



Synthetics: Aspects of Art and Technology in Australia, 1956-1975 (Leonardo Book Series)

Stephen Jones

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New technologies continually arise, offering repeated opportunities to artists in search of the technologically novel. Stephen Jones calls this phenomenon the "rolling new," and in *Synthetics* he describes how artists in Australia used new technologies in their art, from the early days of digital computing in the 1950s to a landmark exhibition in 1975. Jones looks at not only the artists and the artworks they produced but also at the evolution of computing technologies and video displays as these new forms of media developed into tools that artists could use. He also examines the collaborations that sprang up between artists and the technologists who taught them how to use these new devices. The process, he finds, was reciprocal: the offerings of the engineer could inspire the artist as much as the needs of the artist could inspire the engineer. Jones discusses the constraints imposed by the limitations of new technologies as they developed and shows that different types of output and display technologies made for the production of very different kinds of images. [He explores the development of computer graphics, the use by artists of such new conceptual paradigms as post-object art, and the emergence of video art in the late 1960s and early 1970s.] By 1975, the art and technology movement in Australia reached something of a watershed. The work itself became established as an art form just as funding dwindled and a popular and supportive left-wing government left office. And yet, Jones writes, the early electronic artists laid the foundation for today's burgeoning culture of new media art in Australia.

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