

**POST OFFICE GALLERY**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS**

**FEDERATION UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA**

**SOUND RECORDING TRANSCRIPT**

**EXHIBITION:** Guirguis New Art Prize (GNAP) 2019

**ARTIST:** Laresa Kosloff (winner GNAP19)

**RECORDING DATE:** 13 April 2019

**INTERVIEWER/EDITOR:** Shelley Hinton, Curator, Post Office Gallery

**TRANSCRIPTION**: Lars Stenberg, Gallery Assistant, Post Office Gallery

**WORD COUNT**: 1189

My name is Laresa Kosloff. I work mainly in video, but I also do performance works, Super 8 films and sometimes sculptural installation work.

The work here in the Guirguis New Art Prize is a video artwork and the video has been made entirely out of corporate stock footage purchased online. Stock footage really interests me because it has been produced without a particular purpose in mind. Freelance film-makers and photographers basically film things that they think the market will want and this is usually corporate images of success or diverse happy workplaces: the sort of thing a corporation might use for a cheap advertisement. The representations within this footage are really stylised and stereotypical, romantic and idealistic. They become part of the façade used by corporations to promote images of success in their businesses. So, it’s really like an idealised representation of globalised capitalism, but it is really completely empty material too because obviously the business people acting in this footage aren’t really business people, they’re actors who live quite different kinds of lives.

So I decided to make a work using this footage. The footage has a lot of constraints: it’s usually silent; it can be anything from four seconds long to 20 seconds long. I decided to purchase this footage online and to try and create a story – to utilise this footage for my own means – and what I did was I created a story about a man who is secretly trying to write a novel during work hours, and he imagines his co-workers as characters in his novel, and he’s in complete denial that, in fact, trying to write a novel at work is unethical and not what he’s supposed to be doing. Everyone else is inconvenient to him. So there’s multiple levels of irony within this film. For example, the man becomes inspired to write his novel when he attends a training seminar where he’s told to reach his potential but, instead of applying that to his own work within the corporate workspace, he thinks “yes, I really need to write this novel”. He’s sort of interpreting everything differently and the session has the opposite effect by inspiring him in the wrong way.

So I looked at this footage, and decided to try and create and story, and then I hired a professional voice actor to narrate it, and that’s the thing that brings all the story together. Professional voice actors have a really fantastic authority in their voice and so there’s a man who reads the story who has a really deep voice and that frames the story.

The title of this work is *La Perruque. La perruque* is a French term. It translates as “wearing the wig” and it’s the term French people use when someone in the workplace is secretly doing their own work. This is something we all do, such as writing an email, texting our friends, that kind of thing and I’m really interested in this concept because it’s a way for people to reclaim their own agency within a powerful organisation. It’s this little way that we get something for ourselves. So the man in this film is doing this to an extreme level where he’s actually disregarding everything else he should be doing and he’s typing out his novel at work.

I’ve tried to create various levels of irony in this work and there is a consistent theme around artifice, the ethics of doing the wrong thing at work, perception, creativity, psychological projection and fantasy. I also tried to make something that’s broadly accessible so I’m interested in maybe a 10-year-old coming in could enjoy the story or maybe a critic could unpack things within this as well on a deeper level. I think humour is the way I achieve this and I’m really interested in pointing out the humour and tension that come out of, I suppose, our own agency and our desires, and our limitations of our own individual agency and free will. There’s this interesting tension that we constantly live with around that and having to navigate that in relation to societal expectations, cultural values, and personal limitations is kind of like an on-going struggle. So this artwork is also exploring some of those themes.

In terms of putting the work together, I purchased clips where there were lots of similar characters. Often with stock footage there’s only one shot of the person, but this particular grouping of footage had lots of variation, so really the film maker was putting their actors in one spot or scene and then swapping them all around so one minute the lady is the boss and the next minute the man is the boss. Trying to get the most out of their day of filming as they could. And this suited my purposes because it meant that I could extend the narrative, so I chose this footage because there were multiple clips. Then I printed out still images from the footage and really meticulously logged how long they were, what was the person doing, facial expressions, when did they turn to the camera so I had an inventory that I could work with and then I laid them all out on the table and started to write over the top of them what could happen. You know, what could this character be thinking, or what could someone else be thinking about this character while they were typing or looking at the camera, that kind of thing.

So, first of all there was the problem of resolving the narrative and writing it; and then the second issue once that had been recorded as an audio file was matching it to the footage. And it’s a really obsessive edit where I’m trying to get the most I can out of the footage. So, for example there’s a little section where one of the characters appears devastated and he puts his hands to his face as though something’s gone really wrong and then I wrote into the story that at that moment he discovers he has no money left in the bank and he’s been ripped off. Or if one of the characters looks strangely at the camera then I’ve created a narrative that that person is really suspicious and perhaps deceptive and that kind of thing. So it was a matter of sometimes slightly slowing the footage down, reversing the footage a little bit to really maximise what was possible.

The work was first presented for Sutton Gallery at Spring 1883 and I presented it on a really large monitor on a corporate stand and coming into the Art Gallery of Ballarat, this is the first time I’ve actually seen it installed really large. It’s just fantastic, for me, with really great sound. So it’s been really terrific, having watched it endlessly on my own computer, to see it become a big physical thing in the gallery has been really rewarding for me. So it’s lovely to see this work go outside computer world, and from being something that was purchased online now become a physical experience within a gallery.