

JENNIFER WOLFE

# SPECTACLE: THE MUSIC VIDEO

Assembling the Innovative Interactive Museum Exhibit



The music video, a huge part of youth culture for just about anyone who grew up during the 1980s—the MTV Generation, as the demographic came to be branded—is celebrated as an art form in the exhibition *Spectacle: The Music Video*, now at the Museum of the Moving Image in New York.

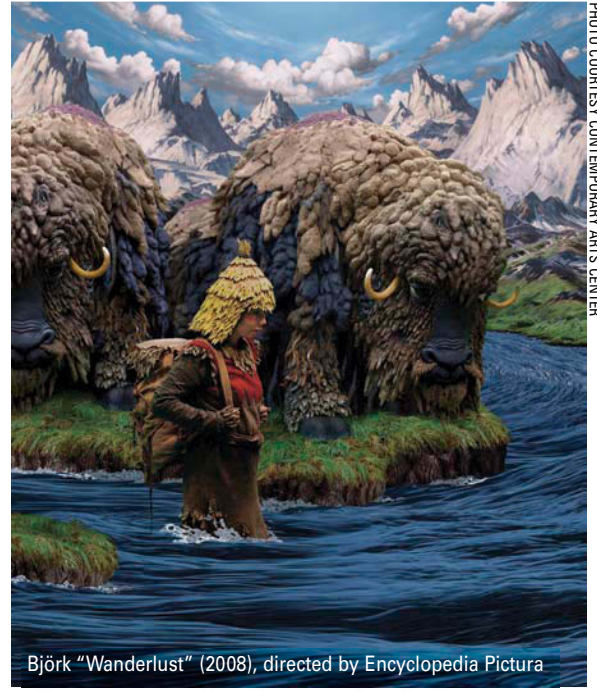
The exhibit, which runs in New York through June 23, debuted in Cincinnati at the Contemporary Arts Center, after which it traveled to São Paulo, Brazil, where it was displayed at the Museum of Image and Sound. *Spectacle* will



PHOTO BY ERIC HARVEY BROWN/MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE



PHOTO COURTESY CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER



Björk "Wanderlust" (2008), directed by Encyclopedia Pictura

eventually migrate to Australia, where it will be on display at the Australian Centre for Moving Images in Melbourne from Sept. 26 through March 2, 2014.

*Spectacle* features more than 300 videos by directors including David Fincher, Michel Gondry, Spike Jonze, Mark Romanek and Floria

Sigismondi, set pieces and artifacts from videos, and other interactive installations that present the changing landscape of the art of the music video,



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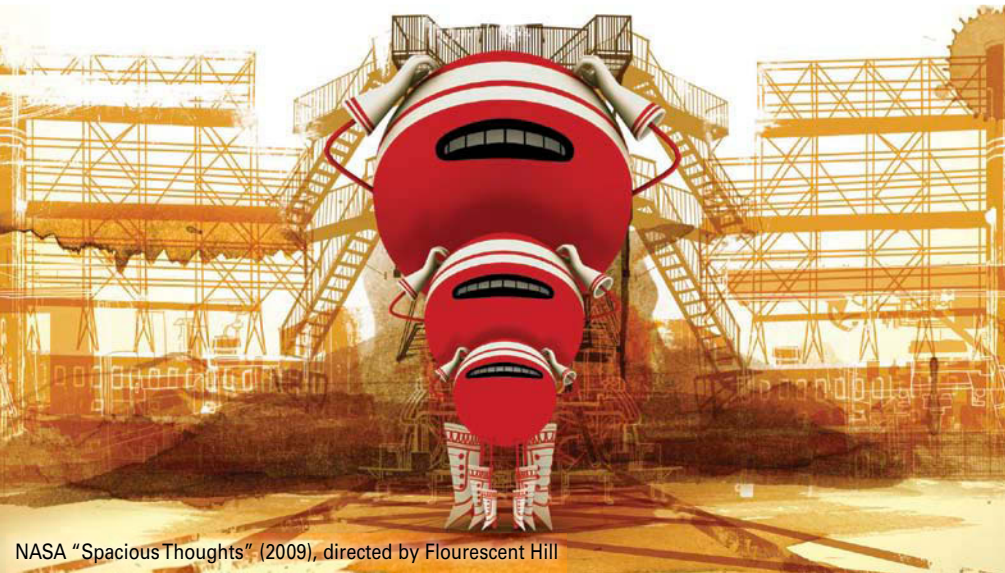
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Six-foot-tall milk carton prop from Blur video "Coffee and TV" re-created for the exhibition



