

EUGENIA LIM

YELLOW PERIL

5 – 29 October 2016

**ARTEREAL GALLERY
747 DARLING ST
ROZELLE NSW 2039
WWW.ARTEREAL.COM.AU**



New Australians series. Installation shot courtesy of Bus Projects and Zan Wimberley.

In the bold cinematic masterpiece that is *Playtime* (1967), director Jacques Tati takes some of the most familiar shared spaces of French post-war society, and renders them strange. A visit to Paris by a group of provincial American tourists forms the film's slim narrative pretext—the Americans arrive in a convoluted cityscape whose supposed modern conveniences conspire to trip, bewilder and ensnare these hapless interlopers. *Playtime*'s Paris is a literal House of Mirrors, a spatially interchangeable landscape that connects an airport terminal with an office lobby, a hotel, a home expo, an apartment complex, and a flashy new restaurant, all in one dizzying continuum. A running joke in the film is that the tourists never actually arrive in the French capital, but rather they spend their visit amiably negotiating the hypermodern simulacra of Paris. The 'real' or authentic city, if such a thing can ever be experienced, is sublimated by the signs and representations of Paris (an effect that was partially achieved through Tati's construction of a 15,000 square-metre film-set replica on the outskirts of Paris).

With its emphasis on simulation, globalisation and the touristic gaze, *Playtime* makes an instructive introduction to artist Eugenia Lim's latest video work *Yellow Peril* (2015), which was filmed at the historical theme park of Sovereign Hill, a 'living history' museum that depicts life on the Ballarat goldfields in the 1850's. *Yellow Peril* borrows from many of *Playtime*'s aesthetic tropes in order to explore the nuances of Australian nationalism, and to question Australia's capacity to facilitate and resist the powers of globalisation. Specifically, the work navigates the fraught historical, political, economic and social dynamic between Australia and China, reminding us that whether it is a fear of immigrants, a fascination with the exotic or something in between, Australia has had a long and deeply ambivalent relationship to Chinese settlement.

Yellow Peril opens with a graceful pan across Sovereign Hill's dusty and deserted landscape. The camera settles on a bright and shiny vista lined with faux 1850's shopfronts, their hand-painted signs reading 'New York Bakery', 'Glasgow Saddlery', 'United States Hotel' and 'Soho Works' all evidence of the international capital present in the Victorian goldfields early-on. The viewer's eye is soon drawn to a cast of anachronistic 'readymade'

characters gathering in the street — iPhone-wielding tourists mingling with Sovereign Hill's own period-actors. A curious time-travelling *flâneur* dressed in a gold Mao suit simultaneously emerges from deep within the frame. Performed by the artist herself, this ghost from the future reinterprets Tseng Kwong Chi's ironic *East Meets West* (1979-1989) photographic series, whereby Tseng's self-constructed persona as an "inquisitive traveller and ambiguous ambassador" satirised relations between the United States and its emerging rival, China.

Indeed *Yellow Peril*'s ambiguous 'Ambassador' activates a chronological jump or temporal void in the work, which serves to amplify the tension between past and present, reality and fiction. The intermeshing of different time-periods confuses the linear clock-time inscribed within the Sovereign Hill experience, whose own history lessons are tethered to concepts of progress and chronological succession. Like narrative film, Sovereign Hill depends on its audience's suspension of disbelief in order to function—the living history museum is extolled as a 'time capsule' contrived to take us 'out of time.' Unpicking this illusion of temporal wholeness, *Yellow Peril* also throws the ideological underpinnings of Australia's whitewashed history into question.

The spatial rupture mobilised within *Yellow Peril* is another ideologically destabilising tactic. The constant overlapping of visual and aural information between the foreground and background scenes in the video commands multiple sources of attention. The viewer, lacking the direction usually provided by narrative filmmaking, is forced to actively pull focus in often-cacophonous scenes, just as in real life. In this way, *Yellow Peril* draws attention to the many conflicting, polyphonic histories happening in the world at any one time.

Presented beside the *Yellow Peril* video are two black-and-white photographic images digitally printed onto folded gold emergency blankets, themselves spectral objects loaded with mysterious metaphors. The first image, *New Australians (Yellow Peril, 1980/2015)*, is a snapshot of the artist's parents taken at City Square soon after their arrival

in Melbourne. The young Chinese-Singaporean couple look hopeful as they stand before *Vault* (1980), Ron Robertson-Swann's much-maligned public sculpture better known as "yellow peril." Considered alongside the video, one is struck not only by the stockade-like quality of Robertson-Swann's sculpture (and, by extension, its formal association with the Eureka Rebellion of 1854), but also by its residual power as a symbol of invasion. Even as the Lim couple stand as the embodiment of optimism in their newly adopted country, the spectre of resentment and fear activated by the sculpture's racist moniker hangs over the scene.

