

*Cognitive Dissidents:  
Reasons to Be Cheerful*

20 February - 9 April 2020

Exhibition  
Labels

# Cognitive Dissidents: Reasons to be Cheerful

20 February–9 April 2020

Comprising over 20 works that cover both activist documentary and synthetic forms, *Cognitive Dissidents: Reasons to be Cheerful* explores the development of Australian video art from the 1970s to the 2000s.

Video's capacity for self-reflexivity established it early on as a fluid and expansive medium. Firstly, as a documentary form, video has both reflected and informed political movements and social experimentation. Secondly, new image-making possibilities using video feedback – in which the image generates itself – have been central concerns.

*Cognitive Dissidents* explores artists' recognition of the widely applicable experimental aspects of video, where it is seen as a live medium, and where immediate and cultural/political feedback was central to the artists' thinking or their immediate needs. The artists shown here reflect on their engagement with the medium and with their worlds. While many works included were made in the earliest days of video, the notion of the experiment was not superseded by later work, but has continued throughout. Likewise, while most of the works are not entirely electronically produced, video is not simply a photographic medium either; it relates to the feature film as electronic music does to orchestral music.

*Cognitive Dissidents* inquires into the meaning and politics of dissidence through its exploration of the value of the experiment, and the possibilities of aesthetic and social politics. The title of the show is a playful take on the 1979 song and single "Reasons to Be Cheerful, Part 3" by Ian Dury and the Blockheads, which simply lists a number of reasons to be cheerful, reflecting the energy and optimism for change embodied by this selection of works.

*Cognitive Dissidents: Reasons to be Cheerful* has been curated by respected Sydney curator, artist and conservator Dr Stephen Jones, who has worked with video since the early 1970s.

Artists: ARF ARF, Debra Beattie, Joan Brassil, Warren Burt, Bush Video, Peter Callas, Barbara Campbell, John Conomos, Justine Cooper, Francesca da Rimini & Josephine Starrs, Merylyn Fairskye, Michelle Mahrer, Frank Osvath, David Perry, Jeune Pritchard & Luce Pelissier, r e a, Jill Scott, Warwick Thornton, Linda Wallace, Geoffrey Weary

# ARF ARF

active 1985-2000 Australia/Europe

## Thread of Voice 1993

16mm film transferred to video, monochrome, sound, transferred to digital file,  
19 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory board, 1995

ARF ARF was a collective of artists, sound poets, and filmmakers based in Australia and Europe; it comprised Marisa Stirpe, Frank Lovece, Michael Buckley, and Marcus Bergner. ARF ARF staged hundreds of live performances and collaboratively produced films, journals, music, and other artistic manifestations, while also maintaining separate artistic careers. Prompted by the online publication of a range of archival materials, the group resumed their collective practice in 2015 and toured Europe.

Their 16mm black and white 'performance film' *Thread of Voice* received international exposure, screening in New York, London, Paris, and Berlin. *Thread of Voice* is a documentation of ARF ARF pieces performed live since the mid '80s, but it is also a playing with the medium and language of sound and film. The film moves between different registers: direct filming, varieties of refilming, and word and drawing animations, and is a demonstration of the collective's ongoing commitment to the question *What is sound poetry?*

# Barbara Campbell

b.1961 Beaudesert Australia

## The Seduction of Art 1996

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 11:30 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 1996

Barbara Campbell is an internationally recognised performance, installation, and video artist. She studied both fine art and art history before completing a Doctorate at the University of Sydney in 2016. Her oeuvre explores women's personal and historical fictions, the visual and adaptive qualities of texts, and how the meaning of a work changes according to the physical and contextual properties of its location, whether gallery, museum, atrium, tower, radio airwaves, or the internet.

Co-performed with Peter Anderson in 1996, and originally performed with Ted Riggs in 1982, *The Seduction of Art* is a conceptual work of detailed observation and careful description, a slow and detached expression of the impact of the modern on the remains of empire in the 1960s. Campbell herself is the subject on a mattress wrapped in red satin, being stroked by a man in a black suit. It presents a young girl's memory of her maiden aunt taking her to view a special artwork at the Brisbane City Hall, and presages her subsequent career. As she says 'The first time I was seduced by art I was 13 years old. It was a special trip.' The agent of this seduction was Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*. As Campbell has noted, '...this is a story about an "expressionist" master painter and his masterpiece'.

