

## MUMA Launches 50th Year with Powerful and Timely Exhibition Exploring Image Making in the Digital Age



### IMAGE ECONOMIES 8 February – 17 April 2025

**Naarm/Melbourne, Australia:** Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Australia's leading contemporary university art museum, is pleased to launch its 50th year with *Image Economies*, a powerful and timely exhibition featuring 17 acclaimed artists and collectives from across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Asia Pacific including significant works from the Monash University Collection. Running from 8 February to 17 April 2025, the exhibition will explore the role of evolving digital technologies in reshaping storytelling, identity and cultural practices, asking fundamental questions about agency and communication in a world mediated by machines.

To mark MUMA's 50th anniversary year, *Image Economies* will open with a free community party on Saturday 8 February from 2pm to 5pm at MUMA. Open to all, the festivities include a workshop with exhibiting artist **Sione Tuivailala Monū**, a live performance by exhibiting artist **Scotty So**, music by DJ **Lucreccia Quintanilla**, drinks by **T.I.N.A.**, food by **Flavours of Syria**, and a specially commissioned 50th birthday cake by a guest artist.

*"In an era where images circulate online and influence our lives—shaping elections, mobilising movements and defining social norms—Image Economies provides a timely and thought-provoking exploration of how the systems that generate, process and trade images shape contemporary reality. The exhibition highlights the essential role of artists in critiquing and navigating these impacts on everyday life,"* says **Dr Rebecca Coates, Director of MUMA.**

Curated by MUMA's **Stephanie Berlangieri, Melanie Oliver** and **Francis E. Parker**, the exhibition traces how artists have engaged with and appropriated digital technologies over time, from mid-twentieth-century explorations of reproducibility and authenticity to contemporary applications of AI and machine learning. Through painting, sculpture, photography and video, the exhibiting artists explore themes of materiality, identity, cultural knowledge and the social impact of image economies.

Themes of self-representation, identity and consumerism emerge in **Scotty So**'s newly-commissioned holographic performance in which he embodies American socialite and 'momager' Kris Jenner. The new work references Kris Jenner's own hologram by Jim Jordan, with So using AI to craft a script in which 'Kris' reflects on his art practice. So brings this persona to life through a lip-syncing drag performance, providing a witty, critical take on fame, influence and self-presentation in the age of Instagram and TikTok.

**Victoria Todorov**'s pop-culture collages featuring Cicciolina, Anna Nicole Smith and Toni Holt Kramer (leader of the Trumpettes)—custom-painted in a studio in China—playfully interrogate celebrity culture and the aesthetics of mass production. Todorov draws attention to the evolving image economy—where social media amplifies and transforms visuals from glossy magazine spreads to viral TikTok videos, celebrating the commercial sensibility of her subjects and the relentless proliferation of their images across contemporary media platforms.

In a deeply personal work, **Sione Tuivailala Monū**, an artist of the Tongan diaspora, curates a decade of their Instagram stories from 2015 to 2025, weaving together snapshots of daily life, family, friends and feasts across Tāmaki-Makaurau, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. These seemingly whimsical, ad-lib moments form a rich chronicle of intimacy shared publicly, offering a nuanced reflection on the lived experiences of Tongan diaspora. Through their films, Monū captures the complexity of these conditions—private, lived and resistant to direct translation—while celebrating the beauty of connection and everyday life.

The exhibition also foregrounds critical themes concerning the accessibility of cultural knowledge, data sovereignty and repatriation. Goenpul artist **Ashley Perry** confronts these issues through a series of stone implement reconstructions, informed by data sourced from institutional museum archives. By reimagining these objects within the context of Indigenous experience and digital heritage, Perry challenges the dynamics of institutional collections, urging a deeper conversation about ownership, representation and the intersection of technology and tradition.