The second image, *New Australians (Welcome Stranger, 1869/2015)* features a Victorian-style portrait of *Yellow Peril's* Ambassador holding the Welcome Stranger nugget. The practice of prospecting is etymologically linked to ideas of anticipation and expectation—to a linear conception of time—and yet the Ambassador's portrait with the gold nugget here suggests a return of the repressed. Read in relation to contemporary xenophobic anxieties about an 'Asian invasion' of the Australian property and resources market, this image of Chinese wealth achieved off the Australian land carries a doubly sinister edge.

It could be suggested that artists are often our best historians of the present because they are at one and yet out of sync with their time. Unlike historians, who feel compelled to try to explain why the present had to evolve in exactly the way it did from what came before it, artists trade in making the lived elements of the present appear to be as unnatural, as inexplicable, as possible. To this end, the *Yellow Peril* installation harnesses the visual binary of real/simulation to reveal what Homi K. Bhabha regards as the postcolonial condition – simulation and realism, the global and the local, are proven to be contemporaneous and extant within each other's space. The textual struggle within *Yellow Peril* transcends the boundaries of the visual to embody

the tensions of competing global and local cultural identities.

Ulanda Blair (2015)

Ulanda Blair is Curator, Moving Image at M+ Hong Kong.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Eugenia Lim is an Australian artist who works across video, performance and installation. Interested in how nationalism and stereotypes are formed, Lim invents personas to explore the tensions of an individual within society – the alienation and belonging in a globalised world.

Lim's work has been exhibited internationally at venues including the Tate Modern, Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, HUN Gallery NY, and FACT Liverpool. She has received a number of Australia Council for the Arts grants and residencies, including a residency at the Experimental Television Centre in New York and exchange at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

Lim is currently exhibiting her video work *Yellow Peril* at the 2016 ExIS Seoul International Experimental Film and Video Festival, where she is a finalist in the International Competition program. Eugenia is also one of three Australian artists currently undertaking a month-long residency facilitated by 4a Centre for Contemporary Asian Art at the studio of renowned Chinese- Australian artist Shen Shaomin.



New Australians (Yellow Peril, 1980/2015)_2015_Digital print on mylar emergency blanket
Edition of 5_ 210 x 160cm_\$1,950



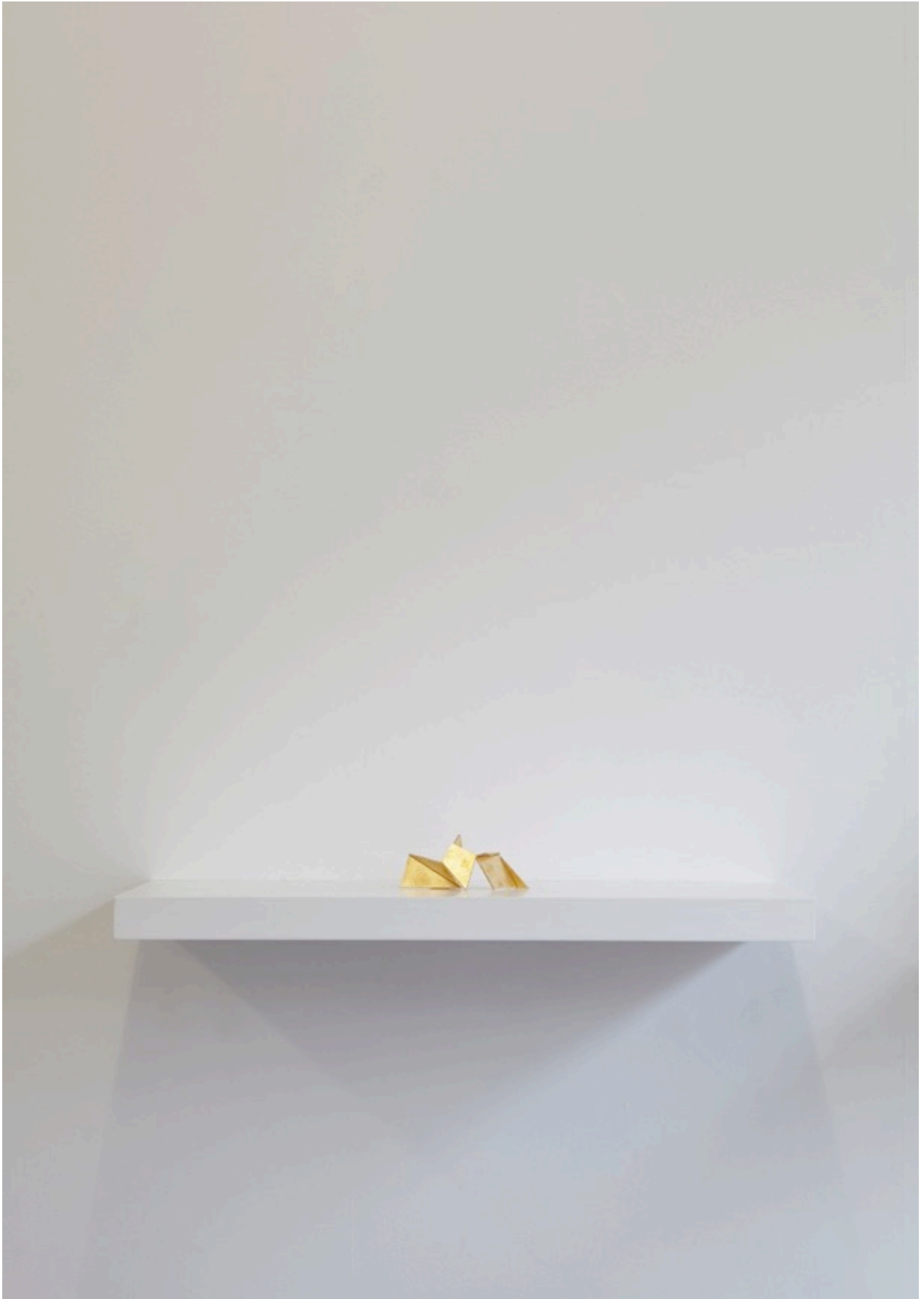
New Australian (Welcome Stranger, 1869/2015)_2015_Digital print on mylar emergency blanket
Edition of 5_210 x 160cm_\$1,950



