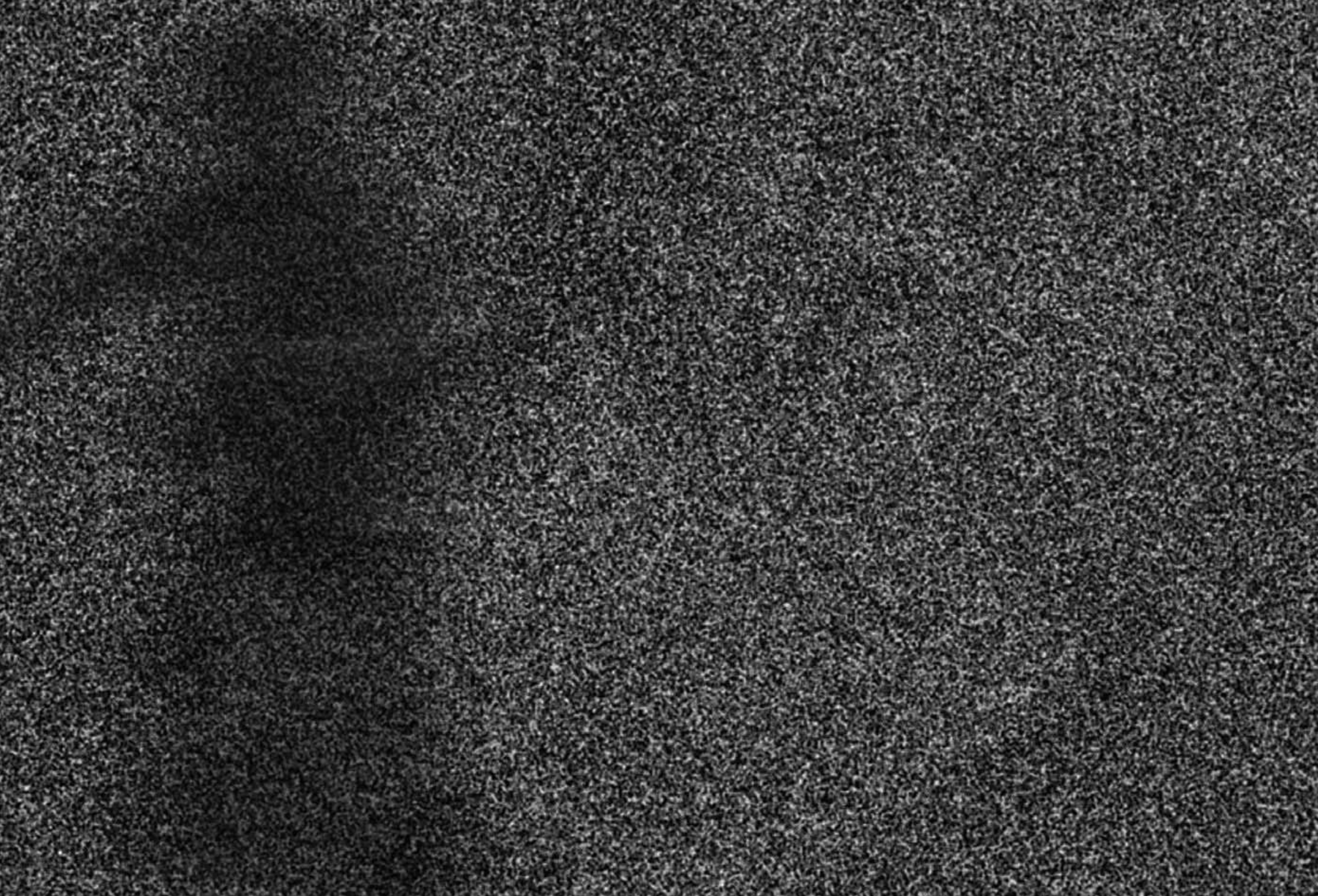
## Matt Glenn

*A Secret History (Self, Other, Passage)*, 2010  
Mirrored stainless steel, .38 calibre bullet holes,  
photographic paper and neon lighting  
Three panels 175 x 90 cm each  
Courtesy of the artist and  
James Dorahy Project Space, Sydney



Daniel Kojta

*Dancing naked, with chance in the corner of my eye*, 2010  
TV, data projector, speakers, Mac Mini, Perspex trestle,  
audio, sensors  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist



Wade Marynowsky

*Phantom of the rock eisteddfod, the tri tone*, 2010  
Plywood, high gloss enamel, glitter,  
modified light box, amplifier, speakers, sound  
6 x 400 x 400 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and  
John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne



Kate Murphy



*Dix*, 2010  
Single channel HD video with sound  
Courtesy of the artist and BREENSPACE, Sydney

## Eugenia Raskopoulos



*Waiting for Lass*, 2010  
HD video, 16:9, colour, stereo sound  
Online editing: Emma Watkins  
Courtesy of the artist and Arc One Gallery, Melbourne  
and WW Artists Projects, Sydney

## Artist Biographies

**Robyn Backen's** interdisciplinary practice is concerned with technological change, communication systems, and the intersections between art, science and philosophy. Backen's manipulates both, old and new technologies from a concern for both conceptual and material references. Backen has shown in many national and international exhibitions including Australian *Perspecta* (1991 and 1997), *Spirit and Place* at Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (1996), *Flow* at National Gallery Kuala Lumpur (2000), *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial*, Japan (2003), *Imagining Prometheus*, Milan, Italy (2003) and *Whispering Trees* at De Overkant, Den Haag Sculptur, Holland (2007). In 2009 Backen completed two public commissions: Delicate Balance at Ballast Point Park for the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and *Walls that Whisper*, a permanent installation for The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra. She recently exhibited *Connecting You* at Canberra Contemporary Artspace – funded by the Australia Council for the Arts.

