

Dude, where did I bury my car?

Louise Schwartzkoff

TO MAKE his video *Road Movie (Part 1)*, John Gillies bought a \$10,000 Subaru, drove it to the Southern Highlands and then buried it.

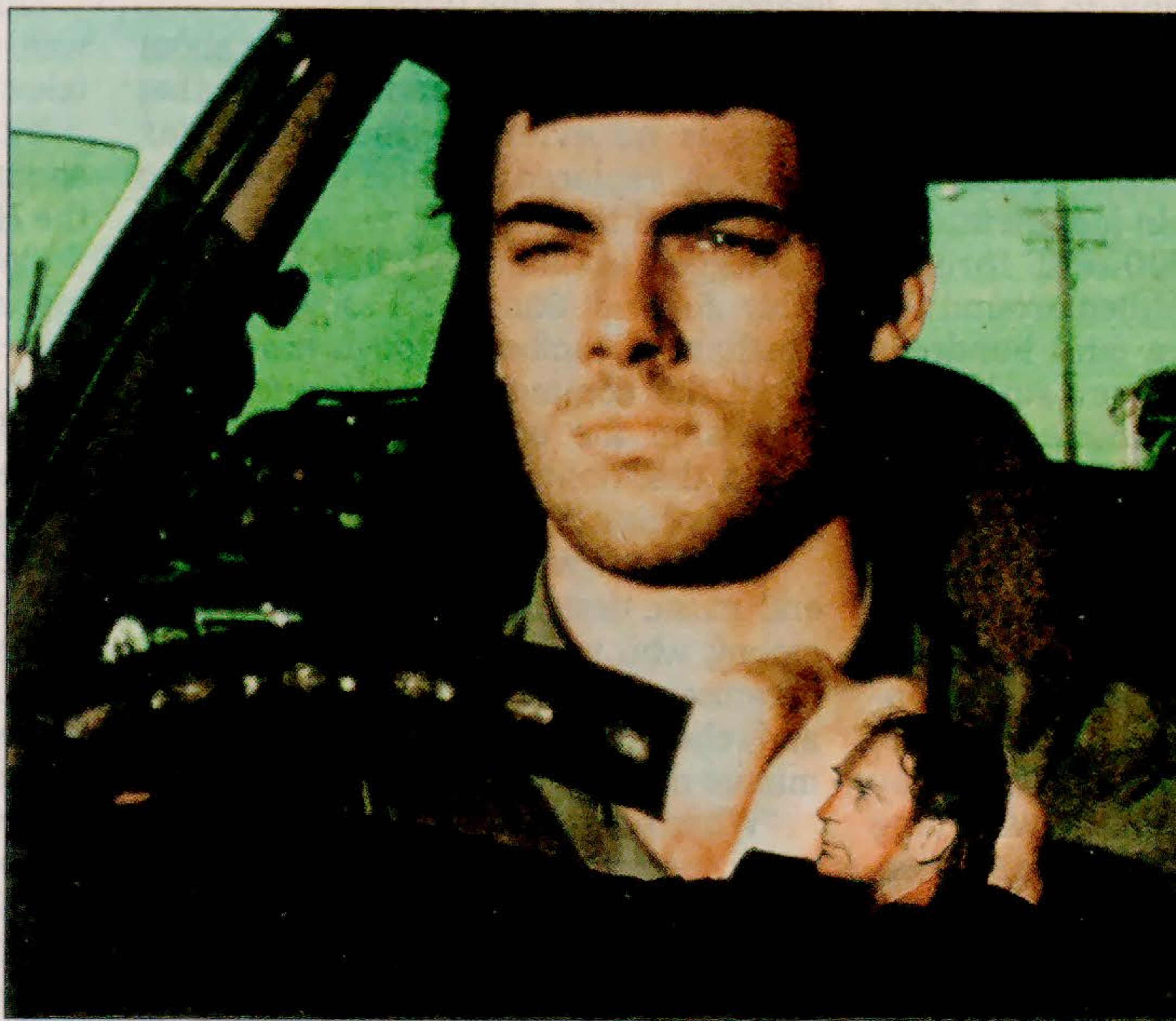
When he dug it out after filming, the roof had collapsed, the windows broken, and piles of clay landed on the seats.

"I wanted to destroy the car without crashing it or exploding it," Gillies says. "We've seen that so many times and it wasn't something I wanted to do, but I did want to express that feeling of ambivalence so many people have towards their cars."

Gillies owns a car, but feels guilty about driving.

"The guy at my garage told me I should be using it more, but I'm worried about the environment and the price of petrol," he says. "Cars offer us freedom, but they're also a kind of cage. It feels to me like the car has reached a moment of crisis."

As he filmed the car's journey from gridlocked traffic on Parramatta Road to a deep pit, Gillies remembered why he avoided driving in Sydney. "I spent a lot of time sitting next to Parramatta Road, inhaling the



Driven ... John Gillies, bottom right, looks at his video. Photo: Kate Geraghty

fumes and hearing all that noise," he says. "When the drivers saw me with a camera, some of them thought I was a cop. You get some annoying comments. Some people even mooned us as they passed."

The work is screening at the Museum of Contemporary Art's *Video Logic* exhibition.

It is projected across a wall at the gallery like a moving painting.

"The colours in this work are really important," Gillies says. "It's also quite cinematic. The thing about video projection is that it's an impure medium. It has elements of cinema, performance, electronic art and painting. It's a vessel where all

these forms and rich histories can be contained."

In recent years, video art has gained prominence in Australia though the work of young artists such as Shaun Gladwell and TV Moore. Gladwell's *Storm Sequence* last year became the first digital video work to be auctioned in Australia. It sold for \$84,000 at Sotheby's in Melbourne.

The works on display in *Video Logic* are by older artists who have worked in the medium for decades. "There have been at least three generations of video artists in Australia," Gillies says. "It has a longer history than most people realise, but I guess it has come of age in the last 10 years. It's become cheaper and more accessible for artists, and museums now have the facilities to deal with the technology."

Road Movie (Part 1) is the first instalment of a series about transport and movement. The buried car is unlikely to feature again. "It's now sitting in a bad state in the street outside my place in Leichhardt," Gillies says. "It's probably fixable, but I don't think it's worth repairing."

Video Logic is at the Museum of Contemporary Art until November 2.