The Moving Image-Key Points

- Toward the end of the Twentieth Century, as traditional forms of art were increasingly challenged, the moving image played a significant role in our evolving understanding of what art could be.

- Since its early days, OCMA has championed artistic work made in film and video and considered these works alongside those of other vanguard artists. Collecting video works has also always been important to the museum. Today, there are nearly one hundred video works in the collection.

- The artists whose work is on view here explore the capabilities and limitations of the camera, and play with light and the projected image in space.

- These artists also consider the conceptual implications of the recorded image over time.

WALL LABELS

I. INTRO PANEL

The Moving Image

“IN TODAY’S WORLD THE CAMERA IS THE EMBLEMATIC INSTRUMENT, THE ICON OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS…”

–BILL VIOLA, 1997

Toward the end of the twentieth century, as artists challenged traditional forms of artmaking, the moving image played a significant role in our evolving understanding of what art could be. Since its early days, OCMA has championed artistic work made in film and video and considered these works alongside those of other vanguard artists.

Beginning as early as 1969, with The Movie Show; Seven Stages of Hollywood from Silents to Cinemascope, The Newport Harbor Art Museum (now OCMA) has had over twenty exhibitions focusing on film and video-based artwork. In turn, the museum has produced important scholarship on the subject and supported significant solo exhibitions for artists such as Bill Viola and Diana Thater, featured here in this installation. From 2004 to 2009, OCMA’s Orange Lounge was a gallery in Sout Coast Plaza dedicated to video art, and the recent Pacific Project space at OCMA showcased the work of emerging video artists from the Pacific Rim. Collecting video works has always been important to the museum, beginning with early work by William Wegman, Nam June Paik, Paul McCarthy, and others. Today, there are nearly one hundred video works in the collection.

The artists whose work is on view here experiment with the formal aspects of film and video in groundbreaking ways. They explore the capabilities and limitations of the camera and play with light and the projected image in space. Some, like Thater and Yoshua Okón, consider the moving image in the context of larger room-size installations, while others, like Viola, Elad Lassry, and Jeremy Blake, make work for a singular, framed image. These artists also consider conceptual implications of the recorded image over time. Some works on view have clear beginnings and endings, while others question the very concept of a linear
narrative. Above all, these artists challenge our thinking and the ways in which we encounter and perceive the world around us.

The Moving Image section of PIVOTAL continues in the video space located in the lobby.

II. JAMES BLAKE | (b. 1971, Los Angeles; d. 2007, New York)

*Winchester Redux*, 2004
Single-channel video, color, sound
5 minutes
Edition of 25
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge
2005.003

In the early 2000s, artist Jeremy Blake was a leading innovator of new media work, using new digital technologies to merge the traditions of painting and filmmaking. Toying with fields of color and psychedelic patterns of images in combination with ambient sound, Blake used the medium of video to evoke psychological space and abstract associations of sight, sound and memory.

*Winchester Redux* combines 8mm film footage, static 16mm shots of old photographs, hundreds of ink drawings, and intricate frame-by-frame digital retouching. The video was inspired by the true story of the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California and its original owner Sarah Winchester, superstitious widow of gun magnate William Winchester. After the death of her husband and child, she built the allegedly haunted mansion continuously for 38 years with no architect. She believed this would atone for the angry spirits of people killed by the guns her husband produced. Today, the 160-room mansion has freestanding doorways, stairways that go nowhere, and miles of dark hallways for the spirits to roam. Of the Winchester series Jeremy Blake wrote, it “distills and abstracts American myths of violence and spiritual reconciliation.”

This work was acquired by OCMA in 2005 before the artist’s untimely death in 2007, and was shown in OCMA’s 2009 exhibition, *The Moving Image: Scan to Screen, Pixel to Projection*.

III. ELAD LASSRY | (b. 1977, Tel Aviv, Israel; lives/works: Los Angeles)

*Untitled*, 2008
16mm color film
9 minutes, 20 seconds
Edition 3of 3 + 2 APs
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge with additional funds provided by Anita and Myron Kunin
2008.004

Israeli-born artist Elad Lassry’s work questions long-held notions of visual perception, perspective, and constructed space. *Untitled* references the visual language of contemporary art history. The projected film reconstructs a series of photographs of architectural and sculptural structures found in 1970s textbook illustrations about perception. Actors are superimposed over the images creating a linear and interpersonal sub-narrative. The hardly perceptible, slow-moving image is shown looped on a 16 mm film projector. The projector itself becomes a sculptural object, offering the soundtrack to the work through its mechanism and creates a nostalgic experience of sound and physicality, shifting the focus from the image to the mechanics of vision.

