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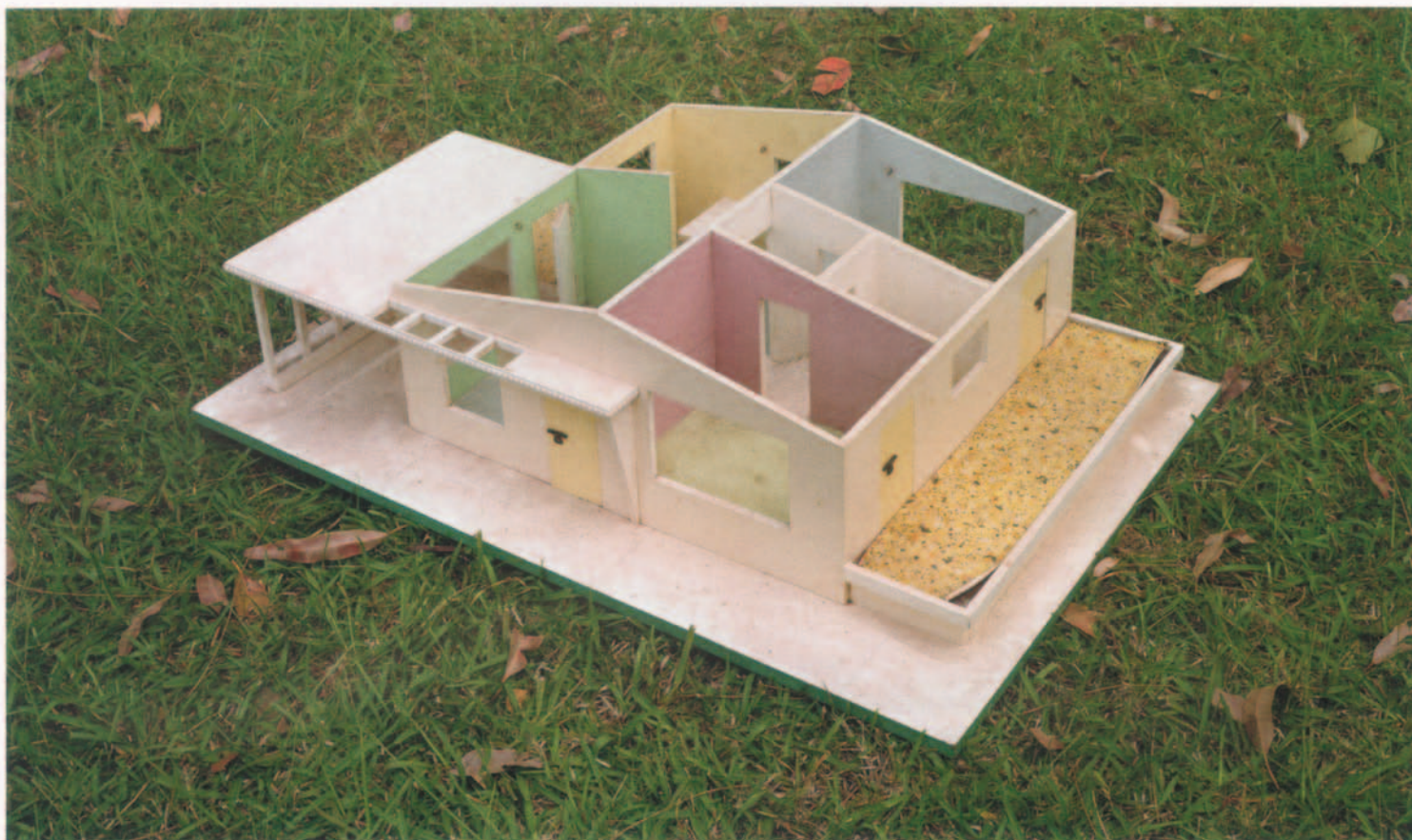
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Debra Phillips, *Doll's House I*, 2004. Courtesy: the artist and Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney

pieces had some resonance for this columnist. Derek Kreckler's *White Goods* (2003–4), large-scale allegorical photographs of battered fridges in absurd Australian scenarios; Catherine Richards's subtle interactive meditation on electricity, the human body and

our technological environment *I was scared to death/I could have died of joy* (2000), and Joan Grounds and Sherre DeLys's seven metre-tall salute to the Tower of Babel *Gargalesis* (2004), with its witty critique of the local art world.

