

David Rosetzky
How To Feel

acca
education

Biography

David Rosetzky's is one of Australia's leading video artists, creating skilfully crafted video portraits in which identity, as a play between individuality and community, is intimately observed. His video installations and associated photographic works take on the aesthetic of high-end advertising, juxtaposing its emphasis on idealised surface appearance, with personal experiences of being in the world.

Rosetzky has developed an increasingly sophisticated video repertoire, collaborating with well-known choreographer Lucy Guerin on a number of occasions. For ACCA, he has been commissioned to make a new series of video works that will be presented across a number of purpose built sets in gallery 1.

Born in 1970, David has an extensive exhibition history in Australia and internationally having been the founding member of the influential artist run space 1st Floor and one of the first local artists to embrace the filmic and aesthetic potential of video in a contemporary art context. He is best known for his single video and ambitious video installations as well as more recently sculptural, drawing and photographic work.

In 2009 his video portrait of Cate Blanchett was selected to be exhibited in The Third ICP Triennial of Photography and Video, International Centre for Photography, New York and Open Air: Portrait in the Landscape, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra. He has exhibited in museum exhibitions in Canada, Lithuania, Japan, Berlin, and Wellington and was awarded the Anne Landa Art Award from the AGNSW in 2005. He has been Artist in Resident at Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, and at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, NZ and is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.



How to Feel (2010)

curatorial rationale

How To Feel features Rosetzky working with professional actors, choreographer, dramaturg, cinematographer and sound designer. In what has become his preferred methodology, Rosetzky first conducted a series of interviews with the cast and colleagues to gather frank and relevant textual material. The interviews formed the basis for the script and dramatization with the development of choreography and integration of text with physical movement following, adding a distinctive documentary quality to the slightly abstract and imaginary aspect of the work.

A group of people of various ages (from 19 to 40) coming together in *How To Feel* for what appears, loosely, as a studio-based therapy/exercise workshop. Over the course of a single day, confidences are shared, personality traits discussed and reflected upon, and repressed emotions and vulnerabilities revealed.

While taking the confessional format endemic to today's reality TV and Facebook cultures, *How To Feel* subverts it somewhat: intimate revelations are performed across the group, with thoughts and feelings shared by the ensemble, thwarting accessibility to a 'true' individual self and questioning assumptions based on age, gender, sexual orientation and physical appearance. Attention is drawn to the degree that we are required to self regulate our feelings and emotional responses to others. Featured movement and dance sequences attempt to tap into an unmediated or inhibited self, reconnecting mind and body and opening up other ways of thinking and being.

Rosetzky's video reflects on shifts in social relations, between public and private life, on and away from the screen, in our highly individualized society in which self-determination and self-improvement are taken as a given. *How To Feel* provides an insightful portrait of a more relative, fractured and proliferating self, acutely affected by our environment and the people that surround us.

Image and identity

“A lot of my works explore the fracturing effects that global lifestyle culture can have on contemporary subjectivity and how inter-personal anxieties manifest as a result of a highly individualized and consumer culture. Identity is shown as a shifting conglomerate of stories and images that seldom, if ever form a complete picture.”

David Rosetzky

Rosetzky develops and then deconstructs screen characters and personas within specific and diverse environments, reflecting the contrasting and contradictory sites inhabited in our daily lives. He questions the assumption that identity relates to a singular, unified self, instead suggesting it to be relative and adaptable. Relationships, social and media conventions and the creation of the public moment (often mediated by the camera) influence our sense of self. As Rosetzky's characters provide personal confessions, the viewer experiences feelings of identification, comparison and judgement, self definition

In *Untouchable* (2003) three couples sit in separate rooms. Each speaker, in voiceovers and out loud, talks and thinks about their interaction with other people, confessing anxieties and revealing experiences that are preoccupying them. At first it seems as if they are referring to the other person in the room. Yet soon the viewer realises that these speeches are being swapped between speakers. The interchanging narratives, and the familiarity of the emotions and situations that the viewer experiences, imply that identity is fluid and constructed.



Untouchable (2003)

“The identity of the characters within the videos is not singular, and they differ from typical soap opera characters, as they never actually enter into a dialogue with each other. Rather they speak in monologues that are then echoed back to them by other characters, the video subjects say each other's lines in an attempt to avoid cultural stereotyping and to draw the viewers into doubt as to the origin of their stories. Identity is presented not as a cohesive whole, but as a collage of disparate elements that are interchangeable.”

David Rosetzky

Rosetzky also explores image. Contrasting perfect, stylized imagery with uneasy dialogue suggests that behaviour is invented, imitated and postured. In his photographic collage series *Without You* (2003-4) and *One in Five* (2008) Rosetzky layers photographs, with organic cut out shapes revealing different persons in the same portrait. The skin acts like a mask, while the layering reveals the ways that image is constructed and the many personas one can have. Rosetzky examines interiority and exteriority by simultaneously emphasising surface and what lies beneath.

[‘Without You’ responds to the way] “people are attempting to seek refuge in the things they think they can control - like their bodies or appearances - in a world that is increasingly out of control”

David Rosetzky

Communality versus individuality

In the age of globalisation Rosetzky investigates our contemporary drive to individualism and the simultaneous desire for communality, for self definition achieved through belonging. We desire intimacy and connection with others despite living in an increasingly individualised society.