Vault and Welcome Stranger. Installation shot courtesy of Bus Projects and Zan Wimberley.



Welcome Stranger_2015_Papier-mâché & paint_50.5cm x 13cm x 33.5cm_\$750



Vault_2015_Cardboard, gold leaf_11.5cm x 7cm x 4.5cm_\$450



*Yellow Peril*_2015_Single-channel HD video, colour, sound_17 minutes and 55 seconds_Edition of 5_\$1,750
View an extract of the video here: <https://vimeo.com/138508907>

EUGENIA LIM

b. 1981.

Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.

SELECTED SOLO & COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITIONS

2017	Artificial Islands (forthcoming), Firstdraft, Sydney
2016	The People's Currency (forthcoming), 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art offsite
2015	Shelter, Grey Gardens Projects
2015	Yellow Peril, Metro Arts Brisbane
2015	Yellow Peril, Bus Projects
2015	Rare Earth, flag commission, John Wardle Architects
2014-15	NIMBYism, Schoolhouse Studios
2012	Sunfade: a room of one's own, Schoolhouse Studios, Melbourne Festival
2012	Narcissus, live commission, Flash Night, Kings ARI
2012	Stay Home Sakoku: The Hikikomori Project, West Space and www.stayhomesakoku.com
2011	Oasis, Dianne Tanzer Gallery + projects
2011	The Fraternal Daughters of the Aurumic Order, with Tape Projects, Sugar Mountain
2010	Territorial, Manningham Gallery
2010	100 Proofs the Earth is Not a Globe, with Tape Projects, Victorian Space Science Education Centre, Next Wave,
2010	NOWHERELAND: the Paris Human Flesh Incident, Blindside ARI
2010	Australian Landscapes, KINGS ARI
2009	Loose lips sink ships, collaboration with Nic Whyte at Platform ARI
2005	Young American, Alice Euphemia & Barberella Hair
2004	Tulle Love, Performance and 'mock wedding' at Clubs Project Inc.

SELECTED GROUP & CURATORIAL EXHIBITIONS/SCREENINGS

2016	Between a Thought and a Feeling, performance lecture at MPavilion
2015	Video Contemporary, Sydney Contemporary
2015	La Movida, Biblioteca Municipal de Barranco, Lima, Peru
2014	Forever Now, Aphids 'interstellar golden record' project
2013-14	Put Up a Signal, Asialink Screenlink project feat. Australian/Indonesian artists, BUS Gallery, Fed Square Big Screen and Mes56 Jogjakarta
2013	Experimental Congress, curated by Otherfilm, Gertrude Contemporary
2013	Dark MOFO/Faux Mo, Odeon Hobart
2013	Profile Me, commissioned artist for online project, ACMI
2012-14	Speak To Me – 5th Experimenta International Biennale of Media Art

