

Gordon Bennett

Performance with object for the expiation of guilt (Apple Premiere mix)

1995

single-channel standard-definition video, 4:3, colour, sound

3:25 minutes

Purchased through the Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2017

From his early Brisbane exhibitions in the mid-1980s until his untimely death in 2014, Gordon Bennett was a consistently provocative artistic agitator and critic of Australia's colonial past and present. *Performance with object for the expiation of guilt (Apple Premiere mix)* was produced just after Bennett had attended summer school classes in video-making. It shows the artist in a blockishly forceful black suit wielding a bullwhip, cracking it near a coffin as projected words denigrating Indigenous people behind him contribute to form a wholly enveloping scene of lurid and chaotic violence.

The soundtrack features Ice T's song *Race War*, connecting the Australian situation to race issues in America. So too does the bracketed reference to the work's technological heritage, a move that explicitly locates it in dialogue with MTV's new dominance of the pop culture sphere and its role in the continued extension of that country's cultural imperialism.

Gordon Bennett was born in Monto, Queensland in 1955. He lived and worked in Brisbane until his untimely death in 2014. One of Australia's most prominent and critically engaged artists, Bennett's thirty year career saw him achieve significant national and international recognition, with representation in biennials in Sydney (1992, 2000, 2008), Venice (1995), Kwangju (2000), Shanghai (2000), Prague (2005) and Berlin (2014), as well as the prestigious Documenta 13 in Kassel (2012).