

were of essence, enacted within the video frame, and videoed so that the performers could reflect on their actions – as silent-film actors had done using a mirror. The video was filmed over some months and extensively edited, with sound – a key element – linked to images. As Gillies said in an interview with the late Nicholas Zurbrugg (then at Griffith University, Brisbane), 'I see *Techno/Dumb/Show* as a very angst-ridden work, although I also see it as being humorous as well, with a black or sly sense of humour'.²⁰ Close-ups of faces and expressions are a prime feature, with Gillies's experiments with analogue processing and lighting resulting in a mix of black-and-white images and others with a red cast. Writing of this work, John Conomos described how 'the spectator encounters a whole array of different theatrical gestures and intense emotions constituting a veritable labyrinth of dislocation, pleasure, reverie and vertigo', concluding that 'this is a video that is alive to the multiple conceptual and ironic registers of its own title'.²¹

Barbara Campbell's work, in comparison, appears cool and restrained, even wryly humorous. Yet it, too, provides evidence of a performance of endurance. In the work *Conradiana* 1994, Campbell typed on an old-style typewriter Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*, almost six times on long lengths of rice paper. When installed, the paper scrolls are hung from the wall,

edge to edge, while situated in front, a video plays on a monitor. This video takes the viewer in silent slow motion down a waterway as if on a riverboat into the heart of the jungle, where they witness majestic trees, Eastern ruins, and elephants that trumpet water. But this jungle cruise is a Disneyland Jungle Cruise, and even the elephants prove to be cleverly contrived fountains. The film appears degraded. Layers of meaning are to be read here. The typewritten text carries Conrad's narrative of the search for Kurtz in the Congo jungle, and the jungle that becomes a metaphor for Kurtz's madness. However, Campbell more particularly references Eleanor Coppola's narrative in the 1991 documentary, *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, which was based on her 1979 memoir, *Notes on the making of Apocalypse Now*, produced in response to the tensions and obstacles faced by her husband Francis Ford Coppola (and her family) during the making *Apocalypse Now* in 1979.²²

As in other performances, Campbell's focus is on women's history, in Eleanor Coppola's case, the wife of the film director. The very act of typing the novel so many times speaks to the back-of-house work often undertaken by women. Anxiety and a sense of dislocation is arguably at the core of Campbell's assiduous typing of Conrad's text. The dark terrain of the jungle could, in Campbell's case, be read as a metaphor for Queensland during the dark

years of the Bjelke-Petersen regime. *Conradiana*, was part of a larger work by Campbell, *Backwash*, performed at the 1993 Australian Perspecta at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. This performance included a reference to the Stinson crash in Queensland's Lamington National Park rainforest in 1937, near to where Campbell lived as a child. The jungle, with its stories of search parties walking into its terrain looking for survivors, places the women at its edge of darkness and, for Campbell, one of those waiting was the switchboard operator, Gracie Wilcox.²³

Fiona MacDonald similarly found material for her work within her home state. In 1993 she returned to Rockhampton for a residency and set about searching the archives for historical photographs. The resulting series, *Universally Respected* 1993, comprises photographs that have been woven together, in essence interweaving photographs of those former 'respected' members of the Rockhampton Club with non-members, outsiders by race or gender. Her aim was to stop Rockhampton's history being 'whitewashed'.²⁴ MacDonald's project was an early instance of artists mining the archives, and was undertaken prior to protocols being developed as to the use of such materials (nowadays an artist would wisely seek community permission to use such materials, and indeed may need to identify family or cultural-heritage connection to it).