

VIDEO ART

Really, it's all a matter of time

In Parallax, the artist manipulates time through footage played on two screens: The same film is shown with a slight time delay between them



Blink, and you might miss it, with Parallax, 1999, two simultaneous video projections on a wall with a time delay between them by artist Heike Baranowski.

ART

VIDEO WORKS
by Heike Baranowski
Singapore Art Museum
Until Sept 17

By SIAN E. JAY

THE overriding theme that emerges from the three video works by Berlin-based artist Heike Baranowski, is time. The passing of time, the distortion of time, the manipulation of time, and the drive to recapture time.

Because we think of time as "passing", as being in a state of flux, the use of video and the moving image becomes an ideal medium with which to express the artist's ideas.

It is the manipulation of time that becomes manifest in these works. Whereas in the "real" world and "real" time we are powerless to stop its motion, by capturing visual metaphors of time — essentially sequences of movement — the artist can play around and create different sequences of time.

If photography, Baranowski's original medium of expression, proved unsatisfactory — or too static? — then her video works become both imaginative and intriguing, even if they do appear to reduce enormous concepts down to simple "statements".

It is up to the viewer to take these "statements" and expand them within the limitless space of the mind to see where it takes each individual.

Take Passage I, a 15-minute loop of a North Sea ferry continually overtaking the same tramp steamer. On a personal level the image becomes a metaphor for the artist's repeated journeys backwards and forwards between Germany and England. The same ocean, the same boat, a continual meditation of time.

At another level, though, it reflects the alternative concept of time being cyclical rather than linear. Buddhist notions of continual

rebirth until the cycle is broken. Feelings of *deja vu*, the idea that whatever we are doing now, we have already done many times before. An almost surreal journey that can never be completed.

To appreciate these works, you do need to focus on them. Video art is rarely something that can be appreciated at a glance.

Parallax, for example, is the continual movement through a forest. Played on two screens, you may think that you are seeing separate footage of similar film. Look carefully and you will realise you are seeing the same film with a slight time delay between them.

The manipulation of time in this case creates certain visual distortions related to the ideas of time distortions. As the image from one screen reaches the optical cortex and the second one a moment later, time awareness also becomes distorted, creating a three-dimensional or stereo impact as the brain struggles to make sense of the information reaching it.

These are powerful works, and demonstrate how effective video can be as an art form. It is by no means new to the art scene here; many local artists use video as a medium for getting their ideas across.

Unfortunately it has received relatively little public support or recognition, possibly because many people find it a little harder to grasp.

We need, one suspects, more quality foreign video exhibitions as well as by homegrown artists, and at more accessible sites — as disparate as shop windows and street corners — where more people are likely to stop and stare.

◆ *Video Works by Heike Baranowski is showing at the Anderson Gallery, Singapore Art Museum, 71 Bras Basah Road, until Sept 17. Gallery hours: Tue - Sun, 9 am - 5 pm (Wed until 9pm). Normal museum charges apply.*