



# Place as embodied time, 2006

A NON-LINEAR MOVING IMAGE PUBLIC ARTWORK

WESTPAC PLACE, 279 KENT ST, SYDNEY

The Brief: An interpretation of the city block to be occupied by a new Westpac Corporate headquarters

Artist: Anne Kay

Site / Display:

- A transitional public space connecting King St Wharf to Wynyard Station
- 5m glass wall (part of a glazed lift well) under Westpac Place
- Interactive control system and paired mirror-throw projectors
- 600 video files, synchronised or randomly paired, total running time: 6 hrs

Audience: commuters, employees, building visitors

Content:

Conflicting histories of the site—natural, topological, archaeological & human:

- pre and post settlement European colonisation of the area, the reclamation of the land during plague cleansing operations in the early 1900's, and the experience of the waterside workers on 'The Hungry Mile'
- aspects of the design and construction of the building

Imagery:

- Video interviews with labourers, tradespeople, architects, the chief archaeologist, site engineers, the local Aboriginal Land Council Cultural Officer and the local Historian
- Video from the building construction process
- Video and stills from the archaeological dig on site and documentation of buildings present on the site pre-demolition (e.g., the Waterside Workers Federation building and CBD gallery)
- Images and video of flora and landscape, 're-enacting' the pre-settlement environment of the area
- Archival images—drawings, prints, paintings and photographs sourced from the City of Sydney Archives, the State Library of NSW and the National Library of Australia
- Images sourced from the architectural and interior design processes
- Excerpts from a Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit film: Bones of the Building shot at the Kent St Car Park (a building demolished for the construction of the new tower)

## Form:

A major structuring principle for the work is a mirroring within the frame of the videos of the movement of commuters past the work. Movement on a vertical axis mimics people passing up and down in elevators immediately behind the work. This axis suggests a present tense, and shows brief selections from the video interviews shot in 2005

The horizontal axis in the video frame reference the diachronic progression of time and emulates the passage of pedestrians back and forth in front of the work as they use the thoroughfare through the food hall. Here, archival and historical images have been animated and given a temporal duration by introducing side to side movement across the frame.

The interactive control system is programmed to play clips in random patterns, montaging different periods or activities in the history of the place. Selected images are programmed to play in sync across both screens to form a landscape image.

## Intention:

The irregular and ever changing montage of paired images are presented as a way of visualising the many, and at times conflicted histories present in any one place. The fast pace and 'random play' characteristics of the work have been designed to respond to a mobile, commuter audience that will view the work repeatedly over many years of contact. The unfolding and changing juxtaposition of imagery is intended to generate a cumulative experience of the place and it's invisible other lives.

During the making of the work it became clear that some of these histories and events were cyclical in nature, with the urban renewal of the 19th century, it's plague epidemics and industrial disputes having an uncanny resemblance to conditons present at the time of the work's completion in 2006.