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**Matt Glenn** graduated with an MVA from Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney, in 2006. He has held solo exhibitions within Australia and has participated in group shows in New York, Cologne, Paris and Berlin as well as undertaking residencies in Germany and the USA. Glenn has been a finalist in the Fauvette Louriero Memorial Travelling Artists Scholarship and was

awarded the Sir William Dobell Foundation Scholarship in 2005. His work is held in the collections of the City Of Sydney, The Australian Museum and the Arthur Boyd Collection (Bundanon) as well as private collections in Australia and the USA. In 2010 Glenn was awarded a New Work Emerging Grant from the Australia Council for the Arts. Works for the exhibition *The Ghost Show* were created with the assistance of this grant. Matt Glenn is represented by James Dorahy Project Space, Sydney.

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**Daniel Kojta** is a new media artist and curator based in the Blue Mountains in NSW. In the tradition of Panamarenko and Bill Viola, Kojta makes work that engages the senses, often through an interactive experience with installation, sculpture, performance or video. The fascination of the mystery saturates Kojta's practice. By confronting the creative process through explorations into the ambiguities of reality, illusion and perspective, Kojta's work assimilates the forces that comprise his understanding of perception and interaction. With a background in Arts Education, Kojta develops workshops that bring media techniques to remote communities Australia wide. In turn these unique environments provide content for the responsive works that are exhibited. Most recently Kojta has exhibited at Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery and Stills Gallery, Sydney.

**Wade Marynowsky** is a hybrid media artist working across robotic, immersive and interactive installation, performance, music and video. Since 1998 Marynowsky has exhibited and performed extensively. Highlights in 2010 include being highly commended in The Premier of Queensland's National New Media Art Award, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane and exhibiting in the International biennale of contemporary art, Mediations Biennale, Poznan, Poland. In 2009 Marynowsky exhibited *The Hosts: A Masquerade Of Improvising Automaton*s at Performance Space, Sydney and *Autonomous Improvisation v.1* in Primavera at Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. In 2008 he performed *The Discreet Charm Of The Bourgeoisie Robot* at The Institute of Contemporary Art Newtown (ICAN), Sydney and exhibited *The ministers are coming!*, at the Inter Cross Creative Centre, Sapporo, Japan. In 2007 Marynowsky travelled to Montréal, Canada to study robotic art at Hexagram (Institute for Research/Creation in Media Arts and Technologies). From this research Marynowsky has developed the recent body of work, which explores 'the uncanny automaton'. Wade Marynowsky is represented by John Buckley Gallery, Melbourne.

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**Kate Murphy** b.1977, Queanbeyan, New South Wales. Lives and works in Sydney. Has an MFA, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney (2005) and a BA (Visual) (Honours), Canberra School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra (1999). Solo exhibitions include *The note*, BREENSPACE (2010), *Cry me a future*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra (2009); *Rehearsal*, Virgin Mary Church, Dublin, Ireland (2007); *Placing the Camera*, Performance Space, Sydney (2005). Recent group exhibitions include *TWMA Contemporary* 2010, TarraWarra Museum of Art; *Vocal Thoughts*, Contemporary Art Centre South Australia (CACSA); *Tele-Vision Eyes*, Penrith Regional Art Gallery & The Lewers Bequest (2010); *Video Swell*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2009), *What I Think About When I Think About Dancing*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, (2009), *Rising Tide: Films and Video Works from the MCA Collection*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, USA (2009), *Song of Sirens*, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne (2009); *Contemporary Australia: Optimism*, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane (2008). Awards and residencies include New Work Grant (Established), Visual Arts/Craft Board, Australia Council for the Arts (2008/2010); Greene Street, New York Residency, Australia Council for the Arts (2007); 2004 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship, NSW Ministry for the Arts (2004). Kate Murphy is represented by BREENSPACE, Sydney.

**Eugenia Raskopoulos** is a visual artist based in Sydney. Her work explores ideas on identity, translation, language and the body. Translation in the broadest sense of the word is a thread that is continuous throughout her art practice. Raskopoulos has been the recipient of a number of grants from the Australia Council. In 2007 she received a Scholarship from Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 2004 she was awarded the Western Sydney Fellowship from Arts New South Wales. In 2003 she spent 3 months at the Art Gallery of New South Wales Studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. Her work is collected in most major state galleries including the National Gallery of Australia. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in exhibitions including *Nightcomers* at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Istanbul Biennial 2007; *Intrude: Art & Life 366 Project* by Zendai MoMA, Shanghai, China; and *Video Logic* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Eugenia Raskopoulos is represented by Arc One Gallery, Melbourne and WW Artists Projects, Sydney.

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## Curator Biography

**Dr Daniel Mudie Cunningham** is a curator, writer and artist based in Sydney. From June 2007 to June 2010 he was the Exhibition Coordinator & Curator at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery. He is a widely published arts writer and is currently working on a book that is supported by a New Work Established Grant from the Australia Council for the Arts. His most recent work as an artist, *Rhymes with Failure*, was exhibited at MOP Projects in 2010. He takes up a new position as Senior Curator at Artbank in 2011.