2012	Afuera, festival of site-specific art in Cerro de Pasco, Peru
2012	Place of Assembly, Schoolhouse Studios, Melbourne Festival
2013	A via B, curated by Jon Butt and Simon McEwan, C3 contemporary art gallery
2011	Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Flowerface, curator and artist, 24Hr Art, Darwin
2011	Studio Apartment, curated by Jon Butt & Simon McEwan, C3 Gallery
2011	Platform 20th Anniversary Show, collaborative work with Tape Projects, Platform ARI
2010	The Ultimate Time Lapse Megamix, Fed Square Big Screen during Next Wave Festival
2010	SUB12, curated by Jeremy Gaden, The Substation
2009	Small Worlds: Video and Animation by Australian Artists, The Substation, Singapore
2008-09	Figuring Landscapes, curated by Catherine Elwes and Stephen Ball, various venues incl. Tate Modern and Queensland GOMA
2006	2 HUN Gallery International 2006, New York
2006	The Harries International Digital Art Prize, QUT Brisbane/Margaret Lawrence gallery

SELECTED RESIDENCIES

2016	A Centre for Everything artist-in-residence (forthcoming)
2016	Bundanon Trust artist-in-residence
2009	Experimental Television Centre, New York
2005	Rhode Island School of Design, semester exchange/RMIT travel scholarship

SELECTED AWARDS AND GRANTS

2015	Incinerator Award for Art & Social Change, People's Choice Award
2012-14	Kultour 'Pulse', creative development mentorship
2012	City of Melbourne Arts Projects grant
2011-12	Australia Council Inter Arts Projects
2008-10	Next Wave Kickstart recipient (Tape Projects) for 100 Proofs the Earth is not a Globe
2009	QANTAS Spirit of Youth Awards (SOYA), top ten finalist in Visual Art category
2009	Australia Council Visual Arts New Work – Emerging grant recipient
2009	Australia Council Inter Arts RUN_WAY Grant Recipient
2008	City of Melbourne Young Artist Grant recipient
2006-08	Australia Council Inter-Arts Emerging Producer In Community (EPIC)
2003	NOISE 'Digital Allsorts' grant and mentorship with David Rosetzky

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dawkins, Urszula, The mining of image and metaphor, Realtime, issue #127, June-July 2015
- Nelson, Robert, The past is a foreign place on reflection, The Age, 15 April 2015
- Kaweki, Joanna, Emerging: Eugenia Lim, Ala Champfest magazine, issue 7, Sept 2013

Visible actions, Helen Grogan, Elvis Richardson and Eugenia Lim, un Magazine 7.2, Aug 2013
 Warren, Kate, The body shut away and on display: the recent performative practice of Eugenia Lim, Das Superpaper, July 2013
 Kawecki, Joanna, Eugenia Lim: People, Shift Magazine, May 2013
 Davis, Jared, Narrative Threads, Experimenta: Speak to Me Catalogue, Sept, 2012
 Bosco, Roberta & Caldana, Stefano, Encierro digital o en cama con Eugenia, El Pais newspaper, 22 Mar, 2012
 Rainforth, Dylan, Shut in, but still reaching out, The Age, 7 Dec, 2011
 Warren, Kate, In and out of the comfort zone, Real Time Magazine, Aug-Sept, 2010
 Rule, Dan, Around the galleries, The Age A2, 3 Oct, 2009
 Modra, Penny, Australian landscapes, The Sunday Age, 30 Nov, 2008
 Zuvela, Danni & HOFFIE, Pat, When boundaries flicker, Figuring Landscapes catalogue, 2008

COLLECTIVES AND ADVISORY PANELS

2013-ongoing	Next Wave Festival Board of Directors
2011-16	Founding editor, Assemble Papers
2011-13	Channels: the Australian video art festival, co-director
2007 and 2013	Australia Council for the Arts, ArtStart (2013) and Inter Arts peer assessor, Next
2011	Wave Festival 2012 curatorial panellist
2007-11	Founding member of artist collective Tape Projects

EDUCATION

2006	Honours in Media Arts (First Class Honours), RMIT University
2003-05	Bachelor of Media Arts, RMIT University
2000-02	Bachelor of Creative Arts, VCA / University of Melbourne

Information correct at time of publication.
Subject to change without notice.

All prices are listed in Australian Dollars, inclusive of GST.

www.artereal.com.au
747 Darling Street Rozelle NSW 2039

T: 02 9818 7473
E: info@artereal.com.au

ARTERREAL