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**SYNTHETICS: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ELECTRONIC
IMAGE IN AUSTRALIA, 1955-1975**

By Stephen Jones

This thesis primarily traces the development and use of electronic technologies in Australian visual art, and to a lesser extent dance and electronic music. The thesis examines the cultural and technological layers of the arts in Australia, building up an understanding of the local context within which much of the artistic developments took place. Art and Technology is a collaborative practice and a systems theoretic framework is utilized in examining the workings of the collaborations between artists and technologists by which technological artworks are produced. A distillation of the cases described provides a means for understanding the spectrum of ways in which collaborations function and gives some insight into guidelines as to how collaboration can be made to work smoothly and with maximum value for everybody involved. The thesis begins with the seeds of computer graphics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, broadening into the earliest computer art based on developments at the University of Sydney. I then cover developments, in the 1960s, of kinetic art that used electronics as a means of working with light and which formed the first steps into the development of responsive artworks through the work of Frank Hinder, Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski and Asher Bilu. Following this I explore the impact of geometric abstraction, post-object art and conceptualism on art and technology through the artists gathered around the Tin Sheds, including Optronic Kinetics. The work of the dancer Philippa Cullen, also associated with the Tin Sheds, led to the beginnings of interactive performance through the work of and her work with theremins. Meanwhile in the late 1960s the underground films and lightshows of Ubu Films, in the context of the psychedelic era, led to the slightly later development of video synthesis with video artists such as Mick Glasheen of Bush Video in Sydney and John Hansen, working in Melbourne. I close with the exhibition 'Computers and Electronics in the Arts' which was held as part of the Australia 75 Festival of the Creative Arts and Sciences and forms a point of convergence for almost all the work discussed.

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