



ENGROSSING: Left, Arvo Leo's *Fish Plane*, *Heart Clock*; and below, *Freud Und Friends* by Gabriel Abrantes.



Get a move on

**Biennale of Moving Images
MONA
Until July 6**

There's probably no better example of truly contemporary art than a collection that looks at where the moving image is, as an art-form, right now. There's a lot to enjoy in the *Biennale of Moving Images* – video art, experimental documentaries, otherworldly science fiction and much more – but what holds it all together is how diverse screen art can really be. *BIM* features many specially commissioned and new works from a carefully curated selection of 18 artists who are emerging as some of the most important of this generation.

Experimental video and film can draw in the audience gradually, becoming hypnotic and engrossing. Arvo Leo's wonderful *Fish Plane*, *Heart Clock* is an hour-long investigation of the life and work of Pudlo Pudlat, an Inuit artist who lived in the frozen and inhospitable islands of the Canadian north. The film is a documentary, but not a traditional one. Leo lived in Cape Dorset, Pudlat's home for 30 years, and experienced life in a remote town. It features a beguiling panorama of weather, land and the minute details of life which are punctuated with Pudlat's drawings and archival footage creating a feel for the artist and his world rather than simply listing facts.

Again in a new documentary style, *Fragment 53, Liberian Notes* by Carlo Gabriele Tribbioli and Federico Lodili is intensely powerful and confronting. This feature-length film, showing in CineMONA, is a heavy examination of war and conflict in Liberia.

It features interviews with a selection of warriors, all of whom have experienced the horror of war in the most intimate ways. And while the amount of work and risk involved in making this

film penetrates, it is the subject matter – men who have been deeply involved in conflict – that is totally engrossing. This is one for adults with strong stomachs, but it could be one of the most powerful things you'll see this year.

Also for adults and only screening in CineMONA is Benjamin Crotty's *Fort Buchanan*, a peculiar feature set in a strange military camp where we meet a married gay couple having relationship issues, their angry adopted daughter, sexually frustrated army wives and a personal trainer. The film creates an odd world, but seems to reach for a universal truth about relationships and family, and ends up being quite sweet as a result.

Not so intense is the charmingly surreal *Freud und Friends*. This shorter work could well fall into the realm of comedy, with a fake Werner Herzog providing narration, scenes that parody the works of David Lynch and Woody Allen, and some spectacular singing monkfish that almost steal the whole film. Silly but savvy, with bizarre fart jokes and a deliberately trite script, the film can be read on several levels and is proof contemporary art has a keen sense of humour.

"What is a moving image anyway?" is a pertinent question asked by a number of the works, including *The Inversion Of Morel* by Marie Kølbaek Iversen, which does this by shining light through a slide made of black opal. This may not seem like a "moving image" at first, but the opal is actually in motion – it's just that the motion in question is in geological time. It's a simple idea that looks beautiful in execution but could be found a little dissatisfying by some.

The same might be said of (*Mo Ba*), a simple screen image of a gently shifting dress made of camouflage material that's basically a moving painting. More successful is *Raking Light*. Constructed from short snippets of found footage, this shorter work in black and white tickles the memory with precision, making the viewer

wonder if that was a tiny flash from an iconic '80s action film or a famous Film Noir work.

The five-channel installation *Escape From The Scene* by Beijing artist Li Ran is also successful. This clever work consists of five tables, each with a monitor playing different footage, a set of headphones and labels. It seems to almost be a genuine puzzle, with clues and hints as each section of video is explored. The hands-on element is exciting as well – so often you can't touch in gallery spaces and this experience almost feels naughty.

Tom Huett's *Playing Fields* defies expectation about what a moving image is as it delves into the odd masculine world of body-building and car-customising, using footage from YouTube and Instagram. Seeing these images projected in large formats produces a bizarre effect.

Heather Phillipson's droll installation *Put The Goat In The Goat Boat And Serve it Hot* is a screen that sits among a flock of cardboard flamingoes, boxes and buckets. It's rough and bursting out of its edges, as if the plants, light and human bodies shifting about could spill out in a jumble of colour and fill the space.

Among all the experimentation, Jeremy Shaw's fictional documentary *Quickeners* manages to be effective and disturbing. This unique work describes the "quantum humans", a race which exists after some unnamed apocalypse, who return to long-abandoned religious rituals. The film was made by creating a new soundtrack for what appears to be found footage of a snake-handling religious group. *Quickeners* is truly strange and may not be for everyone, but if you can be immersed in its unique perspective, it's very compelling.

Be prepared to spend a significant amount of time when visiting. Some of the works are lengthy and to do them full justice it's recommended you watch the diverse moving images in their entirety. A rich reward awaits those who really dive in.

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