

# The Ian Potter Museum of Art The University of Melbourne

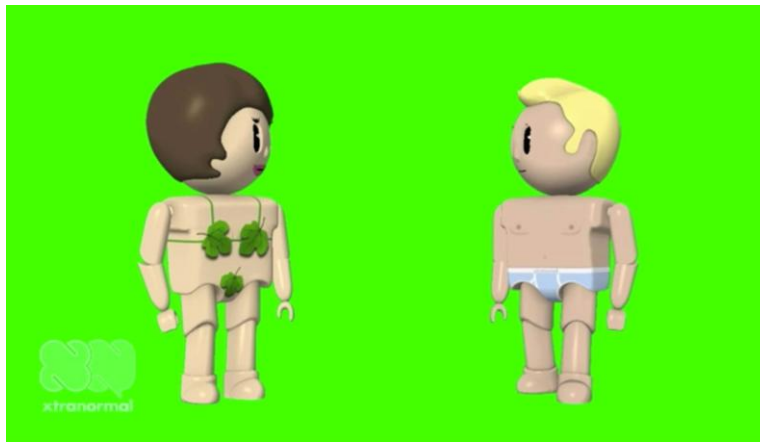


Media Release

2 April 2013

## Frances Stark: *My best thing*

20 March – 2 June 2013



The changing nature of dating, courtship, love, sex and artistic creativity is played out in a ‘compulsively watchable’ feature-length animation by acclaimed Los Angeles-based artist Frances Stark, which will screen continuously at the Ian Potter from Wednesday 20 March.

Stark’s visually chaste and verbally promiscuous video, *My best thing* (2011), is constructed from interactions in online video chat rooms. The storyline traces the development of sexual encounters which extend into conversations about film, literature, art, collaboration, language, philosophy and subjectivity.

*My best thing* was born out of the creative block Stark experienced while attempting to balance life as a mother, full-time teacher, writer and artist. Stark confesses to having sought refuge from anxiety in the online video and chat room Chatroulette, and discovering there, to her surprise, the inspiration for what has become one of her most celebrated works.

*My best thing*’s doll-like figures stand in for Stark and the men she met online, two of whom became her partners in intimate virtual relationships. Dialogue is lifted directly from transcripts of her encounters with them—frank discussions that shift from opinions on Federico Fellini, David Foster Wallace and Pablo Picasso, to philosophical ponderings and, frequently, to sex.

Stark and her men communicate in computer-generated voices. The green screen against which they interact is part of a striking, crude visual language, lifted from the do-it-yourself animation software Xtranormal. The gap between the naiveté of the characters’ semi-naked physical forms and the complexity of their interaction reinforces a tension between intimacy and anonymity.

*My best thing* conveys a remarkable range in tone and feeling, from poignant and insightful to laugh-out-loud funny.

The film was first exhibited at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and subsequently at galleries including MoMA PS1, New York, and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London and this is the Australian premiere.

**ENDS**

## Thursday Floor Talks @1pm

18 April: Professor Darren Tofts, Media and Communications, Swinburne University of Technology, Associate Editor of 21C magazine and cultural critic.

30 May: Professor Norie Neumark, Chair in Media Studies, Director, Centre for Creative Arts, La Trobe University, sound/media artist and theorist.

**The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Swanston Street, Parkville**

**RSVP essential:** 03 8344 0327 or [potter-events@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:potter-events@unimelb.edu.au)

## About the artist:

Born in California in 1967, writer and artist Frances Stark has held solo exhibitions at the Van Abbemuseum, the Netherlands; the Hammer Museum, UCLA; the Banff Centre, Canada; CRG Gallery, New York; Kunstverein Munich; Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne; greengrassi, London; and Marc Foxx, Los Angeles. Her work has been presented at the 54th Venice Biennale, the 2008 Whitney Biennial and in group exhibitions at museums and galleries including Gagosian Gallery, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the CCAC Institute, San Francisco; and the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Stark is an assistant professor of painting and drawing at the University of Southern California.

**View documentary:** <http://vimeo.com/38244867>

A multidisciplinary artist, Stark takes as her subject matter aspects of her personal life including her gender identity, her experience of making art and the public and critical reception of her work.

Through these interlocutions—some virtual, some actual—Stark has expanded her career-long cross-media exploration of the pressures and pleasures of life as an artist, one in which the confessional mode serves as a conduit to wry insights into the workings of the art world.

### Image caption:

Frances Stark

*My best thing*, 2011

single-channel SD video

colour, sound

duration: 99 minutes

© Courtesy the artist, Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles; greengrassi, London; Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne; and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York

### Contact:

Kara Cutajar, MediaLink Productions. **T:** 03 9663 3222 **M:** 0406 173 993

[kara@medialinkproductions.com](mailto:kara@medialinkproductions.com)

Katrina Raymond, MediaLink Productions. **T:** 03 9663 3222 **M:** 0417 303158

[katrina@medialinkproductions.com](mailto:katrina@medialinkproductions.com)

**Images available upon request**

**The Ian Potter Museum of Art**, the University of Melbourne, Swanston Street (betwn Elgin & Faraday sts), Parkville, **T:** 03 8344 5148 **W:** [www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au)

**Hours:** Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm: Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5pm