

List of Works:

Chris, 1997

video monitor, headphones, aluminium foil, neon sign.

Stevie, 1997

video monitor, headphones, plastic, medium density fibre board, neon sign.

Untitled, 1997

video monitor, headphones, background paper, light stands, medium density fibre board.

David Rosetzky

July 9 - July 20 1997

David Rosetzky would like to thank: Chris White, Julian Savage, John Meade, Sarah Tutton, Steven & Brown Anchor, Susie Rosetzky & Route 66, Chris Gill, D.J. Huppatz, Lyndal Walker, Brett Carroll, John Spiteri, Benjamin Brady and Luke, Gerard, Jason, Byron and James.

Portraits

Portraiture in 17th century Europe was founded on the principle of verisimilitude, that is, the painter's aim was to create the closest possible likeness to the sitter. Compared to previous centuries, there was an increased preoccupation with expressing the "true essence" of the individual. Rather than archetypal religious or classical subjects from Greek and Roman mythology, portraits began to focus on the psychology of contemporary individuals. This "new realism" accompanied key discursive movements: the swing away from religion in favour of secular knowledge and the rise in rational sciences. God was slowly dying and the individual was conceived.

European portraiture set about freezing the immediate, concrete and sensuous aspects of everyday reality into ever-smaller analyses and categorisations. Constructing a "realist space", the audience became participants in the spatial-psychological field created by the portrait in order to engage with the personality of the sitter. With its emphasis on the material world, portraits included props that indicate something about the sitter or "true essence". With its emphasis on the psychic world, portraitists sought to expose the individual sitter's soul.

As contemporary portraits, David Rosetzky's tableaux reveal little of the psychic depth or the "individual soul" of their subjects. They have a generic feel that suggest manufactured identities, contrived personas, artificial surfaces appropriated from lifestyle magazine culture or trendy low-budget movies. They retain no nostalgia for any original individual but revel in fragments of identity that contain both pop culture clichés and yet remain personal and singular.

The scene is inner-city Melbourne, 1997, but it could just as well be inner-city New York or London. Shot on amateur video, these portraits are of familiar self-consciously retro characters from almost any city in the Western world. Rosetzky presents a series of "performance personas" rather than "individuals" at a time when everyday reality has become a series of performances. The "performative" self implies an acceptance of multiple selves rather than one true or natural individual. When the fashion and advertising industries take on the strategies of conceptual/minimal art to sell pre-packaged "lifestyles", "identities" and "individuals", names are advertised in neon and bodies are faceless.

Installations

In the 1960's, a group of American installation artists sought to critique the depersonalising, alienating aspects of mass consumer society. Familiar environments of contemporary life were recreated as mini stage sets: George Segal's melancholy and isolated plaster figures at work, Edward Kienholz's bleak political tableaux of faceless figures, Duane Hanson's fibreglass portraits of clichéd subjects detached from everyday American life. All created portraits of depersonalised or archetypal individuals as an intentional critique of mass consumer society, all with more than a touch of nostalgia for the contemporary loss of the spiritual or soul.

Rosetzky's installations offer a different perspective on consumer society. While he portrays archetypal characters, they aren't depersonalised but real-life people, his friends and peers. In his installations, the mass public sphere and private worlds dissolve as everyone is multi-souled rather than part of a soul-less mass culture. In the 90's, fashion, advertising and superstardom are constantly drifting into everyday life to shape the homogenised "cool". While the mass media are quick to prey on and exploit fantasies, Rosetzky's characters are taking control of the codes and languages that mould culture and are participating in creativity and entertainment on a personal or private level rather than a mass culture level.

Rather than the bleak cynicism of many 60's installation/conceptual artists, Rosetzky invites his audience to participate in the intimate personal sphere created in his tableaux. Artforms extend into one another, revealing the performative aspect that occurs between them. His tableaux operate not as an essence but an event. Rather than a voyeuristic experience, the audience are implicated in the scenarios. As both a domestic and a public medium, video shapes and orders reality and records the everyday surfaces of life where everyone can be a superstar. Rosetzky has created miniature operas distilled from the dynamics of the contemporary world around him.

D.J. Huppatz