# Bush Video

active 1973-1975 Australia

## Meta-Video Programming 1974

Video, computer graphics, colour, sound, transferred to digital file, 32 minutes

Commissioned for the Phillip Morris collection, gifted to the National Gallery of Australia, 1982

Bush Video was an experimental video collective set up to establish a communications centre at the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival. Its members were Mick Glasheen, Joseph el Khouri, Melinda Brown, John Kirk, Jon Lewis, Anne Kelly, Tom Barber, Ariel (*aka* Mark Evans), and Fat Jack Jacobsen. The collective then lived in Sydney, where they produced new experimental video works. In 1974 they moved to the community school established by architect Bill Lucas at Guriganyah, a mansion in Oxford Street, Paddington. There they built a Geodesic dome in the backyard, established a studio, and engaged with an expanding community of artists, including those directly opposite Paddington Video Access Centre.

*Meta-Video Programming* (1974) was commissioned for the Philip Morris collection, which was gifted in 1982 to the National Gallery of Australia. It features a colourised combination of primitive synthesised forms, Lissajous patterns (patterns produced by the intersection of two sinusoidal curves, the axes of which are at right angles to each other), computer images, and video feedback set to a soundtrack of lush synthesiser music (*Phaedra* by Tangerine Dream and other music fragments). Part electronic meditation, part psychedelic vision, it was made one year prior to the introduction of colour television in Australia.

# Francesca da Rimini

b.1956

# Josephine Starrs

b.1955

## White 1996

Colour and monochrome video, sound, transferred to digital file, 9:35 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 1997

Francesca da Rimini is a multidisciplinary artist whose online and installation-based practice deals with issues relating to technology, identity, place, gender, and knowledge. In 1999 da Rimini was awarded an Australia Council New Media Fellowship. Josephine Starrs creates media art projects for national and international audiences and was a senior lecturer at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney until 2016. With Julianne Pierce and Virginia Barratt, da Rimini and Starrs are members of the cyber-feminist collective 'VNS Matrix'.

*White* is a memoir and memorial for da Rimini's mother. It opens to a close-up of her posterior right shoulder. No emotion at first, just the shouts of an aged woman: a woman with a badly damaged body. She shouts: 'I am the Madonna, born with original sin. I know all about temptation. Sometimes it's yes and sometimes it's no.' This is a personal, moving work of deep emotion, set in a dry, emotionless hospital room.

# David Perry

1933–2015

## Album 1970

Colour video and film transferred to digital file, 10:31 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 1994

## Interior with Views 1976

Monochrome video transferred to digital file, 4:45 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 1994

David Perry was one of Australia's most significant moving image artists. Together with Albie Thoms, Aggy Read and John Clark, the multi-disciplinary Perry founded the pioneering avant-garde film group Ubu Films in 1965.

*Album* is a biographical film made from segments of many of Perry's films. Made after the breakup of Ubu Films, and on the verge of the transition from film to video, *Album* uses in-camera optical effects and still and movie intercutting to accommodate for a time where film meant colour, but video was only available in black and white.

*Interior with Views* was made during a residency at Griffith University. Running for the length of time it takes for the jug to boil, the camera captures a cup of tea being made in dappled afternoon sunshine, and flickers between vignettes. Towards the end we observe a television set transmitting these same images back to us on-screen, a feedback loop interweaving layers of memory and the present.

# Debra Beattie

b.1955

## Expo Schmexpo 1986

Colour, 16mm film transferred to video, sound, transferred to digital file, 5:30 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 2017

Debra Beattie is a Brisbane-based documentary filmmaker, writer and academic. She has produced numerous documentaries, including *Fairweather Man* (ABC, 2008), on the life and work of the artist Ian Fairweather; *Kidnapped* (SBS TV, 1988), which detailed the buried histories of Melanesians in the Queensland sugar industry; and *No Bugles No Drums* (National Seven Network, 1990), which investigated the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers during WWII. Beattie's academic research publications are in the fields of new communication technologies, documentary theory, and cinema studies.

The experimental film *Expo Schmexpo* features Joh Bjelke-Peterson impersonator Gerry Connolly, and footage of South Brisbane's cafe interiors, houses, and industrial warehouses in the process of being developed for World Expo '88. In one section of the work, we hear the voice of Connolly impersonating then Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen spruiking "this enterprise that's coming up... taking place for the...two hundred years now since the white man came to these shores... making way for civilisation."

In 1985, the film was culture jammed into a video. The film was entered in the Inaugural Australian Video Festival in 1986, where it won first prize in the Video Art category.



# Frank Osvath

b.1961

## Homage to John Cage 1993

Colour video using Lissajous figures, sound, transferred to digital file, 6:30 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 1995

Frank Osvath is best known for his digital media work, which he presents with concrete sculptural structures. Influenced by his Hungarian upbringing in the 1960s and 70s, Osvath's socio-artistic works echo a sense of humanity, challenging the relationship between form and function. In his article 'Applause' (*Eyeline*, 1993), Robert Balint describes Osvath's work as: "Free from excessive utopian aspirations, [it] forges an implicit stance in relation to the dehumanization of 'mass society' and offers a posture of abstracted and distanced contemplation."

Osvath channels the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde composer John Cage through this self-reflexive poem using Lissajous figures, which are drawn from the vocal sound, traced onto an oscilloscope, and re-photographed with a video camera.

The visual rendition begins as a single line that wanders over the screen and forms a bright fog surrounding a sharp central brightness. A rich synthesiser tone is held, its frequency slowly draining away, but at that point a second tone rises and soon becomes discernible as a vocal phrase fed back into itself. The voice starts to be heard saying: "I- I- I... ha—v—e nothing to say and I'm saying it." It begins to repeat clearly, matched by the Lissajous trace on the screen. As a coda, the voice stops and then a background comment notes, 'and that's worked, too.'

# Geoffrey Weary

b.1952

## Museum 1996

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 9:15 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 1997

Geoffrey Weary is a film and digital video artist who makes work for single screen projection and site-specific installations. Early in his career, Weary was an active member of the Sydney Super 8 Group and the Electronic Media Arts Organisation. He has a Masters of Film and Digital Image from the Sydney College of the Arts, where he now teaches.

This video-dance is set to the piano music of French composer Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), and takes place within a gallery in the Louvre in Paris, focusing on the work produced by neo-Classical painter Jacques-Louis David during and immediately after the French Revolution. Attention is drawn to the physical and psychological conflicts that the paintings evoke as the crowd flows through the gallery, briefly observing the dramas at play in the works on the walls. Weary's video evokes the power and ritual of the architectural and psychological spaces of the world's largest art museum, through the movement of the audience and their observation of David's paintings.

Music: Michael Fahres, *Piano. Harfe*, 1st Movement. [ECM New Series 1281]

# Jill Scott

b.1952

## Continental Drift 1989

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 12 minutes

Courtesy the artist

Jill Scott spans video, conceptual performance and interactive environments and has exhibited in the US, Australia, Europe and Japan. Her interactive work explores relationships between the body, technology and experiences of real time and virtual space, most recently using computers, 3D Animation and Interactive Art. While her works have varied in style and content, they have a common interest in developing a more expansive concept of the human body.

*Continental Drift* is Jill Scott's personal exploration of the development of breast cancer. This is an experiment in communication: in the value of hope and in the giving of hope. The body is seen as a mutable fluid – 'the metaphor for Life---Water'. That fluid allows Scott to realise control over her body's fundamental metabolism.

# Joan Brassil

1919-2005

## Kimberley Stranger Gazing 1988

Colour, video, sound, transferred to digital file, 11:42 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased 1997

Joan Brassil was an early proponent of time-based installation art who explored electronics, scientific processes, and environmental contexts. Her work centred on the landscape, drawing together natural materials, language, sound, light, and technological elements. After retiring from a career as a high-school teacher, she was hugely prolific in a relatively short period and was noted for her support of emerging and women artists.

