

# EXPERIMENTA : MESH 17

New Media Art in Australia and Asia

contact

intro

profiles

keynote

## PROFILE: SHAUN GLADWELL

: : Penny Craswell

: : printable version

Shaun Gladwell has recently become one of Australia's fastest rising young art stars. Famous for his video works which often feature him skateboarding as well as documenting a range of street sub-culture arts such as breakdancing and BMX bike riding, he is not confined to one medium, also creating paintings and object/sculptures.

Shaun Gladwell grew up in Sydney's western suburbs and began to experiment with video after his ambitions to become a professional skateboarder were ruined by injury. Gladwell went to Sydney College of the Arts and then completed postgraduate research at the College of Fine Arts (COFA) at the University of New South Wales. In 2001 he won a Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship to study at Goldsmith's College in London and completed a prestigious residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. A founding member of Imperial Slacks artists collective in 2000, he exhibited more and more widely and has had recent exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and at Art in General in New York.

However, Gladwell is no ordinary video-wielding skateboarder and his artworks are not the fast and choppy videos you normally see in this genre. From the very beginning of his experiments with video, taking shots of his brothers jumping over paintings on their bikes, Gladwell wanted to capture something different.

In the video work *Storm Sequence*, Gladwell skateboards freestyle on a flat space of concrete above the crashing waves at Bondi. Shot slightly from below and with the footage slowed down to 40%, his repetitive turns and tricks become mesmerising. In addition, the backdrop to the "stage" features the ominous black clouds of an approaching storm, and drops of rain on the camera's lens hasten the sense of urgency and danger. Gladwell has likened this scene to the brewing storm-cloud skylscapes of a Turner painting.

As well as including references to art history in this and other works, he also speaks eloquently about the philosophy behind his work, the concept of the "isolated figure moving and struggling through the panoramas of nature (urban and 'real') in a possible engagement with the sublime".

Other works such as *Tangara* (2003), which shows Gladwell hanging upside down from a train handrail (the camera is also upside down, so that he looks like he is hanging in space), also document Gladwell's athleticism, but each has a distinctive style, here invoking the weightlessness of zero gravity.

**Penny Craswell** is an art critic, book reviewer, communications manager for the National Association for the Visual Arts and arts book reviewer for the Sydney Morning Herald.



Shaun Gladwell  
Tangara  
2003  
digital video still  
edition of 4

Videography: Gotaro Uematsu & David Griggs  
Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



Shaun Gladwell  
Storm Sequence  
2000  
digital video  
edition of 4

Videography: Techa Noble  
Original Soundtrack: Kazumuchi Grime  
Courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney