



Crossing the digital threshold

Scott McQuire's research project on digital media and the cinema has been published as **'Crossing the Digital Threshold'**.

The project was commissioned from the CLC in 1996 by the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy in Brisbane. It is the first in a 'Screen Industry, Culture and Policy' Research Series being commissioned by the Australian Film Commission and the Key Centre. These partners have attracted funding from the Australian Research Council for a three year collaborative project on 'The Future of Australian Screen Cultural Policy in a Comparative Frame'.

Digital technology may significantly change the experience of cinema by moving it away from its historic basis in the physical world.

McQuire interviewed twenty key creative personnel in the Australian feature film industry about current use of digital production and post-production techniques and likely future developments. These included *Babe* director Chris Noonan, *Romeo and Juliet* editor Jill Bilcock and multiple AFI Award winner Roger Savage.

Digital media

McQuire's paper introduces the concept of 'digital media' and places these new technologies in the context of the historical development of film and associated technologies. He discusses the impact of digital media to date on sound recording and processing, picture editing and digital imaging. He looks at the practical impact on production processes and the aesthetic and philosophical implications of the

changes being made by digital media to the historic association of camera images with 'realism'.

'Underlying the excitement and controversy aroused by the digital threshold is the potential for digital technology to reconfigure our habitual relationship to camera images. While it is too simplistic to say that photographs or films ever granted unmediated access to reality, there has nevertheless been an intimacy between the camera image and the object it represents which is unmatched by any other medium. It is this bond which has come under renewed pressure in the digital era.'

Over the long term, McQuire argues that digital technology may significantly change the experience of cinema by moving it away from its historic basis in the physical world.

The paper considers the particular implications of digital media for Australia's film industry and the skills required to work in a changing industry. Significantly, McQuire concludes that the introduction of digital media into sound and image production and post-production has generally not resulted in cost savings, but in the achievement of higher production values.

Scott McQuire teaches art and architecture in the School of Social Inquiry at Deakin University. He is also the author of *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of the Camera*, to be published by Sage (UK) later this year. 'Crossing the Digital Threshold' is available from the CLC - see advertisement in the adjacent column.

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Screen Industry, Culture & Policy
Research Series

Crossing the Digital Threshold Scott McQuire

"The digital domain offers film makers the prospect of a 'studio' without physical limitations. The digital threshold is fundamentally about extending a film maker's ability to control the film image....".

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