*Kimberley Stranger Gazing* (1988) contemplates the presence of European explorers and agriculture and their impositions on the land. It is an exposition of the landscape – vast, open, dry, distant. Upon the ochre landscape, microscopic representations of grass seeds, topographic contour lines, and cellular transparencies are superimposed and dissolve. The sound is a clashing, clanging, ringing drone along boundless telegraph wires, a poem without words to the song of the telegraph lines. Designed for intimate viewing, in its installation form the video is displayed through sheets of irregularly shaped Perspex. The resulting fragmentation and distortion of the image has almost hallucinatory effects.

Sound: Alan Lamb, *Music on a Long Wire*

Production: John Baird

Production facility: Heuristic Video, Sydney

# John Conomos

b.1947

## Aura 2004

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 11:25 minutes

Courtesy the artist

John Conomos is an artist, critic and writer. He is an Associate Professor and Professorial Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Since the 1980s, Conomos has exhibited across a variety of media including video art, new media, photo-performance, installation, and radiophonic art. He is a prolific contributor to art, film and media journals, and a frequent keynote speaker and participant in conferences and seminars.

Conomos takes us on a journey into the Sublime, a drift through its idealist philosophy as understood in the post-modern frame versus ancient notions of the *ideal* ... an essay on the technological sublime ... a poetic dissertation on the notion of the sublime in post-modern aesthetics.

A cellist is playing arpeggios. We dissolve out to a pan across Lake George and thence to an indeterminate field and the sun in our eyes. The image divides into three panels: Conomos, a lunar landscape and a field of scrubby woodland. A rocket launches into a scorching brightness, our view fades. Then back to Lake George, and a final dissolve to eucalyptus trees bearing witness to a darkening cloudy sky. Fade out to the credits and silence.

Composer: Robert Lloyd

# Justine Cooper

b.1968

## Rapt 1998

Monochrome video made from MRI scans, sound, transferred to digital file, 5:25 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 2000

Justine Cooper investigates the intersections between culture, science and medicine, moving between animation, video, installation, photography, and medical imaging technologies such as MRI, DNA sequencing, Ultrasound, and SEM (scanning electron microscopy). Her work has been internationally recognised in numerous exhibitions and screenings including at The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; The NTT InterCommunication Center, Tokyo; and the Centre George Pompidou, Paris. She was the first artist-in-residence at The American Museum of Natural History.

Through her work, Cooper reminds us that science and art are equally concerned with revealing hidden realities. In this video we travel into a fog of data that resolves into a series of slices of the artist's body. We voyage through the body via the medium of an MRI scan that records the excitation of Hydrogen nuclei (*i.e.*, protons) when they are exposed to a powerful magnetic field. Set to a soundtrack of synthesised and woodwind music, the crunching, creaking, and scratching noises suggest the excavation and crumbling of the body as the images dissolve. Despite having the distinctive appearance of a scan or diagram, the work also presents the human body as ethereal and mysterious: an ongoing site of discovery in the face of continually evolving medical technology.

# Linda Wallace

b.1960

## lovehotel 2000

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 6:50 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased 2000

Linda Wallace is a film and video maker and new-media producer. Her early video works combine digital imaging with layered fragments of video images, exploring the nature of human relationships under the sway of new internet-based interactions. She worked in radio in the 1980s, at 2SER in Sydney and then at 4ZZZ in Brisbane, where she lived at the artist-run space One Flat. In 1999, Wallace curated the first exhibition of new media in China, *PROBE: explorations into Australian computational space*.

*lovehotel* is a collaboration with Francesca da Rimini who reads excerpts from her book *Fleshmeat* — a story of sexual exchange that documents her life online from 1994-97. The narrative runs through the networks of Tokyo and New York, with multiple layers of imagery and text: flowers, faces and bodies. *lovehotel* tells of a female ghost intelligence wandering the spaces of the online and real worlds.