The Biennale invariably

elicits mixed responses from its wide range of visitors. It has become a problematic international art event for a number of curatorial, cultural and intellectual reasons – not least, because we still suffer from a lingering inferiority complex and don't adequately believe in our own artists. There need to be more Australian artists exhibiting in international art events like the Sydney Biennale. Consequently, since the 1980s the Biennale has been, so to speak, a mixed bag. (Artspace's recent anthology of critiques of the Biennale are worth checking out on this matter.)

The 51st Sydney Film Festival also took place during the Biennale and anyone interested in art cinema was blessed with a dazzling retrospective of Michelangelo Antonioni's contemporary and haunting cinema. For art lovers this was a splendid visual treat, as one could trace the influence certain artists have had on his modernist cinema of alienation, architecture and landscape – for instance De Chirico, TS Eliot and Morandi. It is rare to see Antonioni's captivating documentary shorts, travelogues and video clips of 1943–1950 and 1983–1997, which were screened at the Art Gallery of New South

Wales' Domain Theatre.

In June, at the Boutwell Draper Gallery, the major video artist Peter Callas showed a series of superbly beautiful digital photographs, entitled *Circle of Confusion* (2004), alongside photographer Debra Phillips's new show 'One thing leads to another'.

From Phillips's absorbing images of connectivity between objects, people and locales a subtle and imaginative narrative emerges that suggests the photographer's intricate negotiation of her own urban environment and everyday life. In short, Phillips's photographs of the Australian outback, abandoned buildings (à la Edward Hopper), a city skyline, a studio portrait, rubbish on a pavement, street signs and a model house on a lawn, and so on, represent the intricate dialogue between personal and public politics of culture and place with a sharp-eyed and informative view. In another critical sense, Phillips's images form an oblique geometry of complex links between daily events, objects, places and people.

Callas's highly crafted and imaginative digital images of the fourteenth century fresco *Trionfo della Morte* (Triumph of Death),

in the Camposanto Monumentale in Pisa, constitute a brilliant and engaging reworking as necessary preparation for his forthcoming animated interpretation of the fresco. His unique style of multi-layered colour and tone come to the fore of his deft images, time and again; for instance *Speculatore No 1* (2004) forms an extraordinary study of the human face in extreme close-up from vivid red, blue and purple, which recalls the barely visible faces in the underground fresco in Federico Fellini's memorable film essay *Roma* (1972).

## TAIPEI

EUGENE TAN

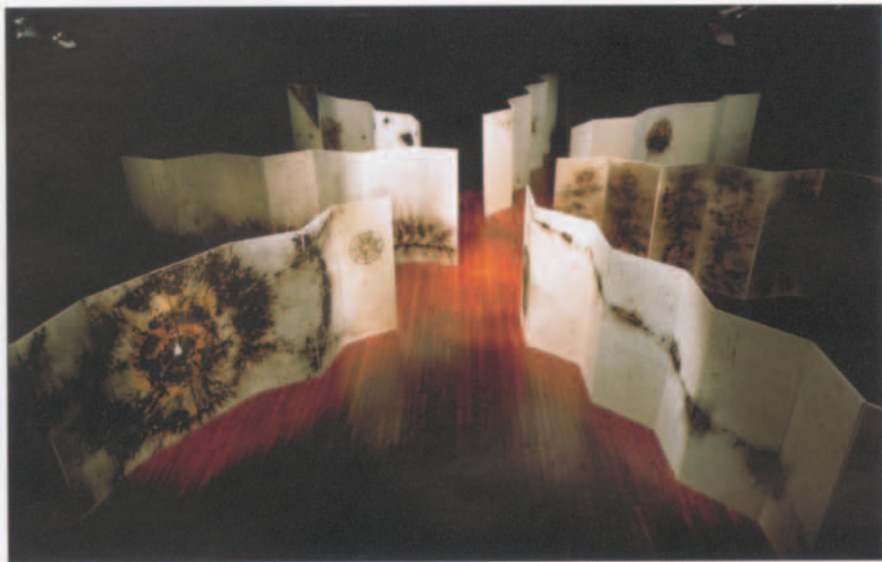
While not as intriguing and theatrical as the events surrounding the presidential election earlier in the year, significant developments have also been occurring on the Taiwanese contemporary art scene. The long awaited announcement of the curators for this year's installation of the Taipei Biennial, which opens in October, was finally made at the end of May. In keeping with the practice of appointing two curators, one non-Taiwanese and one Taiwanese, the selection committee has gone for Barbara