This film and other works by Lassry were included in OCMA’s 2008 *California Biennial*. 
IV. **KELLY NIPPER** | (b. 1971, Edina, Minnesota; lives/works: Los Angeles)

*Interval, 2000*
Type C prints
Edition 3 of 6
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge
2001.023

Kelly Nipper creates carefully executed works based in photography, video, and performance that explore nuances related to time, motion, weight, space, and dimension. Often employing dancers and meticulously choreographed activities and movements, Nipper’s works are poetic studies of motion and relationships. Although her highly formal works often engage precise structures and systems, they nonetheless leave room for chance and the possibility of a collapse of order.

*Interval* is an elegant photographic series of images featuring four seemingly related positions held by a dancer against the formal aesthetics of mid-century design and architecture. In this simple yet enigmatic sequence, Nipper calls attention to unknown movements between the frames, while introducing a subtle disruption of logical order. Interval suggests the imaginary activity that takes place in the space between a series of images of a body in motion.

This work and others by Nipper were featured in OCMA’s 2008 exhibition *Girls Night Out* and in OCMA’s 2002 *California Biennial*.

V. **YOSHUA OKÓN** | (b. 1970, Mexico City; lives/works: Mexico City and Los Angeles)

*Coyoteria, 2003*
Video installation with objects
16 minutes, 54 seconds
Edition 1 of 3
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge
2004.009

Through his provocative work, Yoshua Okón probes moral and social issues related to racism, class structure, and corruption. In many of his works he constructs unusual or unsettling social situations and records the resulting unpredictable consequences. As Okón describes it, “These interventions act like detonators that dislocate social codes, bringing along uncontrolled and unexpected effects.”

In *Coyoteria*, originally performed in his Mexico City studio, Okón references German artist Joseph Beuys’s 1974 performance,*I Like America and America Likes Me*, where the artist shared a space with a live coyote for three days. In his contemporary, racially charged version, Okón replaces the animal with a human *coyote*, the slang term for a middleman often hired by Mexican immigrants to smuggle them across the US border.

Yoshua Okón’s work was featured in OCMA’s 2002 *California Biennial* and the 2013 *California-Pacific Triennial*.

VI. **DIANA THATER** | (b. 1962, San Francisco; lives/works: Los Angeles)

*Wicked Witch, 1996*
Three-lens video projectors, laserdisc player, CAV laserdisc, and existing architecture
Edition 2 of 2
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge
1999.016
Diana Thater is a groundbreaking and world-renowned artist who defined new parameters for the use of video imagery in space as installation. Her work contemplates the relationships and intricacies of our technologically mediated world relative to nature and the environment.

This work was inspired by the scene from the classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, when the witch peers into her crystal ball and conjures up a field of poppies — the flowers that produce opium. In the film, the witch aims to foil Dorothy’s venture to Oz by overwhelming her senses with the vivid colors and forms of flowers. Through her installation *Wicked Witch*, Thater hopes to have a similar effect on her viewers. The shifting images are composed of multiple views of a field thick with pink, orange, and red flowers. Thater has further intensified their disorienting effects by brightening the color and de-calibrating the projector lenses. Thater deliberately leaves the analog video equipment exposed and visible as both visual and functional components of the installation. The projector beams create a 360-degree panorama in which both the spectator’s body and shadow become part of the work.

*Wicked Witch* was first shown as a solo project at OCMA in 2000 and recently in OCMA’s 2014 exhibition, *The Avant Garde Collection*.

**VII. BILL VIOLA | (b. 1951, New York; lives/works: Long Beach, California)**

*The Reflecting Pool* from *The Reflecting Pool-Collected Work 1977-80, 1977*
Single-channel video
7 minutes, 27 seconds
Museum purchase with funds provided through prior gift of Lois Outerbridge 2004.011

Since the 1970s, Bill Viola has been a pioneer in the field of experimental video art. *The Reflecting Pool* exemplifies Viola’s exploration of temporality and human experience through the pairing of video editing techniques and metaphorical subject matter.

In this video, the artist is seen approaching a swimming pool in a forested area. As he jumps into the air, his image freezes above the water, which continues gently moving below. According to Viola, *The Reflecting Pool* “concerns the emergence of the individual into the natural world — a kind of baptism.”

OCMA organized a major solo installation of Viola’s work, *Theatre of Memory*, in 1997. *The Reflecting Pool* and other works by Viola were included in OCMA’s 2009 exhibition, *The Moving Image: Scan to Screen, Pixel to Projection*. 