Wallace notes: '*lovehotel* was the first work I made in the digital environment... *lovehotel* continued my interest in using different mediums themselves as a narrative device. I used grainy High 8 video for New York, and sharper... digital video for Japan.'

Soundtrack by Jason Gee.

# Merilyn Fairskye

b.1950

## Eye Contact 2000

Colour video from photographs, sound, transferred to digital file, 8:25 minutes

Courtesy the artist

Merilyn Fairskye is an artist employing photo-media, video and installation, whose work has been exhibited nationally and internationally for over thirty-five years. Her practice traces the cultural, political, and scientific webs that connect the powerful events of real life, to 'explore the experience of a hyper-connected world, where physical and geographic boundaries dissolve'. She is particularly interested in unique digital video editing processes that allow for the representation of the depth of time, rather than linear representations.

'*Eye Contact* is the culmination of a long-term investigation of the landscape of the face', says the artist. Since late 1992, Fairskye has systematically photographed people from a wide spectrum of humanity with whom she has come into contact, producing over 1000 images 'captioned' with the person's first name, occupation and country of birth. Each person was instructed to adopt a neutral expression and to close their eyes before being photographed.

Many of these still images are presented as a video in which they unfold and fold again, expanding across the screen as though fixed to a rotating cube. Each has their eyes closed, but is otherwise in a passive comfortable pose, some smiling, some just relaxed. They explore the way in which the face carries deep information about the person represented.



# Michelle Mahrer

b.1956

## Gravity Feed

### D-Void 1995

Monochrome video, sound, transferred to digital file, 3:20 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 1996

Michelle Mahrer is a filmmaker producing documentary films, short dance films choreographed for the camera, and dance performance films. Early in her career in New York, she worked as a music video director with artists such as Joe Cocker, Grace Jones, Michelle Shocked, Stanley Clark, Shawn Colvin, and Peter Wolf.

Gravity Feed (Alan Schacher, Denis Beaubois and Arl Ehrlich) was a performance group who took radically experimental views of the environment in which they worked.

“In the beginning there was only the great self  
reflected in the form of a person;  
reflecting, it found nothing but itself.” [Upanishads]

# Peter Callas

b.1952

## Lost in Translation 1999

Colour video, computer graphics, sound, transferred to digital file, 6:13 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 2000

## Night's High Noon: An Anti-Terrain 1988

Colour video, Fairlight CVI, sound, transferred to digital file, 7:20 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, gift of the artist, 2000

Peter Callas is considered a pioneer of new media art in Australia. Trained at the Sydney College of the Arts, his work is concerned with transcultural identities, and draws on a range of visual cultures, particularly popular and propaganda iconography.

*Lost in Translation* hints at the history of the white man's hegemony over the earth and how mapmakers contrived to centralise Europe's position. This work explores how contemporary use of imaging is used to demonstrate our 'self-importance', and how this parallels the ways geographers worked to represent the forms of the continents through mapmaking.

In *Night's High Noon: An Anti-Terrain* a stream of images reminds us of the history of popular culture. Vincent Van Gogh via Ned Kelly; the European colonisation of Australia, and xenophobic fear of Asian people. All this is overlaid onto animated abstract backgrounds, a painting of the Australian bush, before finally returning to the 'discovery' and colonisation of the continent.

# Jeune Pritchard

b.1944

# Luce Pelissier

b.unknown

## Queensland Dossier 1979

Colour video, sound, transferred to digital file, 43:50 minutes

Courtesy the artists

Jeune Pritchard is an Australian video maker. She worked for the ABC's *GTK*, where she produced stories about the Aquarius Nimbin Festival in 1973. Co-director of the Paddington Video Access Centre from 1974 to 1979; she returned to the ABC as Coordinator at the Women's Unit of ABC's Radio National and later worked on the SBS *Insight* series as a supervising producer for several programmes. Luce Pelissier worked as a builder's labourer, and on becoming involved with the Paddington Video Access Centre became a sound recordist in video and film.