**Ana Iiti**, from Te Rarawa, Aotearoa New Zealand, explores linguistic ambiguities in *Howling Out at a Safe Distance*, 2020, processing historic Māori-language newspapers through Google Translate and uncovering the tensions and nuances in language and meaning. While Thai-New Zealand artist, **Sorawit Songsataya**'s photogrammetric renderings of ceramics from China, Japan and Thailand in *Unnamed Makers*, 2023, question the circulation of objects and the fragility of provenance in digital and analogue worlds.

The materiality of image-making and use of machines to process, filter and degrade images is explored by Australian conceptual artist **Ian Burn** in *Systematically Altered Photographs*, 1968, from the Monash University Collection. Created using a photocopier, the series methodically disintegrates generic promotional images of Australia's lifestyle, stripping colonised spaces of visual detail and shifting them from representation to near-meaninglessness to expose their clichéd nature.

New Zealand artist **Juliet Carpenter**'s 2023 video work *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed*, uses an algorithm to create fragmented, cyclical narratives in black-and-white film. Set in a *Schrebergarten* (allotment), the work follows a shrouded protagonist and is inspired by Samuel Beckett's play *Quad*. The algorithm modulates the film's frame rate, repeating the cycle four times and cutting both forwards and backwards through the timeline, evoking temporal anxiety and challenging traditional notions of time and representation.

A new commission from Naarm/Melbourne-based collective **Machine Listening** (**Sean Dockray, James Parker, Joel Stern**) reinterprets the groundbreaking Ego4D datasets, that are based on first-person machine vision. By shifting the perspective to that of the worker, their new work provides a compelling exploration of the images of labour captured through a machine's lens, immersing viewers in a personal, subjective portrayal of everyday work. The collective's work highlights the human experience behind data-driven processes, questioning the future role of workers in increasingly digitised environments and anticipating the rise of the metaverse.

As future technologies continue to evolve, *Image Economies* underscores the critical role of artists in interpreting and critiquing these transformations. The exhibition offers a timely reappraisal of the digital, networked world and its permeation into our offline lives.

**Ends**

## EXHIBITION DETAILS:

### Image Economies

**Dates:** 8 February – 17 April 2025

**Curators:** Stephanie Berlangieri, Melanie Oliver and Francis E. Parker

**Website:** <https://www.monash.edu/muma/home>

## EVENT DETAILS:

What: Image Economies Opening + MUMA 50th Celebration

When: Saturday, 8 February 2025 from 2 pm to 5 pm

Where: MUMA, Ground floor, Building F, Monash University, Caulfield Campus, 900 Dandenong Road, Caulfield East VIC 3145

### Address:

Ground Floor, Building F, Monash University, Caulfield Campus 900 Dandenong Road, Caulfield East VIC 3145

### Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Friday: 10am–5pm Saturday: 12–5pm,

Free Entry.

## About MUMA

Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA is one of Australia's most respected and influential contemporary art museums. MUMA has a dynamic artistic program of commissioning, exhibitions, and publishing, and is committed to connecting art, audiences and ideas.

MUMA presents major new exhibitions annually and the artistic program is recognised for its attention to new work by Australian and international artists and its focused curatorial research projects. MUMA's extensive touring program forms strong partnerships with significant Australian and international institutions to ensure wide audience access.

MUMA is also a leader in delivering artist-led education to early learners, school and tertiary students and educators and welcomes over 4,000 students to the museum annually. MUMA invites leading contemporary artists to work directly with diverse student groups to develop critically important skills of creative thinking, problem-solving, and visual and cultural literacy.

### Monash University Museum of Art

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Images: Scotty So, *Face swapping with the photo of Kris Jenner by Jim Jordan 2024* (detail), digital image. Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne. Victoria Todorov, *Untitled (Cicciolina) 2024* (detail). Courtesy of the artist.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners and Elders—past, present and emerging—of the lands on which Monash University operates. We acknowledge Aboriginal connection to material and creative practice on these lands for more than 60,000 years.