



New media artist's non-threatening dark spaces

VISUAL ART

Lynette Wallworth: *Duality of Light*

Anne and Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide. Until April 24.

THE Adelaide Film Festival has presented a visual arts program called Art and the Moving Image, citing the "fast-evolving ways that the art world and the moving image are coalescing, connecting and colliding".

Significantly, the program includes for the first time a commission from new media artist Lynette Wallworth, *Duality of Light*.

Recently returned from presenting her work at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival in the US, Sydney-based Wallworth has exhibited widely here and overseas, notably at the New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna, the Festival International d'Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence in France and the Mostly Mozart Festival at New York's Lincoln Centre. She has also undertaken residencies in Iran, Italy, the US and Britain.

Wallworth's projects, which merge sophisticated technology with simple human gestures, share with those of Bill Viola an intensity of emotion and a preoccupation with themes of grief, love, endurance and hope. There are, however, significant points of difference. Unlike Viola, Wallworth prefers the "revelation of a state of being" to the enactment of it and does not use actors.

Her projects are predominantly, though not

exclusively, interactive and require the viewer's participation.

This first substantial Australian survey of her work, in which the contemplative *Beautiful Sunset* (2006) or *Damavand Mountain* (2006) are not overshadowed by the interactive, moving-image works, is remarkable for its subtlety.

Simple yet haunting, *Invisible by Night* (2004) features a life-sized figure of a woman, obscured by a veil of condensation. When the heat-sensitive screen is touched by the viewer, the woman wipes clear a small window that reveals her sad eyes, before turning away to resume her pacing.

It is the first part of a compelling interactive trilogy expressing a journey from loss to hope that culminates in the immersive installation *Duality of Light* (2009), inspired by the Preah Khan temple at Kompong Svay in Cambodia. A single viewer at a time enters a long, dark corridor, in which the sole light source is the dim glow of a distant screen. Movement through the space triggers the sound of trickling water.

To reveal more would spoil the experience; suffice to say that it's uncanny.

Wallworth is drawn to the evocative potential of non-threatening dark spaces.

Within the blackness of a darkened room, viewers use the medium of a glass bowl to capture vivid and strange images of marine life and the solar system that emanate in dazzling streams from five projectors in the ceiling. Having worked for years with marine biologists and astronomers, Wallworth's intention in *Hold: Vessel 1 & 2* (2001-07) is to induce in the spectator a sense of not knowing: a state of humility that generates not only wonder but respect for the complexity of the natural world, the fate of which is literally in our hands. *Hold* is a project that Wallworth regards as ongoing and it has acquired new urgency with the threat of climate change.

For Wallworth, an important aspect of the work is the sense of temporary community in the gallery space: the imagery in the bowl is observed communally as the bowl is offered to other spectators. It is this kind of subtext in Wallworth's projects that invariably rewards close scrutiny.

Wendy Walker

Lynette Wallworth will be in discussion with Ross Gibson at the Double Helix symposium tomorrow.



Immersive: Wallworth's *Duality of Light*