*Queensland Dossier* was produced at a time when video was proving increasingly valuable as an activist medium. Pritchard and Pelissier spent time in Queensland, where, in 1977, Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen instituted legislation that effectively made street demonstrations illegal. In the following year, violent clashes between police and protesters resulted in the arrests of over 2000 people. Shot in various locations, *Queensland Dossier* showcases diverse and often conflicting views on a range of issues such as unionism, civil liberties, uranium mining, the rights of Indigenous Australians, women's health, and access to education.

r e a

b.1962 Australia

## PolesApart 2009

Colour widescreen video, silent, transferred to digital file, 6:55 minutes

Courtesy the artist

r e a is an artist, curator, activist, and academic whose work draws on a legacy of lived experience and the impact of intergenerational trauma, grief, and loss. She is descended from the Gamilaraay and Wailwan peoples from the Central West, and the Biripi people of the mid-North Coast of New South Wales. Her practice involves photography, digital media and installation. r e a completed her studies in visual art in Australia and New York and currently lectures at the University of Queensland.

Links between personal experience and political history, and photography and memory, run through r e a's digital media and installation practice. Text, image and colour are employed to critique the representation of the blak body, especially the intersection of the female blak body, feminism, and queer politics.

Christine Nichols writes: 'In [this] silent video ... r e a embodies ... an apparently ageless Aboriginal woman... running through a bushfire-devastated forest... The woman who has taken flight successively runs... stumbles...picks herself up again, resumes her fugue. From whom or from what is she trying to escape?'

This video is from a suite of works including r e a's *PolesApart* series: 4 x photographic triptychs and 1 x single-channel video.

# Warren Burt

b.1949, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, lives in Daylesford, Vic.

## Dying Song 1975

Colour video, 4:3, sound, 8:28 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory board, 1997

## Return to Uranus (after Ruggles) 1978

Colour video, 4:3, sound, 5:36 minutes

Courtesy the artist

## Meditation 14 1986

Colour video, 4:3, sound, 5:43 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory board, 1997

Warren Burt has shown and performed widely in Australia and internationally and is known for composing in a wide variety of new music styles, ranging from acoustic to electronic music. He uses elements of video, improvisation, microtonality, humour, live interaction, and lo-fi electronic techniques.

These three works were made with video and audio synthesisers over a decade. *Dying Song* was made with a Beck Video Synthesiser and a Serge Audio Synthesiser and refers to a descending scale of music. A distorted ovoid form emerges out of a black background.

*Return to Uranus (after Ruggles)* was made with a Hearn EAB Video-Lab and a Serge Audio Synthesiser. A series of modulated bands of various colours reduce then slowly broaden out again.

In *Meditation 14*, made with a Fairlight CVI and a Casio audio-synthesiser, a waterfall of colour in two horizontal bands, mirrored on both vertical edges, streams colour down the screen to a repeating musical cycle.

# Warwick Thornton

b.1970 Alice Springs Australia

## Payback 1996

Film transferred to video, monochrome, transferred to digital file, 10:20 minutes

Griffith University Art Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australian Government through the Australian Council, its arts funding and advisory body, 1996

Warwick Thornton is an artist, cinematographer and director whose practice examines Aboriginal Australian displacement and the continued impact of colonial history, tensions between contemporary urban and traditional lifestyles, and connections to country. Thornton is credited in over forty productions including *The Sapphires* (2012), *First Australians* (2008) and *Art and Soul* (2010); and he exhibited an installation *Mother Courage* at *dOCUMENTA 13* in 2012. His debut feature film *Samson and Delilah* (2009) won the *Caméra d'Or* at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival and the IFA Cultural Film Award at the 2009 Berlin Independent Film Festival; the feature film *Sweet Country* (2017) gained further awards at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards and the Venice Film Festival.

Thornton's early short film, *Payback*, follows Paddy, an Aboriginal prisoner about to be released after 20 years in jail. *Payback* refers to the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal law. Having been held under white jurisdiction for two decades, he sees visions of a Kadaicha (the Arrernte term for a 'clever man') who tells him 'tomorrow is your payback'. Paddy is released and met by his people; they exact the 'Payback' that he must give.