

ROOM FLOOR

Great Scott! it's interactive video!

A lot happens between Sydney Biennales. In fact numerous technologies on display in the 1990 Biennale did not exist two years ago. The interactive video disc installation is one of them.

While the title is a mouthful the system is relatively simple. It is the marriage of the computer and the video image – with a touch sensitive screen that allows the creation of storylines and discovery of information at the touch of a finger.

Originally developed four to five years ago as an educational resource, the system has been used creatively by video artists in the last two years in more than twenty projects worldwide.

Jill Scott is in the process of creating Australia's first interactive video disc installation that is entirely art based and art structured. She hopes to have the piece, *Paradise Tossed*, ready for exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum by the end of the year.

For the current Sydney Biennale she is presenting a segment of the first installation entitled *Machinedreams*. It is an experiment to gauge audience reaction and does not use a touch screen – it is live video.

You walk into a room and are confronted by four mechanical objects on stands: a sewing machine from 1900, a typewriter from the '30s, a mixmaster from the '60s and a commander telephone from the '90s. On the wall are four images showing women

using these machines of these respective times. As you move around to inspect this curious assemblage, you are confronted by the whirl of a mixmaster, the clatter of a typewriter and a barrage of musical associations, designed by Andrew Quinn.

You tend to think that the objects are electronically charged, and may not even notice that you are being monitored by video cameras. The trick is that the video cameras have organised the room into four invisible zones, each with two musical and two mechanical sounds. The camera registers your torso in one of the zones and sends a message – a grid plan of the space, to a sampler which plays a note. And if you move about, you can create music. There are no video cassettes.

The piece uses the 3DIS Music System devised in Melbourne by software designer Simon Veech of Perceptive Systems. Ironically enough, he now designs smart security systems.

Machinedreams is a conceptual piece. "When talking to the women in my family about using these machines, they said that once you get used to them, you just dream you are somewhere else.

"It is a history of women in technology and of women's approach to machines," says Scott. "It is my history because my grandmother grew up around a sewing machine, my mother earned her living on a typewriter during the war, my sister was

extremely involved in cooking and nurturing her family in the '60s and I see myself as a networker and a communicator in the '90s.

"My work is about universal extensions of my personal life – and fantasy," says Scott. "The metaphors that come from the subconscious are important. I'm an epic dreamer – when I dream there's a cast of thousands and they're really visual."

She now works with a 386 computer and software programs she acquired through a grant from the Video Arts and Crafts Board of the Australia Council, and is at the script development stage of *Paradise Tossed* with funding from the Australian Film Commission, funding she hopes is an acknowledgement that the system and its associated technologies have a big future.

In its fully developed form, *Paradise Tossed* will intertextualise animated segments – twenty horizontal narratives and thirty-one vertical associations, plus archival material and stills in a mosaic fashion.

International exhibitors are keen about Scott's work, particularly in Europe and the US. She travels the world with her varied installations, doing research and meeting other artists.

Machinedreams and the work of seventy other artists can be seen on the 4th Floor of Bond Store 3, Windmill Street, The Rocks as part of the Biennale from April 10.

Helen Barlow