

Avatar
2005

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of New South Wales, Sydney

As part of 'Disobedience', curated by David McNeill and Zanny Begg, The CGI component of this work was located inside an aluminium garden shed, which I wedged between two walls in the gallery. It featured a digital graphics sequence, viewed on a monitor set up on a work-bench. The shelves carried a computer, audio speakers and a utility box holding audio components for an external speaker, which recounted the biblical story of Jonah.

The looped sequence was created on flight simulator software and commences with a twin-engine aircraft going through its pre-flight checks outside a Qantas air freight building.

Accompanied by realistic air-traffic control and pilot exchanges, the plane takes off from Sydney's Kingsford-Smith airport, accurate in all detail. The flight heads northwest, passing over Darling Harbour with the city on the right. A short while after passing over the Harbour Bridge, the aircraft turns sharply right and as it comes out of its tight turn, the city becomes clearly visible from the cockpit. Air-traffic control requests radio contact, but the pilot remains silent. The plane gathers speed, nearing the Opera House. As it reaches the point of no return over the city, it becomes evident that the Governor Phillip Tower, with its State Government departments and financial houses, has become a target.

There is no explosion, no fireball with showering glass. Dream-like, the plane flies right through the building as if it was a mirage. Then, the entire sequence starts up again in an endless loop.

The title, Avatar, refers to an identity that participants assume in interactive computer games. I wanted to render visible the threat and anxiety that we must all now live with.