One of Rosetzky's earliest video portraits *Justine* (2000) is a young woman's reflection on her sense of self in relation to others. "When I'm alone I feel odd. I feel kind of nothing," She says, "Which could be nice. But it's not. It's weird" As the video portrait progresses it becomes clear that her identity is defined through her sociability. Her sense of self becomes clear through her relationships. Yet she still holds part of herself in reserve, and Rosetzky's portrait depicts Justine caught between alienation and belonging.

In *Weekender* (2001) a group of friends are shown, away on holiday together, appearing relaxed, graceful and belonging together. The camaraderie of the group is destabilised by the inner questioning and turmoil that the accompanying dialogue reveals. The various voices reveal emotional frustration and banal narcissistic preoccupations.

Yet the feeling that our experience of self is affected by relationships with others permeates through Rosetzky's work. The self is shown as it appears through others, suggesting we identify ourselves through the eyes and language of others.

"I wanted to consider how others inform and almost become part of our selves - whether through memory or interpersonal relationships."

David Rosetzky



Weekender (2001)

The ideal and the real

"I'm interested in how people negotiate the space that exists between the ideal and the real in their everyday lives."
David Rosetzky

Rosetzky creates visuals reminiscent of advertising, fashion magazine glamour, film and television. Idealized scenes with picturesque clichés are depicted, familiar imagery from our contemporary lifestyle culture. He explores the relationship between reality and fantasy, combining highly stylised pop culture aesthetic with dialogue revealing the vulnerabilities, anxieties and dysfunctions of the characters in his work.

Nothing Like This (2007) shows a collection of scenes of a young group of friends on a weekend getaway. The group appears harmonious and relaxed in a series of vignettes of exquisite, tranquil scenes resembling those found in lifestyle magazines. However coupled with an audio track featuring inner dialogue of different members of the group, inner chaos, discomfort, alienation and insecurity is revealed. The uneasy feelings rupturing desirable appearances force the viewer to question the extent to which we buy into the notion of an ideal life and the performative roles we take on in attempts to achieve it.

"I want my work to refer to the type of imagery that is found in advertising and lifestyle magazines as it situates the work within the 'now' and talks about how popular media affects the way we live."
David Rosetzky



Nothing Like This (2007)

Curriculum links

VCE ART

Unit 1 - AREA OF STUDY 2: Art making and personal meaning

Outcome 2

Create a portrait in two contrasting art forms such as painting and video; how will you convey identity through these art forms? Document in written and visual form the development of the idea, focusing on a discussion of the materials, techniques and processes with attention to the use of dominant art elements and principles specific to that medium; Consider how has this improved your understanding of portraiture and the chosen art forms?

VCE STUDIO ARTS

Unit 2 Area of Study 2: Ideas and styles in artworks

Outcome 2

Analyse and discuss the ways in which Rosetzky has used highly stylized, lush advertising aesthetics in his video works and communicated ideas surrounding identity, subjectivity and communality. What art elements and principles has he used in his work? What is the overall mood of the work? How does the work compare and differ from other video portraits, such as Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1964-66) in relation to the time and culture it was produced in?

VCE MEDIA

Unit 1 Area of Study 1: Representation

Outcome 1

Write a short review of David Rosetzky's *How To Feel* (2011), discussing how he has represented the individual in relation to identity, image, communality, popular culture and advertising.

VCE PHILOSOPHY

Unit 1 Area of Study 1: Metaphysics- Self and Identity

Investigate theories around the 'self.' As a class, discuss questions such as What is the self? How can the identity of something be decided? What are the essential characteristics of people? Is gender essential to identity? Is it possible to have a fixed identity? Should a portrait express the 'true essence' of the sitter? Should the role of art be to explore the human condition?

VCE PSYCHOLOGY

Unit 1 Area of Study 3: Social attitudes

Outcome 3

Watch David Rosetzky: *How To Feel* and other earlier works. As a class, discuss the influence of groups on individual behaviour, how belonging informs our sense of self and what social factors influence self-esteem and identity.

VELS LEVEL 5

The Arts – Creating and making

Generate and develop ideas that explore particular concepts, techniques and issues when making art works. develop ideas that explore issues, for example: express ideas and images that convey a sense of personal identity and examine different ways in which artists convey identity.

Discuss the way David Rosetzky has investigated identity in his work. Brainstorm ideas about what makes up your sense of self and identity. Create a self portrait incorporating your ideas about your personal identity.

VELS LEVEL 6

The Arts – Creating and making

Communicate their interpretations by effectively combining and manipulating selected arts elements, principles and/or conventions to create the desired aesthetic qualities manipulate arts elements expressively, for example: appropriate the work of known artists and infuse the work with their own preferred imagery, style and symbols; appropriate known artists' conceptual applications and processes, and develop personal interpretations in artworks.

Select a fashion commercial on YouTube such as the Polo Ralph Lauren Fall 2008 Collection. Turn the sound off and work in a group, selecting a character each. Create a monologue for that character, focusing on the sorts of doubts, anxieties and banal preoccupations they are having. Return to the group and record an audio track of the monologues for the commercial. Present the commercial and audio track to the class and discuss the impact of the audio on the idealized imagery of the commercial.