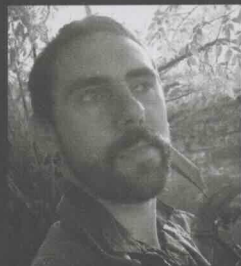


ANZ Emerging Artists Program

James Lynch

Ashley Crawford



detail
James Lynch, *I was running and running*, 2004,
digital video still, 4 min 17 sec duration, courtesy
the artist and Uplands Gallery, Melbourne.

James Lynch

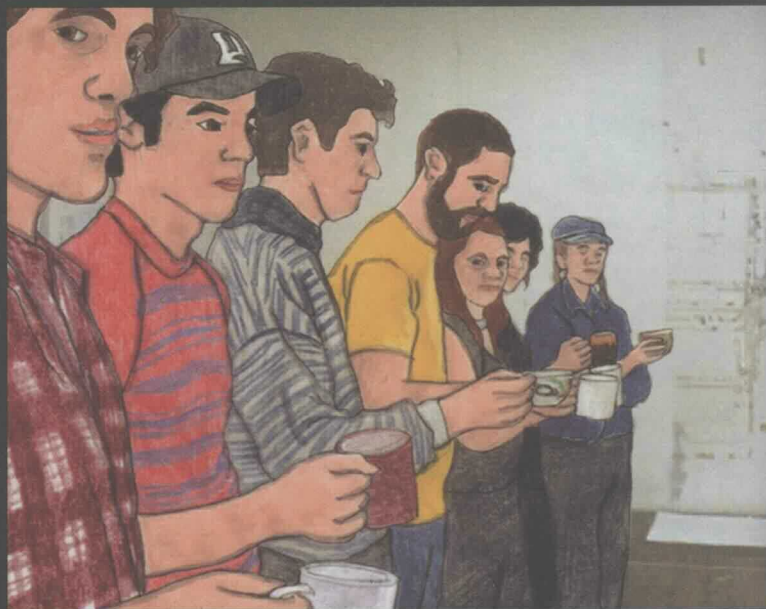
In James Lynch's hands, dreams come to life on the screen as beautifully rendered moments, moving from frame to frame as though the transition from dream-state to gallery has been filtered through a time lapse, the memory hazy in detail but powerful in theme. Lynch is a dream-catcher. He has been working with other people's dreams for some time now, dreams in which he is either a central or peripheral figure. These are not nightmares or sweat-soaked erotica, but rather the dreams of little or nothing that take on epic proportions in wakefulness.

For the exhibition 'New05' at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne in 2005, Lynch installed a large screen surrounded by a tier of seating – a strange, outdoor cinema inside the gallery space. On the screen three core animated 'dreams' were played out. In the first, *I was running and running*, 2004, a large self-portrait of Lynch reads from cards in a painstakingly slow, stilted voice: 'I was running and running with a coffee pot. Everybody was there, including you.' The dream shifts to an Italian-style coffee pot boiling on a stove, its steam gradually filling the screen. From this image the narrative moves to a young woman clutching the pot and running. Across lawns and down cobbled streets she sprints in a bizarre, epic marathon before arriving at an assembled group – Lynch among them – holding out their empty cups.

Does this work make sense? Not really, but then dreams rarely do. 'In some ways these are narratives based on an example of the unconscious process and how connected we are', Lynch says of his work. He is intrigued by the ways in which casual social interactions in the real world resurface in the subconscious.

Lynch was born in 1974 and graduated from the Victoria College of the Arts in Melbourne in 1996. He has exhibited widely, garnering a powerful reputation as a leader in animated work, but also becoming renowned for his drawings and installations. He exhibited his work in the large group exhibition, '2004: Australian Culture Now', at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne, inspiring curator Charlotte Day to write:

Lynch's intense, handmade drawings, paintings, animations and installations create a kind of conduit between the everyday and our fantasy lives ... The artist's recent series of animations are illustrated versions of some ordinary and other more intimate dreams that his family and close friends have had in which he appears. If it is true that it is only in dreams that we encounter our real desires, then these animations may be more representative of our reality than life itself. Dream on.'



The interconnection between individuals has been an ongoing theme in Lynch's work. He has worked closely with artists such as Sharon Goodwin and Amanda Marburg in the performance collective DAMP, and has also been associated with Geoff Lowe and Jacqui Riva's artists' group, A Constructed World. Both collectives undermined the myth of the lone, heroic artist. In 1997 Lynch helped form Rubik, an artists' collective, with Julia Gorman, Andrew McQualter and Ricky Swallow, based on the model of a record label or fanzine. The aim of the collective was to seek out alternative audiences and means of distribution of artists' work through the production of books and the staging of events. 'As much as we might be in denial about it, we are all born into groups', says Lynch. 'The first is family. It's those unconscious groupings that lead to a lot of this stuff.'

Video as a medium has grown in stature internationally over the last decade with video artists such as William Kentridge and Bill Viola now enjoying high profiles. Like Kentridge, Lynch combines the medium of video with imagery drawn or painted by hand. Lynch turned to video after studying painting. He says of his work:

It's kind of experiential. They're all drawings of friends or colleagues ... dumped into a video program. I like throwing in different textures, drawings, photo stills, text and pencil, watercolour and sepia tones. It's not what you would call 'straight' animation. I could have done four stills each second to make it flow, but one still per second gives it a fractured quality. I'm more interested in what's not there, in forgetting.

It is in these gaps that Lynch's animations succeed. He avoids the usual clichés of dream depiction. Rather, his netherworld is a down-to-earth place, where time is slow, made sleepy and hazy. Remembering dreams is a hazardous process at the best of times, and the strange stop-start effect of Lynch's work captures a degree of uncertainty. Says Lynch: 'Society is repressed in a lot of ways. My work is trying to deal with that, with those unconscious connections.'

1 Charlotte Day, 'James Lynch', in 2004, exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2004, p. 166.

James Lynch is represented by Uplands Gallery, Melbourne, and Galerie Frank, Paris.