Re-created environment for Steriogram video "Walkie Talkie Man," directed by Michel Gondry, featuring production design by Lauri Faggioni



NASA "Spacious Thoughts" (2009), directed by Fluorescent Hill



Carl Goodman, New York Museum of the Moving Image executive director, and co-curators Jonathan Wells and Meg Grey Wells

highlighting the genre's place at the forefront of creative technology and its role in pushing the boundaries of creative production.

Curated by Jonathan Wells and Meg Grey Wells of creative collective Flux, *Spectacle* features important examples from music video history, from early pioneers like Devo, the Beastie Boys, Michael Jackson and Madonna, who used the medium to define their public identities, to artists such as Björk and OK Go, who follow in their footsteps today.

"We've always had a dream to bring the work that we do to a bigger platform," says Meg, who,

with Jonathan, curates a video series at the Los Angeles Hammer Museum that's now in its sixth year. "The goal has been to showcase these cultural artifacts in a museum environment"

"At the same time, we wanted to champion filmmakers who are creating unique and innovative and artistic work," adds Jonathan. "Music videos are a creative sandbox for filmmakers to explore different techniques, and they have gone on to improve the quality of cinema itself"

Alexei Tylevich, founder and creative director of bi-coastal creative studio LOGAN, collaborated with Flux to create the exhibition, devising the

show title, classifying and defining the thematic groupings within the show, and determining the best way to display the items in the exhibit. Tylevich and his team conceptualized and implemented the *Spectacle* branding and the overall identity for the exhibition, including the creation of digital 3D replicas of each museum interior using Autodesk Maya and MAXON Cinema 4D.

Cincinnati-based design studio and production company Lightborne handled the nearly 2.5 TB of video data the traveling exhibit comprises, including overseeing the 260 machine-hours needed for ingest and transcoding alone. Led

by creative director Ben Nicholson, Lightborne maintains a rotating team of designers and animators dedicated to the project.

“This is an ongoing project that started a year ago and has continued to evolve as the show travels the world, requiring pretty significant tweaks and adjustments in terms of adapting the design of the show to each venue,” says Nicholson, who is credited as co-curator of the traveling exhibit. “LOGAN’s digital 3D replicas really helped us previsualize the space and design an accurate layout of the physical components of the show.”

One of the key challenges for the Lightborne team was creating a standard format for the various types of media. “Everything had to be the same frame rate while remaining true to the artist’s original intent—letterbox, widescreen, whatever,” Nicholson explains.

Tracking down masters for the 300 videos included in the show also proved to be an enormous challenge. “It was really hard,” Nicholson says. “We would get things like ‘The post house went out of business,’ or ‘Go buy the DVD.’ Sometimes we were able to secure full HD masters, but many of these videos hadn’t even been mastered in HD.”



David Bowie “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” (2013), directed by Floria Sigismondi

PHOTO COURTESY NSA FILMS

Material for the exhibit was ingested into Apple Final Cut Pro and converted to ProRes 422 format, then output at 1920 x 1080 29.97 fps. Following that, material was compressed to H.264 so that it would run consistently on the various media players across the 70 different displays, including a 47-inch 3D TV, touch monitors, four Barco RLMW6 projectors, one BenQ MP525P projector and a Christie LX400.

“We’re still getting better at it,” Nicholson concludes. “The goal is to get these things to look the best they possibly can. As the show moves forward, we’re trying to improve the technology behind it. We’re even getting better masters from production companies to replace the ones they’ve given us in the past, so we’ve gone back and replaced a few.” **dv**

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