MS&MR
XEROX MISSIVE 1977/2011
AGNSW CONTEMPORARY PROJECTS
8 DECEMBER 2011 – 5 FEBRUARY 2012
#3.11
Interlaced with this material is footage of Tessa taken by the artists in 2011 on location in California, as well as extracts from an associated interview in which she reflects on Dick's beliefs and their shared period of upheaval. Tessa held a particular significance for Dick as one of his 'dark-haired girls': a recurring figure in his novels who would disclose to the protagonist that their perception of reality was false. Her appearance to him in real life seemed to confirm elements of his fictional writing to be true. XEROX MISSIVE 1977/2011 plays on the idea of Tessa returning telepathically to Dick from his future, where she is now decades older, fabricating a conversation between the two figures across an impossible stretch of time and distance. In effect, the work functions as a third temporal order, an alternate reality that can exist only within the dimensions of the screen.

As it plays out within each video and across the multiple channels, the exchange between the two figures is disorienting and unnerving. XEROX MISSIVE 1977/2011 immerses viewers in a realm that reflects Dick's unstable sense of reality after 1974. It also recalls the deranged worlds described in his novels: 'delirious, paranoid, entropic and mystical, [places] in which reality had given way to endlessly regressing fictions, vast conspiracies, and mysterious messages from other realms'. This notion of indeterminacy is reflected in the void-like space of the videos, in which the figures float like spectres or phantasms.

The abstracted, nebulous way in which Dick and Tessa are represented frames their role as signifiers. Ultimately, the work aims to transcend their biography in order to address broader questions about the nature of time and reality, and the sometimes-precarious threshold between authenticity and artifice. Correspondingly, it considers the way in which history and memory cut across these domains. In exploring how the archive relates to these concerns, Ms&Mr borrow from archival processes. They gather together traces of past events and map a correlation between them. However, the artists deliberately draw on source material that has an ambiguous archival status: footage and sound that is essentially documentary, but that describes beliefs and events at least partially speculative or delusional. In so doing, XEROX MISSIVE 1977/2011 points to the inherent slippage between the objective and subjective that underscores the archive's operation, much the same as its memory itself.

2. On occasions, these experiences of paranormal phenomena were shared with Tessa.
3. Where linear time moves from past to present to future, Dick considered orthogonal time to ‘touch’ the past, present and future simultaneously.

Anneke Jaspers
Assistant curator, contemporary art
Art Gallery of New South Wales
It’s a common theme in my writing, that a dark-haired girl shows up at the door of the protagonist and tells him that his world is delusional, that there’s something false about it. Well, this did finally happen to me ... she did appear, she was a total stranger and she did inform me of this fact. That some of my fictional works were in a literal sense true.

**Philip K. Dick, Speech Given at Science Fiction Convention, Metz, France, 1977**

**Biography**

Stephanie and Richard nova Milne have exhibited nationally and internationally as the collaborative entity Ms&Mr since 2003, including solo exhibitions at Artspace, Sydney [2010], The Physics Room, Christchurch, New Zealand [2010], and Kaliman Gallery, Sydney (2009 and 2007). In 2008 Ms&Mr exhibited in Primavera at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 2005 they were awarded the prestigious Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship, enabling residencies in New York, Toronto and Paris. Their work is held in a number of collections, including the Musée National d’Art Moderne at the Centre Pompidou, France.

**Reading, viewing, listening list**

by Ms&Mr

- Elisabeth Antebi, _Les évades du futur_, television documentary, France, 1973
- Emmanuel Carrère, _I am alive and you are dead: a journey into the mind of Philip K Dick_, Picador, USA, 2003
- Robert Crumb, The religious experience of Philip K Dick, an 8-page illustrated feature about PKD, originally published in _Weirdo #17_, 1986
- Philip K. Dick, _Ubik_, Doubleday, USA, 1969
- Chris Marker, _La jetée_, film, black and white, 28 min, France, 1962
- Andrei Tarkovsky, _Solyaris_, film, 165 min, Soviet Union, 1972

**List of works**

_XEROX MISSIVE 1977/2011_

multi-channel video installation
archived video recordings (1977) transferred to HD video, original 3K video (2011), animation

A trans-temporal portrait:
Philip K Dick (1928–82)
Tessa B Dick (b 1954)

Production images courtesy of the artists

The artists wish to thank Tessa B Dick, Rhea-Élisabeth Tarjy and the Crestline Historical Museum, Lindsay and Maria.