Jessie Durham, *Self Life with Stone and Car*, 2004. Courtesy: Biennale of Sydney. Photo: Jenni Carter



Cai Guo-Qiang, left: *The Net*, 2002. Courtesy: the artist and Shanghai Art Museum. Right: *Primeval Forest*, 1991. Courtesy: the artist



Vanderlinden and Amy Huei-Hua Cheng respectively. No stranger to biennials, Brussels-based Vanderlinden was co-curator of the 1998 Manifesta 2 in Luxembourg, as well as the 25th Sao Paulo Biennial in 2001. Cheng, meanwhile, is a Vancouver-based freelance critic and curator. Her specialist knowledge of Taiwanese art coupled with the internationalist perspective of Vanderlinden should provide for an exhibition that examines the state of international contemporary art practice and its relationship to the Taiwanese context.

Away from Taipei, on the politically sensitive Kinmen island, meanwhile, celebrated Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang has been appointed curator for a project scheduled to open in early September at the Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art. Due to its close proximity to mainland China (they are within sight of one another), Kinmen island was the stage for tense stand-offs between the Chinese and Taiwanese military during the Cold War years (and is where tens of thousands of Chinese and Taiwanese soldiers lost their lives), hence the existence of the numerous military installations on the island. However, with the decline of Kinmen as a strategic military location, authorities are now attempting to transform it into a centre for international cultural programmes and exchanges. The 'museum' will consist of a series of 18 military bunkers or other military installations, with nine Chinese and nine Taiwanese artists each allocated individual spaces. On the exhibition front in Taipei, MOCA Taipei has been exploring

new media art through the exhibition 'Digital Sublime – New Masters of Universe', curated by Korean Wonil Rhee. The Fubon Art Foundation, meanwhile, continues its showcasing of emerging Taiwanese artists through its series of 'Art Buffet' exhibitions, which consist of site-specific installations in public places.

MOCA Taipei, *Fiction Love – Ultra New Vision in Contemporary Art*, Until 31 October, [www.mocatapei.org.tw](http://www.mocatapei.org.tw). An international exhibition exploring the interface between contemporary art, comics and animation. It will include works by Japan's Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara, as well as Taiwan's Hung Tung-Lu.

Taipei Fine Art Museum *The Transitional Eighties – Taiwan's Art Breaks New Ground*, Until 5 September, [www.tfam.gov.tw](http://www.tfam.gov.tw). This latest instalment in the Taipei Fine Art Museum's series of exhibitions examining the history of Taiwanese art takes place in the context of a rapidly increasingly affluent Taiwanese society, as

well as the lifting of martial law in 1987.

Kincheng Town, Kinmen County: Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art, 11 September – 10 January 2005, [www.caiguo-qiang.com/bmoca](http://www.caiguo-qiang.com/bmoca). A series of 18 solo exhibitions by nine Chinese and nine Taiwanese artists in a project curated by Cai Guo-Qiang.



Kinmen Forest, 2004. Courtesy: Bunker Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei