RealTime

free

Performance and the national arts Feb–Mar 1996

Ken Ria, Marshall Islands Pete Johnson

Stelarc
Radio Eye
Rolf de Heer
Ballarat Opera
Pay TV
Indonesia
Adelaide Fringe
Mardi Gras
Kronos
Kids
Scorsese
Kusturica
WA Arts Politics

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In Spaces Unsuspected
Early film at MCA
Multimedia
ANAT
Burning the Interface
Flickerfest
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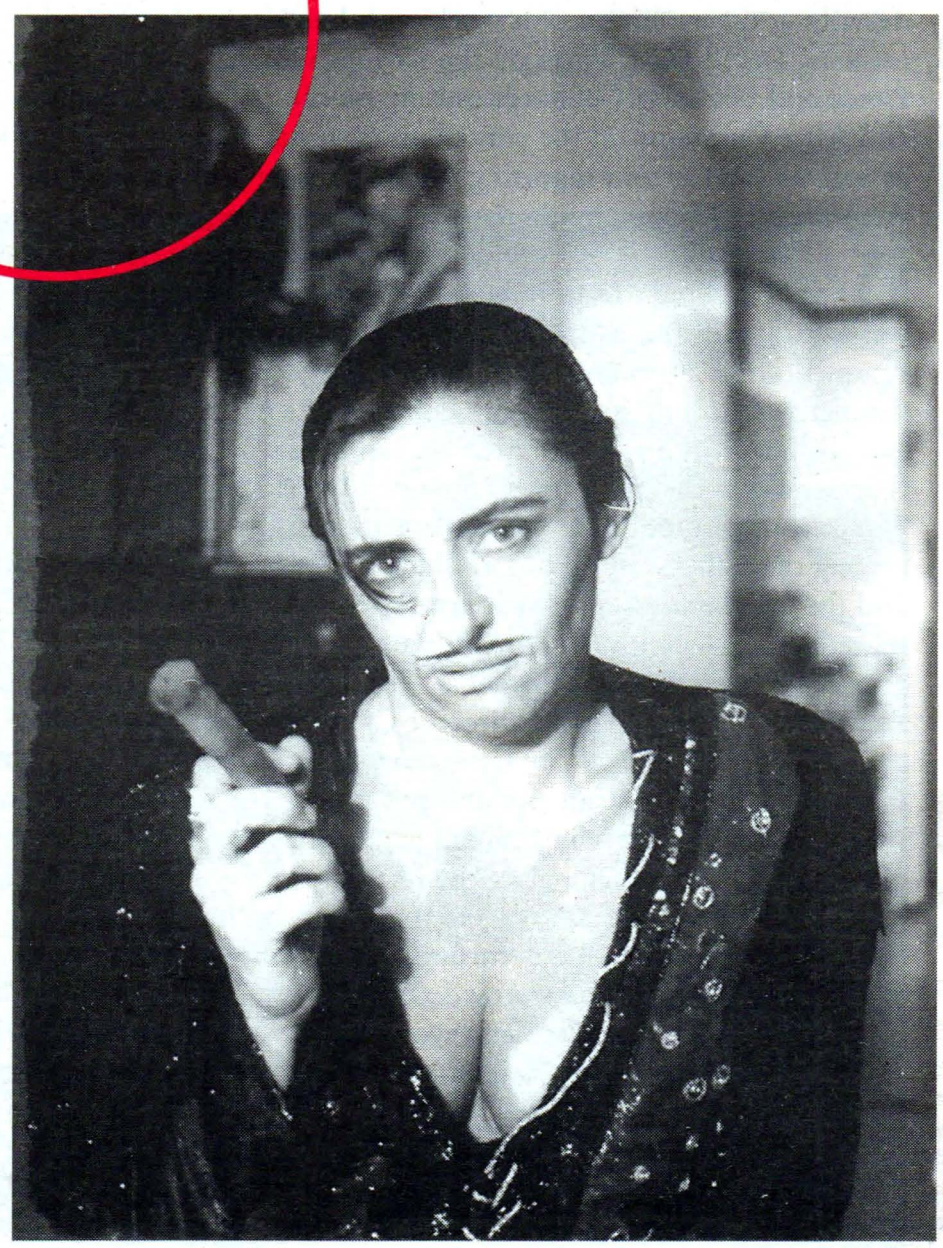

C. Moore Hardy

OnScreen

film, media & techno-arts

11

Welcome to *RealTime 11 i*ncorporating our first screen culture supplement *OnScreen.* With support from the Australian Film Commission, *OnScreen* aims to bring you engaging, critical and informed writing on film, media and techno-arts from across Australia. *OnScreen* will reflect *RealTime's* broader focus on mixing genres and blurring boundaries, especially appropriate as aspects of screen culture become increasingly interlinked in the wake of technological, aesthetic and policy developments. Our first issue gives some indication of *OnScreen's* scope: Media analyst Gil Appleton clarifies the confusion around the interminable policy permutations in Pay TV; Balkans commentator Eddy Jokovich casts a critical eye over Kusturica's *Underground;* John McConchie interviews director of *Bad Boy Bubby* Rolf de Heer about his new film *The Quiet Room;* John Conomos surveys CD ROM based artform practice in his preview of the MCA's *Burning the Interface* exhibition; two writers coming from very different perspectives size up Larry Clark's *Kids,* Boris Kelly visits Stelarc's web site and Anna Dzenis engages with the textuality of Lesley Stern's new book *The Scorsese Connection.* We also bring you reviews of recent new media conferences, *Flickerfest,* the recent UNSW College of Fine Arts screenings, and new interactive media installations, plus previews of the Adelaide Festival film program, the MCA's major retrospective of early film and the Mardi Gras Film Festival. We'd welcome your feedback, and hope you enjoy *OnScreen.*

Realtime 11 is strong on process in performance, dance and music, whether it's Jenny Kemp and Cath MacKinnon on preparing new works for the Adelaide Festival, Tess De Quincey and Stuart Lynch planning 'to dance Sydney' in 100 performances, John Nobbs and Jacqui Carroll discussing performance and training for their Suzuki Tadashi-inspired Frank Productions, choreographer Graeme Watson shaping *Antwatchers* for One Extra, Deborah Pollard describing the evolution of a work with Indonesian actors and farmers, David Harrington on the Kronos Quartet 'as process', Ion Pierce and Nicholas Gebhardt musing on the politics of composition and Alice Cummins on the contribution of her studio to her work, as well as Jan Cattoni reporting on the making and teaching of documentary filmmaking in the Marshall Islands.

On the arts politics front the concern among artists over the restructuring of the Australia Council persists. The issue of artist representation appears to have been resolved with the Australia Council confirming its commitment to peer assessment and the establishment of a range of artform funds in which artists will be represented in the majority, as they will be on Council. MOB has also become a fund (MOF) but its members still don't have an artist among them they can talk to about art! The Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, on which artists were poorly represented, has parted company with the Australia Council, apparently on the grounds that its brief is broader—"heritage, civics, centenary and Federation", said departing director Craddock Morton, to which we could add Fundraising. The issue now is the fate of specific artforms in terms of funding strategies and programs. The second round of the consultative Australia Council forums have been suspended until after the elections. Meanwhile the restructuring goes on and the new coverall Handbook will be released in April. So much for consultation. The pre-Xmas forums were hardly models of excellence—brief meetings crowded with more questions than could be answered. A day in each city would have been ideal with carefully planned agendas, brief keynote addresses and ample discussion time. Too much to hope for?

Hybrid artists were alarmed at the forums to find themselves missing from the list of Funds and the list of closing dates for applications for funding, and 'their' funds allocated to an Advisory Committee to Council. And they were not to be represented on Council. In principle, an advisory committee could encourage all funds to think in terms of innovative interdisciplinary work, even talk to each other. However the Hybrid Arts has been supporting distinctive work in sound, the body, multimedia and interactivity. As the funded area most directly and critically engaged with the issues of *Creative Nation* it seems shortsighted to fail to acknowledge Hybrid Arts as a growing area of activity (not a form), as a Fund and as worthy of representation on Council.

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Between a rock and a hard place

Sarah Miller explores the relationship between politics, art and policy in WA

Talking about state governments in terms of their artistic policies can seem like a contradiction in terms. Historically, their role has been the provision of ongoing infrastructure support for flagship institutions: state theatres, state operas, state ballets, state museums, state art galleries, state libraries and their regional equivalents. These are understood as the mechanisms through which mainstream Australia articulates its traditional (sic) values and aspirations. These activities receive dominant support (financial, political and media) as the constitutive identity process of the culture.

The nature of these ongoing commitments may differ in degree and emphasis from state to state but, generally speaking, there is little left in the budget to support the activities of individuals, groups and organisations whose interests and concerns—stating the obvious—are rarely at one with the interests of government. Hence the emphasis in recent months on the structural changes taking place at the Australia Council—historically at least understood as the major provider of direct financial support to artists and contemporary practice in general and, perhaps most importantly, at arm's length from the interests of government.

In Western Australia however, separated from what are understood as the primary centres of power (Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne aka the Golden Triangle), the issues are perceived somewhat differently. It's not uncommon, for instance, to hear the Australia Council referred to as the 'NSW Council', perpetuating a popular myth about financial benefits accruing to artists and groups living in NSW. Bitterness also attaches to the fact that so-called national institutions such as the Australian Opera and Ballet, resident in Sydney and Melbourne respectively, rarely (if ever) make their way across the Nullarbor despite the fact that WA tax dollars also support these institutions. West Australians tend to be cynical about the notion of national institutions generally, from which they perceive they derive little benefit. This rather begs the question of just who does benefit but more of that on another occasion.

In Perth where around 97 per cent of the population of WA live, artists, groups and organisations take for granted a rather more direct relationship to their Parliamentarians and understand the Western Australian Department for the Arts (WA DFTA) as their primary source of funding (at least potentially), of information and of mediation.

Funding occurs in two streams. On the one hand are those institutions—collectively known as the Arts Portfolio Authorities—directly funded by government through the minister's office: the Library Information Services of WA (LISWA), the Western Australian Museum, the Art Gallery of WA, Screen West and the Perth Theatre Trust. It is perhaps worth mentioning in this context that the overall budget for arts and cultural activities in this state is around $59 million. Well over 50 per cent of these funds goes to the aforementioned institutions with LISWA picking up the lion's share with core funding of more than $26 million.

This leaves around $13 million to be distributed by the Arts Investment Division of the WA DFTA in support of various infrastructure needs, individual artist support and projects. Their brief is enormous, encompassing Community Arts, Music, Dance, Literature, Visual Arts and Craft and Theatre as well as—under one heading—Multi-Arts, Marketing & Youth Projects, Regional Arts, Aboriginal Arts, Touring, Conferences, Seminars & Special Events, Creative Fellowships, Arts Agencies Program Funding and 'Other'. It is true to say that Western Australia provides more direct support for the Arts than any other State in Australia.

State departments for the arts (DFTAs) are utterly dependent on their employer, the government of the day—in particular, the minister for the arts—and are bound to further that government's interests. Unlike the Australia Council, a statutory body at arm's length from government, a state DFTA must conform to the changing tides of political fortune. Peer committees are a courtesy and the minister for the arts has the right—albeit rarely exercised—to overturn any decision made by those peer assessment committees. It leads to a certain schizophrenia in both clients and staff, as staff seek to ensure the dictates of government are met while at the same time addressing the realities of the broader arts community. This slippery relationship, where the government purports to represent the needs of mainstream Western Australia, sits at odds with a frequently paternalistic and even punitive approach to artists and arts workers—never understood as bona fide—let alone to tax-paying members of the WA public.

> I *do not consider arts funding a right, nor is it to subsidise an industry, nor to ensure employment of artists and arts workers. It is to enable arts activities and product to reach the people of WA.*
> The Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Peter Foss MLC, in a 1994 letter to WA arts workers

This message from the Minister (ironically) brings State Coalition Arts Policy into line with the rhetoric of a Federal Labor Government as demonstrated through *Creative Nation* and a restructured Australia Council.

A similar discomfort might be discerned in the relationship between the State Coalition Government—headed up by the ultra conservative Richard Court and with more than the usual number of rampaging Baptists on board—and the Department for the Arts itself with their rather closer relationship to the real needs and concerns of the arts community. Economic rationalism, wholesome family values and good clean fun are all emphasised by the current government with a special emphasis on law and order. While Richard Court continues to grandstand on the evils of Native Title and the need to undo the Mabo legislation, the Coalition arts policy prioritises Aboriginal Arts as "the great lost opportunity in WA tourism"! It is up to the WA DFTA to find a way to turn this exploitative approach into a working and consensual reality for Aboriginal peoples working within and without traditional communities.

The last 18 months have seen considerable changes at the WA DFTA, beginning, in 1994, with the introduction of a significant change in terminology. The State of Western Australia no longer funds or even grants financial assistance to individuals, companies or groups. Rather it 'invests' in a range of cultural activities and services. One well known arts identity in Perth has described this policy as the "open pit mining approach to arts funding"—investment as exploitation as opposed to sustainable development.

Underpinning this change lie several well worn but idiotic assumptions: first that artists, companies and arts organisations exist as bloated parasites on the emaciated body of the hard-working tax payer; second that the most urgent cultural imperative this country faces is weaning artists and arts workers off the 'iron lung' of arts funding; and third that the arts generally takes food out of the mouths of starving babies, hospital beds away from the sick, and resources away from the disabled. In the future, artists (presumably assumed to be white, middle class and able bodied) will be not only self-supporting but make a profit as well.

Further changes in 1995 came with the appointment of Dr Margaret Seares to the position of CEO at the DFTA. Seconded from the Music Department of the University of Western Australia, Dr Seares has already made her mark in the position, being seen as not only pragmatic but also even handed and accessible. Following the announcement of the 1995 Arts Investment decisions, the WA DFTA held a public meeting to explain the rationale behind the decisions and to announce its new priorities: Aboriginal Arts, Youth Arts, Country Touring and that new and nationally acclaimed artform area, Marketing. Given the uproar from the field, which generally did not feel increases to various flagships reflected these priorities, the DFTA acted quickly, initiating a series of working parties and strategies to address their concerns. A Youth Arts working party, a Research and Development Policy, strategies to support the development of artists working in multimedia and considerable rethinking on the proposed marketing consultancy, reflect a desire to engage with the arts community, an attitude somewhat at odds with that of government.

The relationship between government, the DFTA and the arts community—perhaps fortunately—is fraught with such contradictions. The issue, as with any policy, lies partly in the rhetoric but more importantly in the interpretation and enactment of that rhetoric. Whilst the DFTA has certainly not been so crass as to describe their new priorities in the language of the Coalition policy, it is interesting to revisit that policy, subtitled "More Jobs, Better Management". For instance:

> *Recognise the role of the Family. The family is and will continue to be the focus for this awakening of interest [in the arts].Artists and arts administrators should always provide encouragement to arts development through families. However, even the most artistic family cannot supply all needs in this area and our education system has a responsibility to help give children a grounding in the arts.*

I am delighted to be able to say that the guidelines and policy are currently being rewritten.

So whilst the language of economic (ir)rationalism predominates and the flagships continue to dominate the fiscal and political playing field, it has to be said that moves are afoot to address some of the more outrageous omissions and blind spots. Beyond which, if it is true that the people get the government they deserve, perhaps the same can be said of artists and arts policy. If artists and arts workers in WA are committed to change, we will all need to work hard at what Rachel Fensham (RT 8) has described as "the collective process of imagining ... determining what is exciting or important to do now" which lies beyond vested and parochial interests or the presumed universalism of a colonialist aesthetic.

Dancing the city

Tess De Quincey and Stuart Lynch brief Keith Gallasch about 100 collaborative, free, unrehearsed performances scheduled for Sydney in May

Posing the questions "Can a city be danced" and "To what extent do artists form the shape, sound and feeling of a city?", two Butoh-trained performers will collaborate directly and indirectly with Sydney artists (performers, musicians, visual artists etc.) in one hundred performances and sites. The discussion began with Lynch and De Quincey describing where they are working now and why.

SL We had been doing many performances across Europe and Australia and it was becoming difficult to do certain choreographic projects that needed a firmer base. So in a way, the next step was to form one base in Sydney and one in Denmark, and to see if that could work.

TD We've wanted to bring our work into some kind of arena which makes sense in relation to an Australian content as well, so that an exchange can take place. I guess I'm fascinated by the sense of a global basis and having people from different nationalities working together. I've been doing this for a long time, but I want it to make more sense, with a rich load of cultural referencing. I can find all nationalities in Sydney.

SL The idea is also that the project could form a formula, a module. More like a circle, not so specifically focused on two people. So we are collaborating with many different Sydney artists.

KG Would the same approach translate to Copenhagen?

SL We're not sure yet. Because of the 'new' Europe it's in a very different frame of mind from Australia. On the other hand, very exciting things are happening in the arts in both places cutting across practices.

KG You've added a high level of chance by planning one-off spontaneous collaborations with a lot of artists.

TD This project is really built around people, artists from Sydney who represent varying aspects of artistic discipline and the city. They represent certain areas of language and definition. We wanted to get hold of this whole grid of what Sydney is and represents.

KG How well do you know Sydney?

SL I've been coming here since '89, My father lives here but I grew up in England and with the myth of Australia. I don't know it as well as people born and bred, but fairly well.

TD My mother was born here and her family is here. I wasn't born here but my knowledge is strongly affected by my family background.

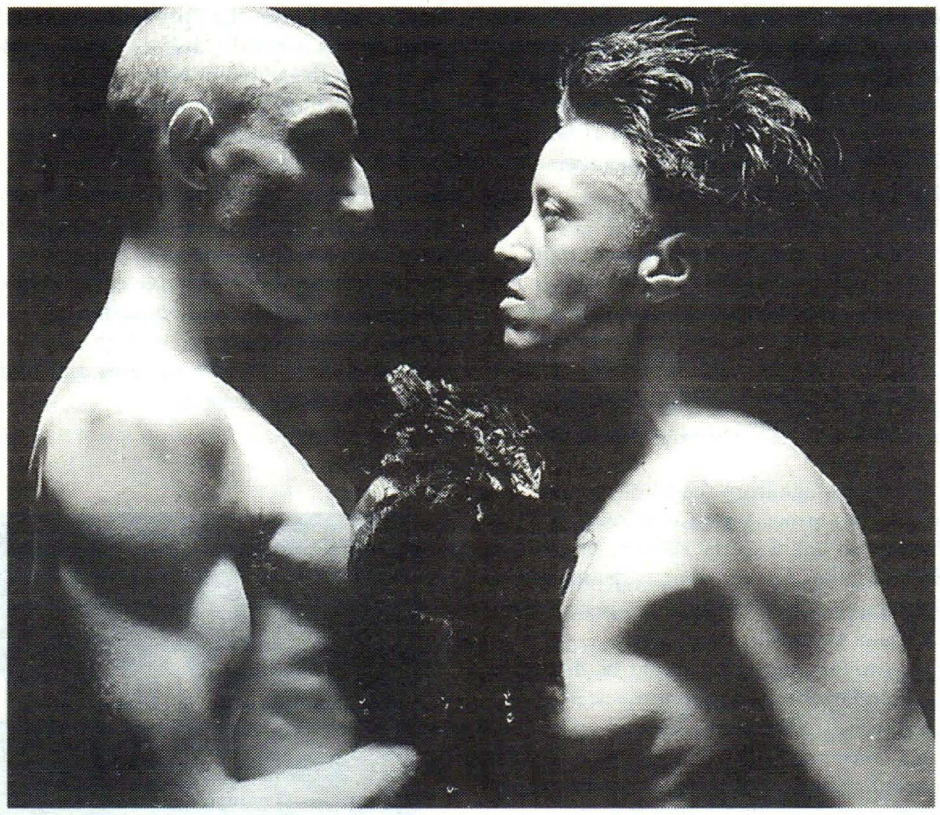
KG It's good sometimes to have a sort of semi-grasp of a place, that outside-inside thing. Even for locals, it's a tricky city. Like many a metropolis, it's highly pluralised, hard to define.

SL The most difficult aspect is the size of it. To what extent can we deal with that?

TD Of course, we'd like to take hold of the whole animal.

KG It's a time of rich exploration of the city in literature, visual arts and performance. There's the debate about the Burley Griffin vision of Canberra, Richard Sennet's new book about cities, Peter Greenaway's big city projects, the 1996 Adelaide Festival focus on architecture, Adelaide and Canberra. Your approach, though, is quite different—involving many locals, very open-ended and looking for spontaneous responses.

TD We're talking about a compression, a combustion, by bringing many things together. The immediacy of meeting and the 'non-preparation' can offer an enormous space to the collaborators. When we work we often have long preparation of basic training but we'll actually put a performance together almost instantly. So we wanted to see how this would work in terms of meeting other people, A musician might rock in without any preparation and just do their thing on the spot. A visual artist might spend months thinking about it, or as long as we can give them when we first make the actual initial contact. We don't want to meet and define whole areas of—"Well, are we going to do this, or are we going to do that?" It's a matter of how we can make this space come together and open up the space for meeting through our practices.



De Quincey & Lynch in *Identity* Freddy Tornberg

KG How important is your selection of the collaborators?

SL What we've done is ask several people to choose for us, adding to the element of chance. We don't want to send out some stiff questionnaire: "Do you want to be involved in non-narrative/narrative performance? Please include a CV."

KG So it has to be informal.

SL Yes and no. There's got to be a middle ground. But I imagine each collaboration will define its own codes and parameters.

TD We did ask our consultants to choose on the basis of finding people who represent different areas, generations and practices. It has nothing to do with whether or not we relate to their work, absolutely nothing. That's going to be the challenge when we meet these people.

KG What spaces will you meet them in?

SL We're investigating different venues all around the city, and hopefully many of the artists will also want to choose a specific site particularly for this collaboration.

TD The cross-points that spark: "Oh, my grandmother's bathroom would be fabulous to do something in," or "There's a nook just down the street that I've had my eye on for years".

KG Will you begin these spontaneous collaborations with a performative element of your own which the other person slots into, or do you wait until you see what they do?

SL I think it's going to depend on the relationships being made as we meet. Probably we'll have to define new strategies for each collaboration.

KG You write about "assaulting the language of dance and performance'. Now, there has been an ongoing assault on the language of dance and performance in theory and especially in practice for many years. For example, you acknowledge there's a lot of interdisciplinary work that has happened in Sydney. How will one hundred meetings with a wide range of artists intersecting by chance affect notions of performance and dance?

TD One of the things that sparked this project was talking with a sculptor whose work we were immensely impressed by. When we actually came to mention performing in that space she looked absolutely amazed and said she couldn't possibly envisage it. Our jaws dropped because the possibility had been so obvious to us. Why is there this gap? It must be possible to bridge. Is the problem because sculpture is assumed to relate to inanimation? So we started out partly from frustration. The issue lies in the relationship and awareness between history and matter and space.

SL We want to work with people who might never have even considered it. Sometimes the practice and theory get lost, they don't meet, and what we very much want is for the theory to come from the practice of working with these people.

KG So you'd rather work with those who don't already have some kind of formulated notion of the interdisciplinary? Because in Sydney there's such a strong interknit performance scene, it's very easy to create self-fulfilling projects.

SL I hope it's a danger that we will get over by asking others to choose artists who represent a broad range of language.

TD Yes, but on the other hand, the 'assault' is also on our practice: the reality of performing three times a day is a massive assault on us and our language. We're really wondering what is going to happen.

SL Our language has developed not only from our work together, but also from our experiences in Japan, and from the people we've been working with over the past few years. For us it's very much about how that language can define these collaborations, and meet each performance, but also how it can be changed. How strong is that language, and how will it meet and move with the challenge from artists coming to work with us?

There is a bigger question for us at the moment of the legitimisation of Europeans working within the Butoh tradition. What we see a lot of is European performers who copy the image of a Japanese making Butoh. Without being xenophobic, I think it necessary at present to cut out the middle man. The actual essence of the works can also be found in a non Japanese body.

KG You trained with Min Tanaka and the Mai Juku Performance Company. Did Tanaka's performance Subject, *where he travelled the length of Japan and performed every day for three months, inspire this event?*

TD Laterally. This was 20 years ago. He was talking about "dancing the space" and "in the space in which you are the space". There's now a great deal of talk of kinaesthetics and the body *in* the environment. For us, it's great. Suddenly we're talking with people who hadn't hitherto really understood how we work in terms of the body as environment and this is straight from the tradition of Min Tanaka and his company. To go back to your point about *Compression 100* being done around cities and whether it's a physical or architectural sense, I think the body *is* the city.

KG The word 'dance' crops up every now and again in your notes as distinct from performance. Do you make a serious distinction between performance and dance?

TD For me, performing in Japan has often been extremely different from performing in Europe. The nature of the language that exists around performance in Japan is different. There are things which are considered natural in Japan but for which there is no language in the West. If you're working within a Butoh tradition it has another set of definitions. As soon as you move outside this tradition it can be immensely problematic: the whole question of nothingness and to dance nothingness and to be nothingness and to have emptiness. For a Westerner, there is no language around emptiness.

KG How does that relate to performance and dance?

TD What I would consider to be dance, my audience won't necessarily consider to be so in Australia. On the other hand it shifts around. If you're in Paris there's a lot more language around it because they've had Butoh performances since the seventies. But again, this has its own limits and it's also very Parisian.

SL What's interesting is that I do know when it's dance and when it's performance—I can recognise the differences, and yet where do they meet and where are they totally different? Are they ever the same? It's a question of semantics. I very much want to go back to Japan and talk with Min again in order to ask him these questions. He's always talked about 'dancing the space', so intrinsically it was 'dance' although his relation to 'performance' is strongly defined by 'performance art'. He says 'I dance the space' Well, do you not 'perform' the space also? Whatever, we're asking "Can a city be danced?" Or performed.

The radical pleasures of rootlessness

Deborah Pollard explores her ongoing relationship with Indonesian culture

Performer Deborah Pollard went to Kalimantan and East and Central Java, Indonesia in 1993 with Canberra's Jigsaw Theatre Company, performing Bruce Keller's *Treehouse,* a play about environmental issues. In rural areas the company were mobbed by intrigued locals. The performances though were greeted with silence by children even though honey bears had been substituted for koalas and komodo dragons for kangaroos. The closer to the cities, the better the response. But what stayed with Deborah was a curiosity about audience response in a very different culture. "We couldn't rely on our old tricks. They weren't communicating anything to our audiences.

"I went back to Indonesia in 1994 on a quick self-funded tour to put my culture shock in perspective with a view to meeting contemporary artists and to see how their processes differed from mine and whether I would think that the work they were producing would translate to an Australian audience."

Deborah asked to meet installation artists or performance artists. The latter didn't mean anything. "Seni installasi" (installation art) was considered "a little bit wanky", considered to be produced by "failed artists" who "have no skills". "I said okay, I want to meet some of these failed painters. So I went to Jogjakarta, an arty city. It was fantastic. I met an abundance of installation artists and foremost, I would say, would be Heri Dono who's visited Australia many times.

"As soon as I met Sutanto—he's a journalist, a visual artist and a composer who works just outside of Jogjakarta in a little place called Mendut which is very close to the famous Borobodur Temple—I knew that he was the one that I could actually work with. Everyone had said 'You must meet Sutanto. You must know, he's crazy'. He's eccentric but I wouldn't say he's crazy. He's a very critical man and he likes to produce 'happenings', still pretty much an unknown form in Indonesia and seen as pretty bizarre. He's out on a limb but because he's a journalist, he has a huge press network. I went back in 1995 to work with Sutanto."

Deborah also worked with Teater Byar in Pekalongan in Central Java, a town famous for its batik but not for performance. "I thought it might be interesting to work rurally as well as in Jogjakarta but it proved to be a very conservative, very Muslim town. We had to be very careful about what we put on so that it wouldn't offend socially, politically or religiously. That's one of the problems with working in Indonesia. The censorship is quite phenomenal. It's embedded in the social fabric."

She worked with an enthusiastic group including the local religious teacher, the tailor, the English teacher, someone who did batik, someone who sold chickens—a range of people. "There was no funding, of course, so they had to have a way to make a living outside of their art." Before Deborah arrived, Teater Byar was doing text-based work in a culture committed to narrative. "After a month and a half I moved to Jogjakarta but the actors in Teater Byar were so overwhelmed with all the new information I'd given them in the workshop that they somehow found the money and a lot of them came to Jogja. They wanted to be in the next project. As a result of that, we had actors and farmers and visual artists working on a project with Sutanto called *Postcards.* It made a nice mix."

In workshops Deborah offered Suzuki Tadashi training and drama games while the performers demonstrated how they created performances and the martial arts training base they used, probably learned from the military. "They loved the Suzuki. It felt very strange to me, teaching Asians another Asian form of theatre training.

"I wanted to introduce the idea of site-specific work which proved to be quite difficult. The performers were afraid of public opinion within such a small community. If they were seen doing strange things what would it mean? They wanted to use natural sites. I preferred the railway station but we used a waterfall: it was easy to reach from Pekalongan and was visually overwhelming. My role was to create a structure they could work in. They wanted to stand in the waterfall. We added umbrellas (I was encouraging them to think about irony and juxtaposition), and then they wanted to add choreography and beeps and whistles to go with the movements. The sounds were drowned out

Deborah Pollard & Teater Byar—Studio Mendut *Postcard*

by the waterfall. They called the piece *Nissa Hujan*—rainy season—which is great because the work felt monsoonal. Their movement was influenced by traditional dance not because they've been trained in it but because traditional dance is still alive and kicking in Indonesia".

The work Deborah created with Sutanto was *Postcards.* "I wanted to create a piece that was coming from me. I didn't want to delve into cultural details that I didn't understand or social issues that I could understand but felt I had no place in." As an outsider she was always struck by the rice fields as beautiful and exotic even though they were part of her everyday life in Java. "I wondered how we might make the everyday activities of Mendut appear exotic or different to the local villagers and the first thing that came to my mind was changing the colour of their hats. They would stand out against the vibrancy of the green rice field. We thought this was a good starting point. One thing I learned immediately is that Indonesians don't appreciate minimal art which is something I had picked up in Japan and quite liked. I was content to stick with the hats. When we tried them out, it worked. People stopped and looked and said 'What's this?'

"But everyone participating said, 'Oh, but we've got to do more. We've got to entertain them. It's boring'. I wanted to explain that I didn't want it to be a theatre performance, it was an installation. They quite liked the idea and it fits in quite well with Indonesian audiences who are quite used to wayang kulit where you can scan, come and go and fall asleep. So we created a structure of three hours a day over three days and hoped that the local police wouldn't shut us down. Every day Sutanto would come back and say, 'Another day through. Aren't we lucky'. We'd worried that the pink hats would be seen as Communist but the Indonesian flag is red and white, so the local police authorities could read the pink hats and white shirts as part of a patriotic performance celebrating 25 years of independence."

Deborah gave the process over to the actors and to Javanese artists who embellished the work with everyday elements like traditional farming songs, the Islamic call to prayer, the formal rest time. Many villagers came to see the work and stayed a long time and tourist buses made quick stops to snap the eleven farmers and eight actors at work—like postcards.

"I don't know if I had a higher purpose, other than my belief in being quite simple in the work and knowing that sooner or later it'll have layered meanings. Other artists contributed, for example Untun who read the artists' statement I'd prepared and said 'That's very different from the way that I work. I produce from here (pointing to his head)'. He talked about creating a farmer's dream. He covered himself in mud and connected himself to a bamboo pole, which is what the water buffalo are usually tied to for ploughing the earth, to represent drudgery, while observing wealthy farmers singing and dancing, and speaking on mobile phones.

"Without Sutanto I don't know how we could have done it. Many of these people speak Javanese, not Indonesian. Half the time they speak a dialect from Mendut. Sutanto had trouble communicating with them, let alone me. He ran workshops for certain sections of the installation in which the farmers would run riot with their farming implements, playing them like musical instruments, imitating animal sounds of the farm—Sutanto's a composer and he loves working with sound—old farmers making frog sounds so different from our perception. Quite beautiful."

Asialink, the Australian funding agency that provides artists and writers with, amongst other things, residencies and exchanges, is assisting Deborah to return to Jogjakarta for three months this year, to work with the Teater Asdrafi, something akin to a film and drama school—"some 20 very eager students, very creative in their movement and quite abstract, which I still find unusual when the main push within theatre is quite narrative". She'll work with Sutanto again and invitations will be sent to installation artists to participate. "The main thrust of this project is cultural perceptions about the sea in a site specific work delving into Javanese traditions, mythology and contemporary beliefs. I want to work with fishermen and streetsellers as well to keep contact with everyday life."

Asked about the dynamic of her exchange with Indonesian culture, Deborah points out that "every familiarity is taken away from you, from language to food to how you sleep to your religious and cultural base—it's all gone. You have to

Untung *Postcard*

learn to go with the flow but at the same time you have to have a way of working as an artist: that's what you bring and even that is challenged and that is good for an artist." As for the influence of her Indonesian experiences on her work in Australia, she says that the brief work *Mother Tongue Interference,* with its dense context of 30 cups of Indonesian coffee, clove cigarettes, alien sounds and a litany of 'copings', is a precursor to her new, longer work coming to Sydney's The Performance Space in May, *Fish Out of Water.* "I'll be dealing with themes of culture shock and perceptions of the East from the West. I'm going to build a rice field on the proscenium arch of The Performance Space. It'll be a cross between stand-up cabaret and performance art: a genre without a name—thank god!"

Deborah says that she's not out to reproduce Asian culture, her work here is about the expatriate experience. "The radical pleasure of rootlessness?" "Exactly," she says. Did she perform *Mother Tongue Interference* in Indonesia? "I was too scared. I performed it at an Indonesian Night in Australia and that was the scariest thing I'd ever done. I got out on stage with a basket on my head and I could feel the audience thinking, 'What are you doing?' But when I started speaking, in English and in my Indonesian bits, thank god there were people who could understand English. It took a while but when it clicked that I was making fun of myself, they found it hilarious, particularly the Balinese. They'd seen this batik clad person walking down their streets before."

Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter

Deborah Pollard, Fish Out of Water, *with musicians Margaret Bradley and Suhandi Kosasih, performance consultant Nigel Kellaway, lighting designer Simon Wise. The Performance Space, May 1996.*

Occupying positive space

Jacqui Carroll and John Nobbs of Brisbane's Frank Productions talk with Julia Postle about performance and the classic text

The reputation of Brisbane-based Frank Productions is slowly but surely spreading as they develop a body of work that includes The Tragedy of Oedipus, The Tale of Macbeth *and* Orpheus. *The company is committed to careful development rooted in rigorous training and in sustaining an on-going ensemble, so it might be a while before an extended season of their work will be seen outside of Brisbane.*

JP Why do you choose to combine the training method of Suzuki Tadashi with classical drama. Is it a logical relationship for you, or is it something more exploratory?

JC It's pretty logical. To present the classics, the performers have to be, in a sense, as large as the material they're presenting. But up there on stage you're as tall as you are. To reach the audience, Oedipus has to be larger than life, the actor has to be totally convincing. Mr Suzuki was the first person who came into our lives who had investigated this and developed a series of exercises which made the actor physically more palpable for the audience. Instead of a person standing there, the actor was actually driving energy into the audience, occupying positive space, not negative space. And to do this you have to be amazingly energised, amazingly driven. You've got to wake the body up; you've really got to *be there* in the moment. At the end of the day, if you've got these actors who look like eagles, you can't present works that belong to sparrows.

JP In your production of The Tragedy of Oedipus *it's that strength of the performers which is so powerful. It seems that the training is a really pervasive force then.*

JC It's not as easy as it would seem. Once you get it, you've got to keep working at it. If the body is not primed for action, then the voice isn't. And the more we explore the text, we find it's extraordinary how much more energised the actor has to be. You've got to do the training to get to that point, because you don't even know you've got a body until someone forces you to do the training and makes you come up with answers to various problems. I wanted to develop the actor who could do it, and then I wanted to develop the works that would expose and reveal the actor who could do it. I was very much on a journey of not only getting into the body of the actor, but also making theatre works that would actually reveal what we have created.
The other thing we are very aware of is the audience. The only reason you stand on stage is for the audience. That sounds pretty obvious. But there's often a feeling of people acting amongst themselves, to each other; as if somehow their personal exchange on stage will transfer across the footlights. But I've got to engage you. Mr Suzuki went back to the Greek ideal; that the actors were there to tell a good story, and to tell it to the audience. They were the ciphers through which the material of the story passed. That's why they've got to be energised, because they're carrying the weight of the text with them. You can't just be casual about that; it's got to be driven through the body to work. And nobody can just wander in and take a position with Frank Productions. They've got to go through the training, because they don't even know what we're talking about until they spend a year thumping the floor and standing on one leg, looking at you and engaging you. It's extraordinary.

JP So how extensive is the research before the rehearsal process? You must really play with the texts?

JN You use many sources to gain different views of the work; rather than sticking to one thing we're looking at all aspects of the myth. And Jacqui basically accumulates the text over many months and we then rehearse over a long period. It's very important that it does take a long time so that we don't have this last-minute rush business.

And we've come to believe in the power of repetition, because the more you repeat something, the more the false ornamentation falls away. So it's very important to us that we do come back and do works like *Orpheus* —this will be our third performance over three years. We're doing the same things we did before, but we're making it interesting again. And most theatre groups eschew that, because they think it destroys the creativity. But if you look at something like the Dying Swan solo from *Swan Lake,* you've got to do the same thing that everyone else has done, but *you've* got to make it different.

JC You may say that you do a small work just to explore something because you're on your way to something greater, but once you create the big work then you've got to hang onto that and keep exploring it.

JN Once you get used to the idea of watching the same thing, you can actually see something new each time. They might be very subtle differences, but they're also strong at the same time. And then the audience gets a chance to see the same work again, with the same performers or new performers, and to watch people go through different journeys. So it's about performing, it's not about technology. And the text is the starting point for something. The text is the intellectual information, but the emotional and spiritual information comes from the actor.

JP And there's also that idea of everything connected to the physical, which is probably related to your dance backgrounds.

JC We have a deep belief in that.

JN When I stopped dancing professionally, Jacqui said to me, "You should get back to the stage, it's where you belong". I couldn't recapture my dance career because I was that much older. But I was looking for a way to amalgamate acting with dance. Suddenly we found a way to do that; to amalgamate the specificity of the text with movement.

Interrogating diversity

Richard Murphet meets visiting UK writer Deborah Levy

Deborah Levy is a mongrel. "I was born in South Africa and we left the hideous apartheid regime when I was nine and I then grew up in England. My father's Jewish, my mother's Protestant. So there I am stranded between all those points with all of them trying to claim me as theirs." Not that Levy claims this as an exotic or even unusual perspective from which to view the contemporary Western world. Far from it. "The idea that there is a pure culture in our contemporary world is totally untrue. Our society is impure—no wonder cultural identity is what everyone is talking about."

It is of course a perspective with particular relevance to Australia and its increasingly complex cultural landscape. In that context, Levy's visit to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane in late 1995 as part of the Playworks 10th Anniversary Festival, *Playing with Time,* was a welcome chance to encounter the writer and her work.

For what is fascinating about Levy's recent theatrical work is not only that it celebrates cultural diversity on a social level but that it discovers that diversity within the individual herself. Any sense of gender essentiality or an individual authentic self are undermined during the fluid investigations of identity in *The B File* or in the careful and witty deconstruction of truth in relationships at the heart of *An Amorous Discourse In The Suburbs Of Hell.*

Theatre has long provided a stage for the interplay between truth and reality and Levy exploits this to its extreme. *The B-File* has a semblance of the form of personal confessional performances of recent years. But the kitsch costumes, the controvertible biographical facts of the five dramatis personae (all called Beatrice, although all supposedly of different cultural backgrounds) and the presence of an Interpreter as an unreliable bridge between us and them combine to make it clear we are witnessing not the tale(s) of a search for an authentic self but the careful construction of an image of inauthenticity in a world of difference. "A world without difference seems to me to be an appalling world."

Levy's fluid sense of identity has caused her, in her more recent theatre texts, to develop for each work a form that is an integral part of her "interrogation" of the themes that fascinate her. In other words, she has been forced to jettison both 'narrative' and 'character' as being too overdetermined for her shakily determined world. "I'm not in the least bit interested in narrative in the theatre (although interestingly she is becoming more so in her novels). I really don't come to the theatre to be told stories that the playwright already knows." This was not always the case. Her early work is structured along more recognisable dramatic lines. But Levy recounts with a mixture of joy and horror the experience of going to a performance of one of her plays—produced successfully by the Royal Shakespeare Company—and hating the result so much she realised she could never write like that again. In hindsight she realised how much the very form of the well-made play dictated the manner in which she could investigate her themes. "In my early days, when I called my texts 'plays', I was required to write scenes that I didn't like and I had to write them in not because I wanted to but because the form of the play dictated it—and I used to dread it. And then I realised that if you wanted to zoom into someone's head—their inner life—you could write that life and record it and present it as a part of the visual world of the text."

In throwing off the cumbersome form of the dramatic play (a "dead and dying form that sits very uncomfortably with any kind of expression of the contemporary world"), Levy is able to concentrate on crafting distilled theatrical images that work simultaneously on several levels. The texts are closely choreographed visually in order to provide strict frameworks for her verbal language—a language both highly imaginative and filled with argot, advertising jargon and songs. This is the common language of the inter(mixed) nationalist. It is also a language of the eternal present and works with the eschewing of narrative and character to undermine the theatre's obsession with cause and effect. "Naturalistic characters always come on the stage with too much baggage. They rarely allow the audience space to project onto. That's why I prefer working with persona. It gives space for the audience to imaginatively construct and reconstruct what it is they are seeing. Theatre is obsessed with explaining every moment and its causation in a way that doesn't interest me much."

Levy, like her plays, is lively, inquisitive and, thankfully, full of humour. "My early plays were rather dour. I had this idea that humour was what you did in your life and in your art it shouldn't be there. I find that absurd now. I think everything, even the saddest moments, should, perhaps in a dark way, be very funny."

The art of struggle

Eleanor Brickhill interviews Alan Schacher, artistic director of Gravity Feed, a Sydney-based performance ensemble

EB Something that strikes me is that your work is very human, not abstract. In Inhabitation, *at Sidetrack Theatre last year, the particular weight of those doors seemed very funny, because you had to wonder what these people were doing this for, carrying around these monumentally unwieldy objects. Similarly in* D-VOID, *recently shown on SBS TV, I liked the caricatures. I also wondered how aware you were of why people might find it funny.*

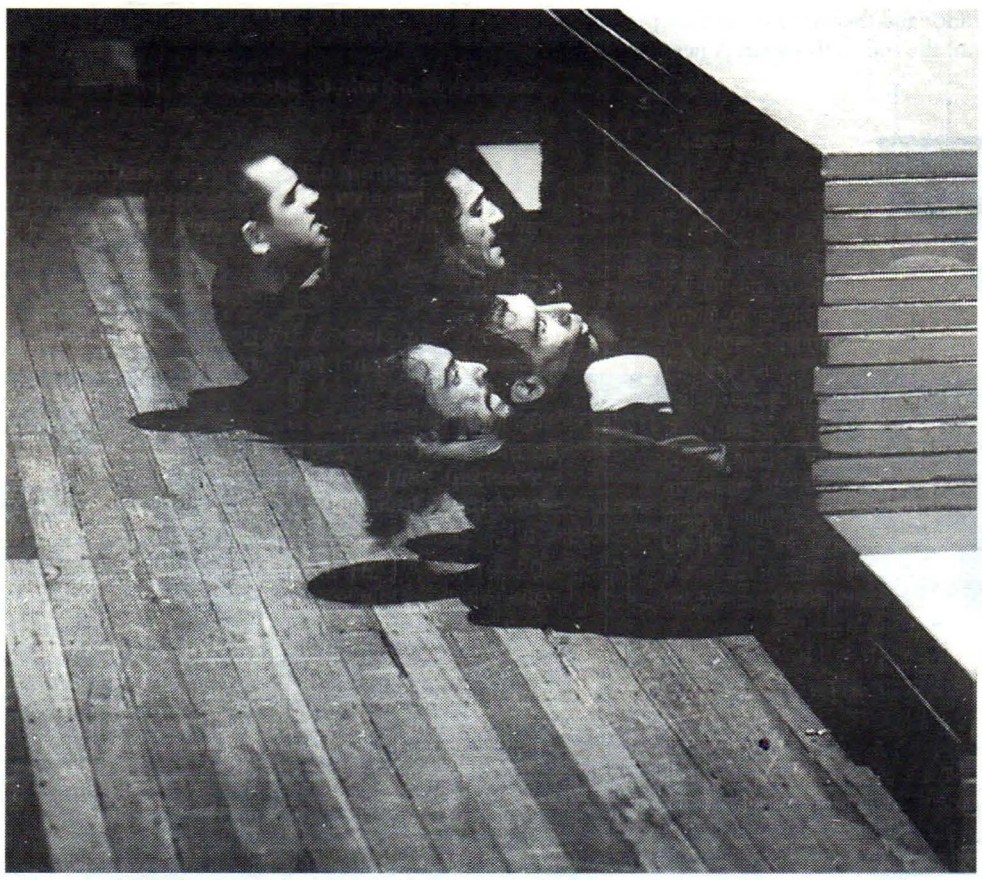
AS I've been told that the concerns with which we're working in the shows are not visible to the audience. Friends have commented that a Gravity Feed performance can be like watching the Twelve Tasks of Hercules, but that's not the intention. In fact my interest is the opposite, to actually be anti-spectacular. *Inhabitation* demonstrated the effects of complying with or resisting gravity, of building and dismantling. It was about inhabiting the spaces that we built, the set and the theatre space, whilst in a constant struggle with that set.

EB There certainly was a struggle.

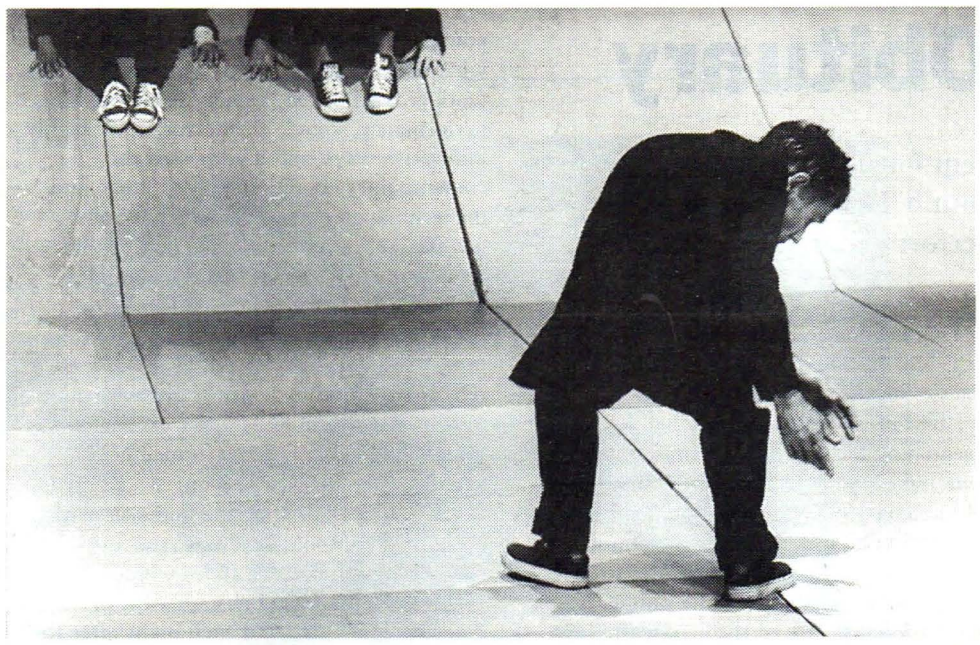
AS The weight was incidental, but it was real. The humour is partly in juxtaposing types, selecting people of different sizes, body build, ages. We're not trying to predetermine where it's going to be funny but we already know it will be because of the structure, those five people, and how serious we are about doing it. My interest in random events supports a respect for humorous content.

EB What the caricatures create is about people living in the world, a very human thing. When you or Ari Ehrlich are on stage, I don't get the sense that it's an act, despite the artistry behind it.

AB I think that's a good thing. The body itself is our material, stripped, but marked by history, culture and upbringing. We inhabit multiple bodies: traditional, emotional, physical bodies, imaginary bodies, bodies of knowledge. In terms of Butoh, we strive to speak to an original or pre-cultural body, loading it down with imagery. The images Ari and I negotiate are not for the body, but are about the situation, and the tasks being performed within that. We don't think about it as imaginary. We're trying to generate an atmosphere—the performance event—and that atmosphere is real.



Gravity Feed *Inhabitation* 1994 Heidrun Löhr



Gravity Feed *Inhabitation* 1994 Heidrun Löhr

EB The images are very dense, people seemingly victimised by situations.

AS Density is certainly something that interests me. The strongest image perhaps is as if the body were inside a slab of rock, vibrating ever so minimally, suspended inside, matter giving way to matter, bodies pitted against other bodies, raw material. If we use doors, the body is pitted against the doors. If we use fire or ice, it's more than metaphor. It's direct substance of which we and our small world are made.

EB When you talk about the work, it sometimes seems quite different from what it can be about for an audience.

AS From my point of view, the work is developed from an intuitive response to the possibilities of a space. Then comes a long process, sorting ideas, references, options, possibilities, readings and misreadings. When it comes back down to working, it does tend to be physical and intuitive again. I trust that source material has become deeper content.

EB Do the sequences of events arise from the physicality of it or from somewhere else?

AS The work is about the atmosphere it's attempting to establish. It isn't made purely listening to the body dialogue. The sound environments created for us by Rik Rue are basically synonymous with what we're doing now, and make it real. His apprehension of the world complements mine. As soon as I have a structure that can be communicated, I take him to the space. We won't discuss the sound. Sometimes he'll ask me questions, but usually he stops me before I've told him as much as I want to. And he'll go away and come back with a composition which seems invisible when you first listen to it on cassette because it already fits the space.

EB When you talk about the space, it's something that's a physical, dense thing, full of matter already.

AB Traditionally, Gravity Feed colonises, inhabits, impregnates, infiltrates, reinterprets the venue. We'll bring the 24 doors to The Performance Space as a metaphor for the fabric of our built environment. In *Inhabitation* many of the tasks dealt with moving the doors or building with them. The new show is a continuation of this, and we're editing quite severely because we felt we failed in our contract with the audience the last time.

The new show will be based on our response to the presence of an audience. Perhaps the contract I talked about is not with the audience, but with ourselves—that we will more fully address their presence as inseparable from the event. My sense of obligation to the audience is that I owe them an intelligence which may be enacted in any number of ways. I also operate within a history of performance art, where the primary concept is being demonstrated either on the body, spatially or temporally. For example, the artist is hidden under the floor, or the event has already happened.
At The Performance Space we know many of our audience, the history of the kind of shows that have been there, almost every nook and cranny, how it's been used. There are certain foregone conclusions which we want to undermine. Our focus is in looking at old things afresh, overlooked things, until they spring out again.

The members of Gravity Feed are Alan Schacher, Ari Ehrlich, Dennis Beaubois, Tim Rushton, Jeff Stein. In the House *previews at The Performance Space, Sydney March 16 and 17, then runs 20-31 March.*

Obituary

Teiji Furuhashi, member of Dumb Type, musician, performer, drag artist, activist.

Teiji Furuhashi died on 29 October 1995 in Kyoto, Japan, of an AIDS related illness—he was 35 years old.

I first met Teiji in Kyoto when I was researching the exhibition *Zones of Love—contemporary art from Japan* which toured Australasia 1991-92. Although he always denied that he was the leader of Dumb Type (or that there was any leader in the group), he was very much the public, internationalist face of the group and his energy was palpable even if his authority within Dumb Type was more covert.

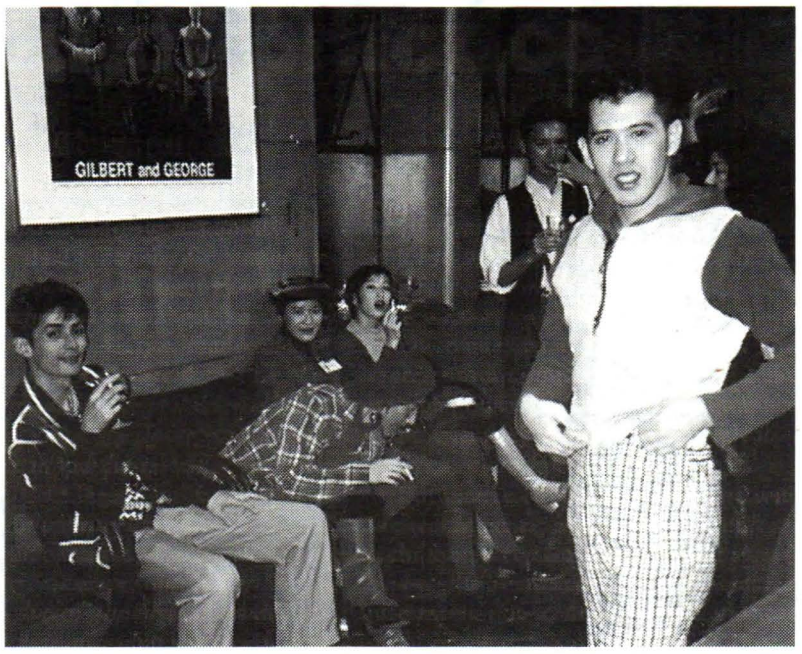
Dumb Type began, and continues, as a loose group of theorists, visual artists, architects and performers. Most met each other when they were students at Kyoto University. Bored by the contemporary scene of the early 1980s and the vacuousness of much of Japanese society, but energised by teachers such as artist Yasumasa Morimura and theorist Akira Asada, Teiji Furuhashi and Dumb Type began to make provocative installations and then performances which quickly propelled them onto the international stage.

When I met Teiji in 1989 and watched the documentation of Dumb Type's work I decided immediately that they would come to Australia and perform as part of *Zones of Love*. It is unusual to meet people who are so young, so organised and so specific about what they are doing—and Teiji was that. The work crossed media boundaries (video, film, performance, sound, architecture...) in highly innovative ways, and it addressed the contemporary condition of both Japan and the technological world in which we now live. Teiji never quite believed that I could achieve my aim of getting the group to Sydney because it was such an expensive project and because of the difficulty of raising money (the Japanese government was most reluctant to fund such work), but with a lot of help and two months to go, assistance was found and Dumb Type performed *pH* in Sydney at the MCA.

This piece electrified the audience with its energy, technological expertise and enigmatic performance styles which presented a bleak and elegant view of contemporary life. And each night after the performance the members of the group would change into drag of one sort or another and go to perform in bars around the city as Julie Andrews or the OK Girls. These people knew how to party.

In 1994 Dumb Type returned to Australia and performed their new work *S/N* at the Adelaide Festival. *S/N* deals explicitly with sexual and racial difference in the Japanese context. For Teiji, this was a painful piece because it was about himself and his journey through one of the world's most rigid and conservative societies as a homosexual and HIV+. Again after each performance the party would begin, and later in Sydney at Newtown and Oxford Street clubs the novel drag acts would utterly delight the audience.

Over the last five years Teiji's bouts of illness grew longer and it was with great regret that Dumb Type had to cancel a tour to Brazil during Mardi Gras in 1995. Teiji and the group returned to Kyoto from North America where his solo installation *Lovers* was being exhibited to much acclaim in New York and Toronto. *Lovers* is an homage to the artist's friends and lovers, a complex and elegiac piece where Teiji and eight other performers become projections of light in a dark room—their actions mingling with words, sentences and the music for which Teiji was also renowned.



Teiji Furuhashi, right, and members of Dumb Type

Dumb Type will continue to tour *S/N* to Hong Kong, New Zealand and Europe through 1996. *Lovers* is currently touring France and thereafter other European venues until the end of this year. A new Dumb Type piece, *Monkey Business*, in collaboration with the Danish group Hotel Pro Forma (appearing at the 1996 Adelaide Festival in *Orfeo)* and New York architects Diller + Scofidio, will premiere next year. Most recently Teiji featured in the SBS documentary *Hell Bento!!*, and a compilation of Dumb Type's music is available from Spiral Garden/Wacoal Art Center, Tokyo.

Teiji was a perfectionist, an innovator and highly creative in whatever form he worked. His credo was "try harder", and people always did.

Judy Annear

Judy Annear is Curator of Photography at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Alicia Rios is a food artist, commentator and cook from Madrid. For the 1993 Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery her lecture/performance was titled *An Organoleptic Deconstruction in Three Movements*. In the first movement she placed bowls of pink and white food on the table—strawberries, cream, marshmallows, meringues and rock sugar and proceeded to "chew" them with her fingers. In the second movement she combined enticing images of food with the amplified sounds of chewing and swallowing. For the finale, she luxuriated on a transparent mattress filled with potato chips.

Alicia Rios will open The Performance Space's *Progressive Dinner* event in April this year with her *Mediterranean Symphony of the Senses*, a multi-sensorial experience in which the audience are the performers and the spaces and their routes are conceived as paths of an enigmatic labyrinth.

Also on the menu: Canadian writer Margaret Visser *(Much Depends on Dinner)* getting her teeth into the subject of Vegetarianism; an exhibition of still lifes by artists Adam Boyd, Savandhdary Vongpoorthorn, Tim Maguire, Matthys Gerber, Bridget Napanangka, Bai Bai and Anne Zahalka; and The Beggars' Banquet, a collaboration between restaurateur/writer Gay Bilson, visual artist Anne Graham and performer/writer Victoria Spence. Open City will take the knife and fork to dinner table conversation over a meal. Barbara Campbell is whipping up a work. There'll be a day of Indonesian food and ritual (yes, there will be a tooth filing ceremony) and a series of artworks from edibles (by Fiona Hall, Ada Leung, Jay Younger and others) in shop windows throughout the city. Organisers are currently seeking a progressive retailer who will offer window space for Victor Meertens' bread sculpture which comes with a party of well-behaved mice. Any takers? The full program will be available in March.

Working up a career

Responding to changes in theatre and performance culture, a proliferation of arts training courses is now on offer throughout the country. In recent years, we've seen the growth of actors' centres, as well as companies that include training such as Entr'acte and Sidetrack in NSW, Frank Productions in Queensland, Adelaide Fringe's International Workshops, business schools for arts administrators and courses for aspiring film and television actors as well as all kinds of independently organised skills workshops filling the gaps in training offered by the established institutions.

It's not surprising then to see the HUSH School of Mime and Non Verbal Theatre in Fremantle set up by actor and choreographer Kriszta Bodonyi and now in its fourth year of operation, offering theatre professionals and the community courses in contemporary mime, commedia dell' arte and mask as well as physical/visual theatre, new circus, and intensives in Butoh and Suzuki method.

The virtue of these and like training courses is that they encourage performers to think beyond psychological realism, to work with their bodies and to see training as an ongoing part of their practice as opposed to its mere beginning. Of course, like tertiary education these days, courses cost and it's always wise to shop around, to also watch out for that solo teacher who comes recommended by word of mouth. *RT*

Sophea Lerner and Gretchen Miller — Anthony King

A salon of broken machines and decrepit audio paraphernalia is the setting for a chamber suite of misremembered and dismembered sounds in *Dream a Little Dream Machine* at The Performance Space Studio, Sydney, March 27-31. Sound artist Sophea Lerner and composer Gretchen Miller with Nigel Crocker on trombone and interactive apparatus by David Bartolo.

Café spectacle

Veda Dante talks to Deckchair Theatre founder Di Shaw about cultural community development

In a picturesque flamboyant port town, a West Australian theatre company has matured into a community asset of cultural significance. Fremantle's Deckchair Theatre, currently under the artistic direction of Angela Chaplin, is passionately committed to the exploration of "exciting and sensual theatre concepts and cultural images", with a particular commitment to nurturing women artists and artists from non dominant cultures, as exemplified in their 1995 program: *Wildgirl, Sweetown, Diving for Pearls* and *Tiger Country*. Their ground breaking production *Ningali* began touring both within Australia and internationally during 1995, culminating in a Fringe 1st award for outstanding new production at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. *Ningali* recently performed to capacity audiences for the 1996 Festival of Sydney.

Deckchair Theatre was founded in 1983 by Di Shaw and Brian Pedie at a time when figures released by the Australia Council showed that less than 7% of the Australian population went to the theatre. "We felt that theatre wasn't relevant to real people in Australia. Most plays were about white middle class people and most were written in England and white middle Australia," remembers Di Shaw. "It was limiting because they didn't reflect Australia's cultural diversity. They were also performed in venues where a lot of people were uncomfortable simply because they didn't and don't understand the rituals—when to clap, what to wear—these are rituals that only certain people have access to.

"We wanted to avoid theatres and instead perform in public spaces where people already gather—spaces which were important to people—interesting spaces where people wouldn't expect to see theatre so they would come with curiosity."

Deckchair's first major production, *Fleets of Fortune*, emerged out of the chaos that was the victory of 'the winged keel' in Newport, Rhode Island and the consequent refurbishment of Fremantle in 1983, and it was performed under the stars at the Fremantle Arts Centre. Di Shaw met with much opposition from the state funding body: "The drama officer at the time thought I was foolish to be using so much of the company's resources on this production, feeling that we should do something safe—something we wouldn't lose money on. But I wanted to express aspects of Fremantle's local identity so we did it and it was a huge success".

Each year since, Deckchair has undertaken a major production for, about, and involving their local community. Promenade theatre and the animation of public spaces have been effective tools for celebrating Fremantle's cultural mix while effectively uniting its diverse demographics. Their community production for 1995, *Cappuccino Strip*, wove these transcultural threads into a dynamic piece of promenade theatre which explored "the wonderland of coffee cups and chaotic cafe culture".

Di Shaw returned to Deckchair as the Associate Director (with Angela Chaplin) on *Cappuccino Strip* with a strong background in, and views on cultural community development. The merging of art, economics and public spaces—according to Di Shaw—has "injected profound change in the treatment of community based projects".

Performers and audience met on the platform at Fremantle Railway Station guided by the glorious sounds of The Joys of the Women choir. Actors Rose Lenza, Steve Shaw, Peter Findley and Jackie Kerin led audiences on a historical, cultural and theatrical journey through the streets of Fremantle, weaving their way through plazas, malls and coffee shops.

Aside from the four professional actors and musician, this exciting piece of theatre featured three choirs, a young dance 'crew' and initiatory aprons for the audience (you had to be there...). *Cappuccino Strip* adopted an interactive, democratic and celebratory approach to contemporary theatre. Open community workshops and extensive research provided a richly textured script taking as one key focus the life of Italian immigrant, Nunzio Cumina, who introduced Fremantle to the art of drinking coffee on the sidewalk.

Cappuccino Strip concluded with a parade by audience and cast members through Cappuccino Strip itself—the main drag in Fremantle—carrying large papier maché coffee cups on litters and singing an ode to the joys of cappuccino, macchiato, cafe latté and the long black. Apart from the general silliness and fun of taking over the street, the parade made reference to three major cultural events in Fremantle: the Blessing of the Fleet, the Festival of Fremantle Parade and the May Day March.

The rewards of working with a community active in its own decision-making processes are both subtle and profound—celebrating the cultural differences but simultaneously bridging the needs of sub-cultures. Festivals, parades, performances are all cultural rituals which can reclaim the streets with dancing, laughter, and innovation—the taking over of space.

Veda Dante is an electronic media journalist and media consultant resident in Perth.

Book Review

Feminist Theaters in the USA: Staging Women's Experience
Charlotte Canning, Routledge 1996

Confronted on the cover with the growling faces and bared claws of five women acting, I wonder what is in store inside. A quick flick reveals few photos but there is a caption for the cover image—Women's Theatre Collective presents *Sacrifices: A Fable About the Women's Movement*. And in those words is told a story or two about this book which is a survey of the American feminist theatre movement compiled from interviews. The documentary evidence provides a readable account of the many small and intense groups formed as a result of the women's movement in the 1970s, covering not dissimilar ground to Peta Tait's book *Original Women's Theatre* which is quoted by Canning—a significant first for an Australian theatre academic to be acknowledged in the US.

Its primary contention is that feminist theatre is drawn from women's experience, and reflects and affirms women's experience to its audience. Instead of problematising the idea of authenticity or the category of experience, parts of the book sound like the confessional forums of Oprah Winfrey with an American privileging of the personal voice: "I remember feeling totally affirmed as a woman...". But how can the primary interest of all the interviews be experience? What about style, passion, aesthetics, theatricality, history, performance processes, the language or theatre itself? For anyone interested in those questions, the book provides little access—the index is mostly a list of shows and names, such as the "Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell—acronym WITCH" and the only general categories are 'collectives', 'consciousness-raising', 'festivals', 'oral history', 'transformations'. And there lies another story which makes it seem 'all wrong' to praise, and not re-examine, the existence of an "It's All Right to Be Woman" theatre.

Rachel Fensham

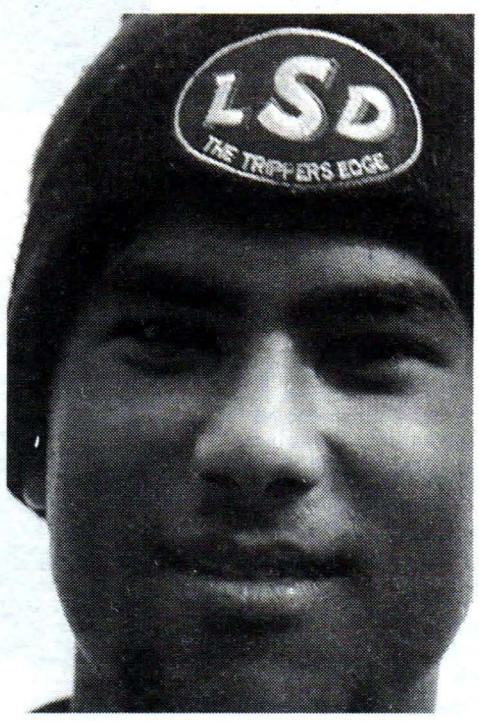
... And in our madness we rave

Kit McMahon and Dena Christy

In "Rave New World" *(The Good Weekend,* Jan 6, 1996), Stephen Spears, after a few "horrendous days" in contemporary showbiz, rediscovers vitality, his youth, memories of by-gone days and, it would seem, an illicit thirst for life—all of this at a rave. It is—without wanting to downplay the importance of these experiences for him—a romantic view of the rave scene, a view that comes from a person wanting to rediscover life and not discover it. It is ultimately an unreal and isolated picture of the scene portrayed as untouchable and inaccessible. With a few funky graphics and blurred photographs it appears dreamy and poetically chaotic. Anarchy runs happily rife in a psychedelic, sweaty, beautiful-bodied, isolated dance.

A person loyal to rave culture could see this article as a great advertisement for the scene, making it more user-friendly and countering bad publicity such as that surrounding the death of the Sydney teenager Anna Wood last year. Perhaps this is what we should learn from Spears' article: that we should respect the two sides to every story.

However, the story of rave culture is complex and the fact is that raves move and change. Spears' article focuses on a dance party but raving is a way of thinking that manifests itself in a person's lifestyle. Ravers think in terms of the big picture. The body and technology are considered interacting forces. Technology helps the body move faster and further. To be a raver is to consume technology and ideas and redefine them in an interactive environment. A raver is conscious of the world, the universe, the past, the present, the future, nature, technology and how these affect each other - an interlocking network of ideas and philosophies that one may completely indulge in or simply pick and choose from.



The most prominent aspect of the philosophy behind raving is the relaxed, friendly environment which is usually violence free. Raves are not sleazy pick up joints, people are there to dance and go off on the music. This is the essence—release and escape.

Emma, Mel, Boba and more, "Rave Special: Dissecting The Rave" *Beat Magazine,* 1994

Alternatively, the rave can exist as part of a philosophical system. Raving is part of a means to fulfil a role in the world wide web of Gaia that calls upon the depths of mathematical and computer science to develop a web of life and consciousness that stretches out from traditional forms of hierarchy.

The ravers see themselves and the creation of their sub-culture as part of the overall fractal equation for the post-modern experience. One of the principles of chaos math... is phase-locking, which is what allows the various cells of an organism to work harmoniously...A phase-locked group begins to take on the look of a fractal equation, where each tiny part reflects the nature and shape of the larger ones. The ultimate phase-locking occurs in the dance itself, where thousands of... like minded young people play out house culture's tribal ceremony...They're on the same drugs, in the same circadian rhythm, dancing to the same 120-beats-per-minute soundtrack...It is at these moments that the new reality is spontaneously developed...

Douglas Rushkoff, *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace,* Flamingo 1994

Rave music—or techno as it is universally known—does not have to be danced to. Like any other music it can simply be listened to. Trish, a DJ and journalist from Melbourne, said in an interview that she discovered techno after getting bored with gothic music. She appreciates its consistent originality. As DJ of a prominent techno show on Melbourne's PBS radio station, she praises its accessibility for composers, producers, lovers of music or ravers. The rapid development in technology—particularly audio technology—has meant that people can create rave music easily. Making electronic music is not limited to the few who have connections in the music and recording industry. One can pick up an old Roland synthesiser or an apparently out-of-date Akai sampler, and with some imagination create sounds that are new, truly different and inspirational.

Ross Harley in an article on Volition Records recognises the creativity of techno and its romance with machinery and technology. ("Acts of Volition", *Perfect Beat* vol.2 n.3 1995). In this essay on the history and development of one of Australia's premiere techno music labels he writes of "the certain perversity that prevailed...for the original design and purpose of...machines" and how these machines could "easily be turned against the industrial uses they were made for".

But there are other issues at stake in an understanding of the scene. The taking of drugs (whether smart-drugs, E, speed, acid, guarana) is an aspect of the rave culture that is so often held out to the public as the only exhibit in the case against the culture. The focus on the taking of drugs effectively casts a shadow on the ravers and parties that don't use drugs. There is also the business of raves. What is the economic benefit of the scene to the promoters and the public? What about its history? The scene has moved from the 'old skoolers'—who were just learning to integrate technology and this new way of being— to the recent split between 'clubbers'—who go to mainstream clubs and don't necessarily subscribe to a different way of viewing reality—and ravers.

The process of understanding the rave scene could lead to the development of discourses that would enable us to work on other contemporary sub-cultures, how they work and the interplay or non-interplay between them and how this effects the wider community.

S.C.A.N. is a group of interested people gathering information and ideas about raves and sub-cultures. Contact Dena Christy on 0416 092 372 or 03 9646 4467 or Kit McMahon 02 798 3378.

Black & Gold ontology

Lucas Ihlein looks into the transformation of a yellow Gemini

Is this man a kind of Midas turning whatever he touches into the (Black &) *Gold of pure art? And the whole world consisting of latent artworks waiting, like the bread and wine of reality, to be transfigured through some dark mystery, into the indiscernible flesh and blood of the sacrament?*

Arthur C. Danto

What is it about inscribing some text on a yellow car, chopping it into little bits and calling it art that captures the imagination? Like all true feats of marketing, *Black & Gold Art* had something for everyone: violence, colour, action, drama, merchandising, father-son conflict and a bit of theory. It was literally art for the whole family.

There's something perversely pleasurable in seeing a car (that seemingly indispensable symbol of success in the taken-for-granted world of suburban must-haves) being destroyed by an angle grinder. The media certainly thought so, with Channels 7 & 9 and *The West Australian* all poised ready to capture the best moments to include in their 'zany' segments.

In *Black & Gold Art,* the sensational aspect was really only a function of necessity: how to get a full sized 1975 Holden Gemini Fastback through the half sized doors of PICA and up the stairs (PICA has no lift). Anyone who followed the car (piece by piece) into the gallery might have noticed the transformative function of this process.

Of course, the other point of fascination was the relationship between artist-son and mechanic-dad. Few artists have not experienced the frustration of trying to explain just what exactly it is they do to bemused parents who only want what's best for their kids (Surely you want to be a lawyer?). Beyond that, the necessity to defend, justify and name in clearly descriptive and easily understood terms that which is not 'real' art is a constant both within and without the family circle. Artist-son's solution (if not resolution) was to involve his mechanic dad in the project in his own professional capacity.

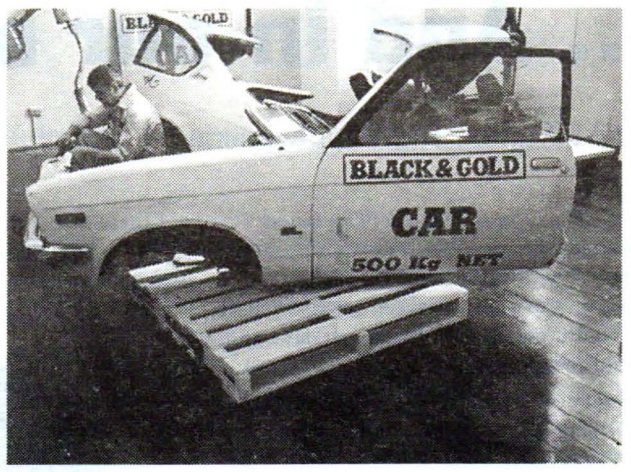
Beyond which, Mick Hender (the son) discusses the function of objects and their names. What is it that gives a particular object its defining nature and how is this mediated by the packaging and labelling of consumer culture?

The primary gesture of this project was the inscription of the words, "Black & Gold Car" onto the side door and bonnet of a defunct yellow Gemini. *Black & Gold* (the company) markets itself as a "no frills" corporation. Its strategy is to declare on the packaging of a product exactly what the product is. The text is printed in bold, generic, stencil typeface, in black on a yellow background. No photographs or images embellish the packaging.

The *Black & Gold Car,* as opposed to regular *Black & Gold* products, didn't have any packaging—the text was printed directly onto the surface of the metal bonnet and door. In a sense, packaging and object become one and the object's name and physical presence become inseparable. The text inscribed on *Black & Gold Car,* rather than distancing the object itself from its linguistic referent, actually gave the car its essence. Similarly, the assistants working on the project wore *Black & Gold* overalls. The gallery was painted gold with black lettering. We're talking *Black & Gold* in overdrive.

Black & Gold Art also involved the printing of t-shirts to specifications laid down by customer/gallery-goers. The idea began with the printing of *Black & Gold T-shirts* as a parody of those brand-name t-shirts which function principally to advertise the manufacturer, and rapidly developed into a means of involving people more directly in the experience of *Black & Gold Art.* Directed by an extensive instruction sheet and order form, customers could designate their size and weight and the title to be printed on a t-shirt. Titles ranged from "Black & Gold Alcoholic Fat Bastard, 90 Kg Nett" to "Black & Gold Fucked Up Homosexual, 69 Kg Nett" to the more straightforward, "Black and Gold Academic, 140 Kg Nett".

The nature of an object is often defined by what it is not. Ian Ground, writing in *Art or Bunk,* gives the example of an imaginary meteorite thought to be identical to a Henry Moore sculpture. Ground asks the reader to consider a set of words and their possible application to both meteorite and sculpture. His selections include "witty", "crass", "simplistic", "vulgar", "original" and so on. He shows that most of these adjectives are inappropriate to describe the meteorite but could, quite plausibly, be used to describe the artwork. Ground's conclusion, that two identical objects can be different things is effective precisely because of his concrete (albeit imaginary) example. Similarly, *Black & Gold Art* exists as an example in action: a proposal about the defining nature of objects, products and their packaging.



Mick Hender

Mick Hender

Black & Gold Art *was the work of Mick Hender, the artist-son, assisted by Brian Hender, the mechanic-dad.* Black & Gold Art *was an umbrella project of the 1995 Artrage Festival at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts.*

Lucas Ihlein, who assisted on Black & Gold Art *is a recent graduate of the School of Architecture & Fine Arts, University of Western Australia.*

Cecelia Cmielewski *Imprimatur*

John Tonkin *Electric Physiognomies*

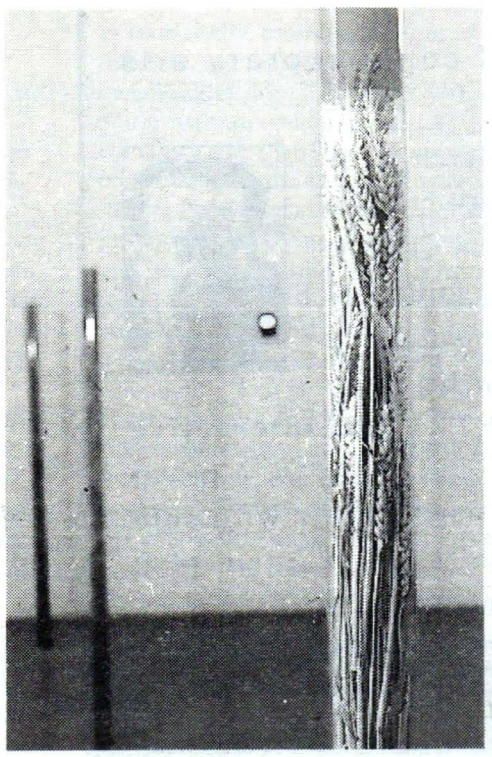
At Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation on November 9-December 3 1995, three artists installed work concerned with challenging cultural and scientific definitions that deny the complexity involved in identification of self.

Cecelia Cmielewski's *Imprimatur* was an eclectic collection of memories diverse in form and effect. Two video monitors side by side with footage of St Petersburg and Talin required a lengthy reading. A 16mm film reel of the artist dressing herself in Polish national costume and dancing, had to be turned by hand, implicating the spectator in the re-enactment of a memory. On wooden boxes and suspended from the ceiling in test tubes were jewellery-like objects—medals, pins, tweezers—as if specimens or souvenirs used to verify a memory.

Bronia Iwanczak's *The Path of the Accident* challenged the authenticity of memory. Transparent poles filled with stones, earth, wheat and air, evoked the landscape and required me to negotiate a path through the space in order to reach the pocket sized television sets that were dotted around the walls. Placed at different heights on the wall the images were small and hard to read unless the right viewing angle was found. Personal, portable screens, they presented private images of a place. The size of the monitors compressed the images—the memories of place—creating an imaginary city from the juxtaposition of images of three cities—New York, Warsaw and Adelaide. A virtual memory.

In *Elective Physiognomies* John Tonkin used computer manipulated images of his own face to highlight the over-simplification of identity in the science of physiognomy. He extended his critique in a reference to the 'discovery' of the gay and criminal genes. I readily conceded the criticism, but found myself participating enthusiastically in the physiognomic survey on the computer at the centre of the installation.

Caroline Farmer



Bronia Iwanczak *The Path of the Accident*

Everyday in the gallery

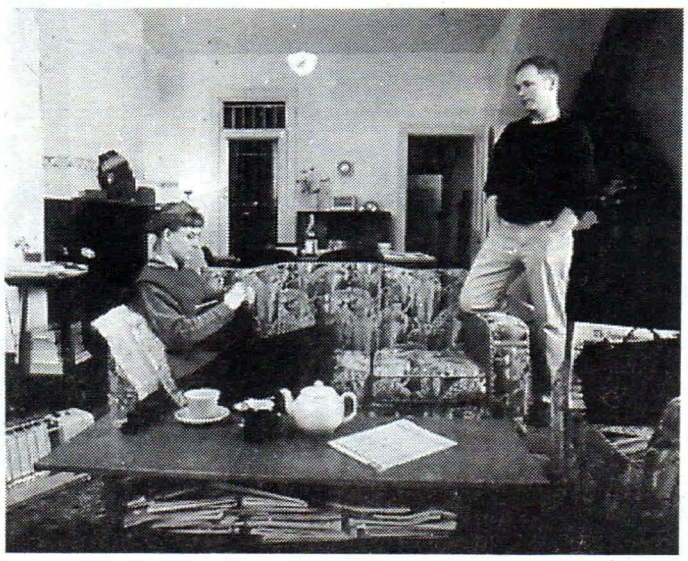
Natalie King reviews ACCA's *Domestic Objects: A Critique of The Object of Existence*

The Object of Existence, curated by Clare Williamson, comprises the work of 14 artists whose work takes up notions of the everyday amidst a range of predominantly three-dimensional work. As the end of year exhibition at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, *The Object of Existence* is concurrent with fundraising exhibitions at Linden, 200 Gertrude Street and 1st Floor. Moreover, it forms part of a recent trend towards accessible exhibitions that last through the summer months, like *Lovers* at The Museum of Modern Art at Heide. Both *The Object of Existence* and *Lovers* have a wide appeal, demonstrating a range of visual practices amongst substantial groups of exhibiting artists.

While domesticating the everyday, *The Object of Existence* plays out the nexus between public/private, house/gallery. In doing so, the exhibition signals the contemporary dominance of the readymade amidst a reworking of minimalist sculpture and a feminist preoccupation with the everyday. Many artists both nationally and internationally are working in the genre of objects and the everyday. *The Object of Existence,* then, taps into a current thread in contemporary art. Here, household objects are reinvented as sculpture. The feminist preoccupation with the everyday and the homely has its legacy in practices from the sixties. Contemporary re-interpretations of the domestic, however, open up new areas of materials but with overtones of coolness.

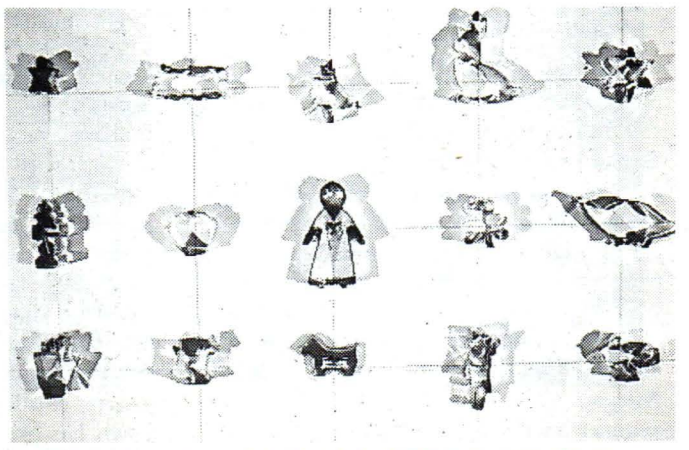
Another group of artists who have drawn upon the legacy of sixties sculptural practices in the nineties lay claim to a vast territory of materials and subjects that are infantile, abject and pop (Mike Kelley, Robert Gober, Hany Armanious, Mikala Dwyer...). There is nothing of the vulgar preoccupation with deforming materials in *The Object of Existence.* Instead, the exhibition points to the obsessive orderliness of minimal art as a sculptural genre involving architectonic structures.

The minimalists' concern with negative space—the floor, walls and ceilings—utilise the structures that divide and compartmentalise interiors. What results are intrusions of forms into surrounding spaces; their interaction with architecture compels viewers to consider the environment in which they are placed. The objects on display at ACCA, however, are less serious than the carefully composed structures of minimalism. These artists utilise elements associated with minimalism: repetition, the grid, and geometric forms combined with notions of banality.



Anne Zahalka *Wednesday 10:23pm* 1995, duratran & light box

Considering the previous domestic status of ACCA as a house, set in the Botanical Gardens, the domestic nature of most of the works takes on an added dimension. For example, Anna Zahalka's photographs of couples in domestic settings are theatrical, highly staged environments that possess an extraordinary clarity. Their implicit voyeurism is contrasted with Andrew Wright-Smith's objects cast in plaster. Set in a vitrine, his discarded washing machine accompanied by basins, takes on the austerity of museum display and classificatory systems. The plaster cast invokes fragments and remnants from the past undermined by the pristine whiteness of the recast objects. This excavated detritus not only signals the nineteenth century plaster cast but also makes reference to the purity and whiteness of minimal sculpture.



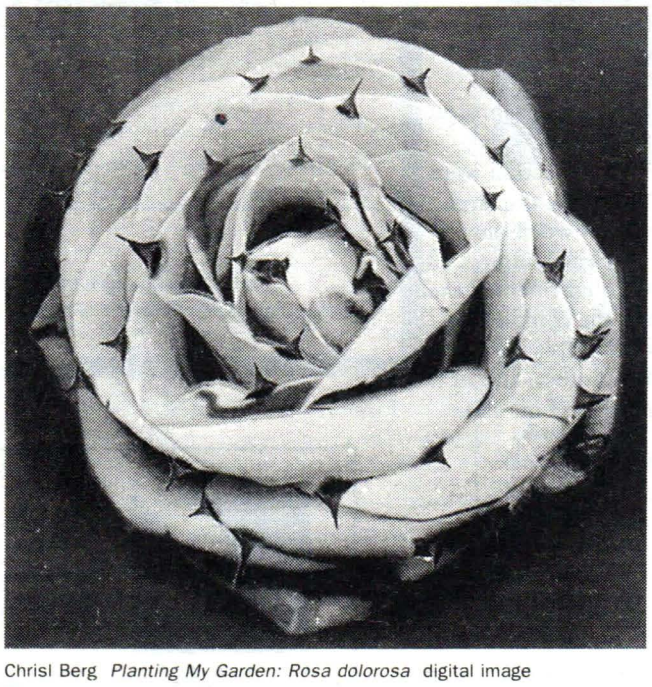
Margaret Morgan *(I'm having a) Cookie Cutter Reaction* 1993, cookie cutters & chalk

Similarly, Callum Morton's reflective reconstructed windows, perched high on the wall, are deceptively integrated with the gallery architecture while alluding to hidden domains beyond the window facade. Morton's form of minimalist architecture, recalling Donald Judd's repetitive structures, are conceptual sculptures fabricated to his specifications with industrial materials. Judd's boxes reappear in the guise of coloured scourers pinned together and arranged haphazardly in Amanda Ahmed's *Lots Of Blox.* The preoccupation with art and life appears in Bill Lane's photographic project, *Shades—Appendix A,* documenting pattern variations available in canvas awnings, absurdly converging suburbia with abstract patterns.

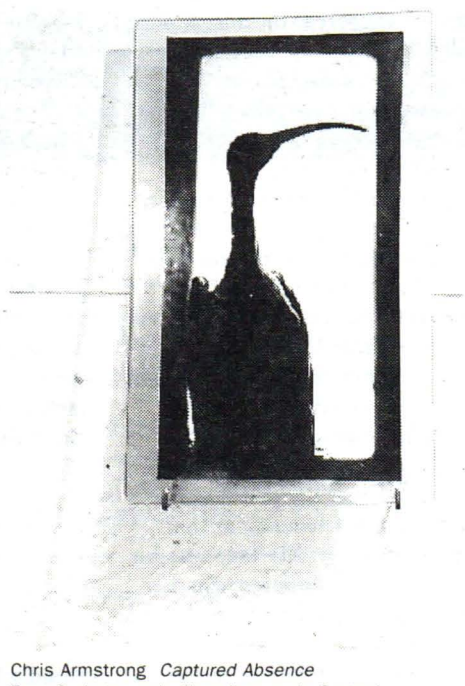
Interest in ordinary things choreographed into domestic tableaux (Ostrow and Zahalka), ordered and arranged components (Ahmed, Berkowitz and Hall) undermine the familiar. Williamson asserts the importance of the everyday at the end of the millennium, in a progressively post-human world. The works in *The Object of Existence* seem less nostalgic but rather eccentric when strangely domesticated by the gallery. Perhaps the most engaging work contains feminist agendas that denote a shift from the post-feminist reconciliation of politics with pleasure towards a reclaiming of the domestic amidst the ordering systems of minimalism.

This adaption of minimalism combined with a fascination with banal objects is evident in Margaret Morgan's cookie cutters gridded up onto the gallery wall. Fiona Hall's illuminated tupperware installation and Lauren Berkowitz's glass jars, obsessively collected, cleaned and arranged, point to notions of cleanliness and ordering. A pristine banality is restaged within the gallery environment. An altering of context reveals obsessional preoccupations as opposed to a rational reading of repetitions and permutations. At times squeaky clean, underlying *The Object of Existence* is an ordered compulsion that gleams.

Domestic Objects: A Critique of The Object of Existence, *Curator: Clare Williamson, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, December 1995-February 1996.*



Chrisl Berg *Planting My Garden: Rosa dolorosa* digital image



Chris Armstrong *Captured Absence*
Type C photograph, fibreglass resin & steel

Hobart is full of wonderful gardens with roses. They were still flowering when I arrived in April. To be reminded here, at the ultimate physical distance from my long ago home where the crescent moon appears inverted and chocolate stars on the Christmas tree melt in the summer sun of my mother's garden in a small town in Southern Germany...
Rose dolorosa, Christl Berg, from *Pivot: Elsewhere*

Pivot is a semi-regular series of photo/media projects based in Tasmania. The first was curated in 1992 by Luke Pellatt. The aim is to provide a forum for emerging Tasmanian photographers to express their ideas about aspects of Tasmanian life. The current *Pivot* curated by Dan Armstrong is thematically titled *Elsewhere.*

Four of the six artists in *Elsewhere* were born in other countries. Two are Tasmanian born. The exhibition examines how feelings and identity are tied to location, memory, culture and language. Christl Berg, Martin Walch and Mala Anthony use digital processes, Sabine Braun uses seven slide projectors and video, Troy Melville uses Vandyke Brown and Christopher Armstrong entombs type C prints into fibre glass resin supported by steel frames. Jennifer Spinks contributes a written response to the theme.

Pivot: Elsewhere is presently being exhibited at the Devonport Gallery and Arts Centre and will be touring Tasmania during 1996. For further details call Clare Rice Contemporary Art Services Tasmania 002-243 637

Dark pleasures

Jacqueline Millner experiences two distinctive Sydney Festival events

Amongst all the glitz and clamour of a Sydney summer festival, it was heartening to find two events which dealt in subtleties, demanding contemplation and quiet attention. *Mind's Eye* was indeed the eye of the storm in the maelstrom that was the tourist-glutted Rocks, providing a profound experience to offset the hot air and oversized baloney (Jeff Koon's *Puppy)* in the nearby MCA forecourt. *The Palimpsest,* an exhibition and performance evening at Artspace, also resisted the call to summertime hedonism by offering a serious and meticulously curated series of conceptual works by German and Australian artists responding to the relationship between text and image.

On arrival at *Mind's Eye,* I wondered where the entrance was, given all I could see was Nicholas Wishart, a small desk and a wardrobe. I was delighted when I found I was to enter through the wardrobe (no prizes for guessing this reference), but somewhat disconcerted when he handed me a blindfold, before issuing these 'instructions': "Put on the blindfold and find your own way to an exit; use the sounds to guide you. If you hear the same sounds twice you'll know you've doubled back, you are not to return the way you entered. There will be a rope to help you at first but then you must use the walls". I was a little apprehensive, but curious...and certainly not prepared for the fear that would set in once inside. The instructions reverberated in my head: *find your own way to an exit.* This meant I was on my own, with no guide and no idea of what it was I should be seeking out. And the blackness was absolute.

Immediately I remarked my relief at finding tactile signs that I was expected here, that there was a guiding hand, however abstract. The sounds were at first overwhelming; on entering, one's body triggers a synthesiser which registers one's proximity with increased volume. As I edged my way around the labyrinth, glued to the rope on my left, I found the panic of isolation and lack of control would sometimes deafen me to the aural clues. When the rope disappeared, the adrenalin pumped harder, as gradually I became aware of the different sound textures, electronic, industrial, natural, the whirring of machines, sonar blips, snatches of TV dialogue, distinct yet cohesive, overwhelming but sometimes reassuring in their familiarity.

When I realised that I had returned to my point of entry, my heart sank. I cautiously backtracked, and heaved myself through a series of large leather barriers, something like punching bags suspended in the darkness. I was uncertain as to whether I ought to have crossed this boundary, and the fear was rising, until a little tuft of fake fur met my touch and I felt once again a certain security in that invisible guiding presence. My face was hit by a blast of air, and I wondered whether if I raised my hand I would feel the slice of a blade. Meanwhile my feet were crunching through a loud plot of gravel, until I detected the glow of a torch and the warm and welcoming sound of a fully fleshed "Hello". Now I was safe.

With *Minds Eye,* sound artists Nicholas Wishart and Peter Woodford-Smith, together with collaborators Joyce Hinterding, Stephen Hamper and Vaughan Rogers, have created a perceptually 'other' place, where one is compelled to experience differently. In achieving this, not only do they raise many complex questions about the nature of perception and being in the world, but they do so in an entirely accessible fashion. The general public responded with great enthusiasm to this event, betraying the profound effect of the artists' work.

This level of public engagement was less obvious with *The Palimpsest,* indeed the atmosphere in the space was almost ponderous. However, spending some time with individual works, and witnessing some of the performances, highlighted the enduring vitality of conceptual practice. In particular I was struck by the prints and paintings of co-curator Ruark Lewis. With a series entitled *Tonal Poem* (1989-1995), Lewis has produced intricate, rich and painterly works through the layering of text. His prints are the result of delicate patternings made with an old typewriter. Both paintings and prints convincingly and with aesthetic allure explore the rationale of the exhibition—the relationship between image and text—with a poetic sensibility.

Christopher Snee's *Memories and Vagaries* (1989-91), a formally balanced work featuring constructivist 'sketches' on the pages of obscurely titled old books, is also a strong piece, as is Peter Lyssiotis' *Extract from Outside of a Dog.* This is a series of documentary-style photographs of the blackboard in an empty classroom, as it plays mute witness to a diverse range of personal and 'educational' interchanges. The simple snippets of phrases, diagrams, questions and lists make for an intriguing puzzle, and Lyssiotis, like Lewis, seamlessly weaves image and text together.

Ania Walwicz's little naive paintings, ominous and playful at the same time, are like literal illustrations of childhood reminiscences or dreams, like word-pictures which recall the very beginnings of language, a child's first words: car, house, cloud. Her reading was the high point of the performance evening, a delirious and disorientating narrative which brushed up against the edges of fear, nostalgia, revulsion and longing. Chris Mann's wide-ranging tonal monologue suffered from the poor acoustics of the venue which rendered the subtle variations and nuance of his piece largely inaudible, but the earphones which formed part of his installation thankfully allowed an appreciation of Mann's experiments with text/ texture/ image/ imaginings.

The Palimpsest is an ambitious project which the curators coordinated with assurance. Installation and selection were sensitively handled, for despite the large volume, one work never crowded out another, and despite disparate cultures and generations, the artists complemented each other effortlessly. In all, the complexity and profundity of *The Palimpsest* and *Mind's Eye* more than counterbalanced the lack of substance of much else on offer this summer.

Mind's Eye: a journey into sound, *Australian Steam Navigation Company Building, January 9-25.* The Palimpsest, *Artspace January 6-27.*

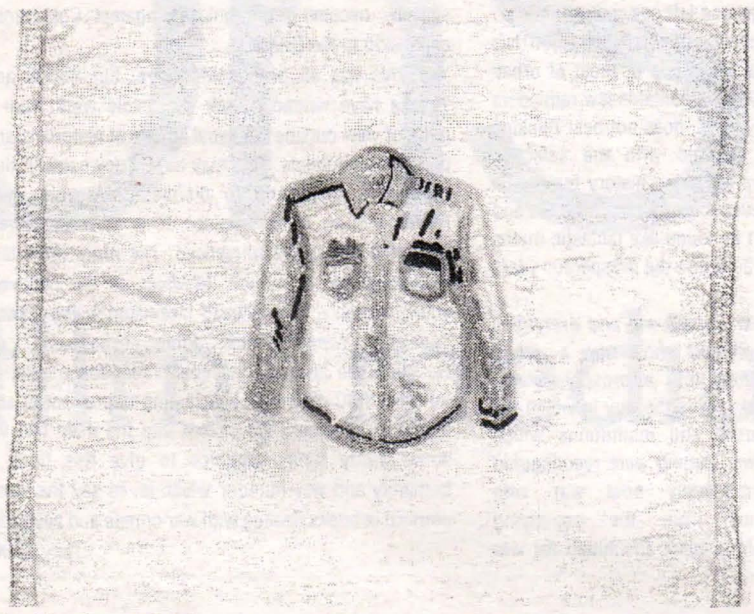
Epic tense

Colin Moore's complex connected works at Greenaway Art Gallery's mezzanine (Adelaide, November 29-December 29, 1995) played games of exaggeration and transposition, each provoking the other; unannounced yet transparent games internal to both notions, and carried by strategies of repetition and accumulation. This inquiry is familiar—disturbing systems of power, ones (dis)embodied and inscribed as laws, of meaning and cohesion—and excavates iconic patterns; the vigorous action brings-them-home and cuts-them-loose. Moore's persistent use of the same or similar objects and figures was crucial, finally, to elastic tense and diffuse tension. This made one legible (iconic too) before the scenes, and erased desire for a fresh 'take' (taste) piece to piece, adding instead the task of 'reading' and 'referencing' documents: not 'external' literal ones, but 'internal' ones, where self is social archive, witness to the grave(side) tenacity of symbols, their imposed menace.

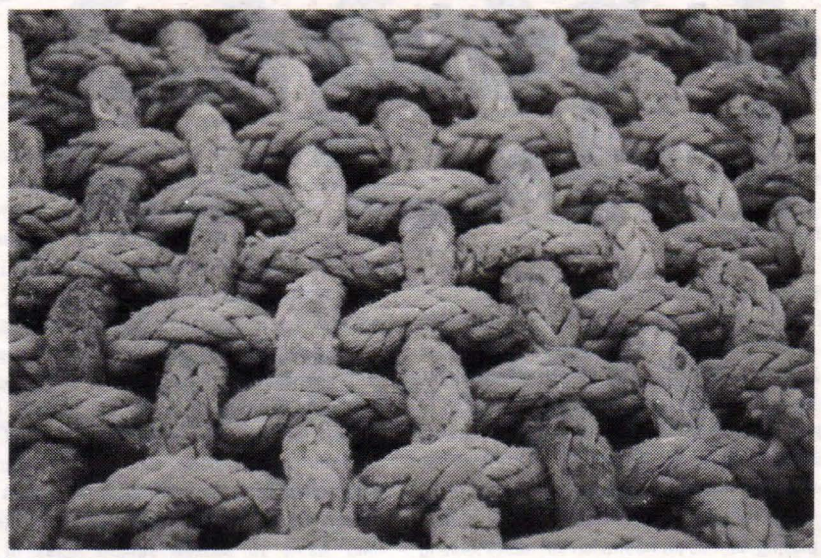
There were seven works: two sculptures, two paintings, three plaques. All surfaces were finely worked with much detail, everything equally weighted, a vocabulary even. The first sculptural work, titled *Television Diarama,* was a hollowed TV set looking like a toast rack. The planes of the scene receded, the good (pious) couple watched a screen which was reflected in the mirror above the mantelpiece, and on it was (I think) the image on the plaques—which were the next two works, both called *Cruxiform,* one resin, the other plaster. The image on the screen, the relief on each plaque, was of two entangled figures, struggling or embracing. Below the mirror was a glowing radio tuned to Belgium. The pregnant woman reaches out to take the remote control from the man, her other hand on her belly. A monstrous (dis)membering soap opera has begun. It continued around the walls, folding and unfolding relationships between objects, beliefs, rituals, and subjects, askewed, questionable, and terrible.

Colin Moore *See Food (detail)* mixed media

Linda Marie Walker



Jan Idle *Groom (detail)*



Jo Linsdell *Mat (detail)*

Michele Elliot *Cover (detail)*

The Pathology of Home

Outside the door of the *Pathology of Home* show a tuft of hair whispers from the skirting rail. Inside, a surreal welcome mat lies in wait—Joanne Linsdell's monstrous rope construction with one fat loop considering its next knot. Beyond the mat, her rope ladder falls from the skylight, twists its way across the room and out the window. In a quiet corner Michele Elliot displays a macabre touch with needle and skin. Nearby, Jan Idle's little embroidered shirts and slippers have slipped their frames and are making their way across the walls. A skin coloured bed beckons from the other room. Closeup, the pillowslip makes me shiver. It's threaded with hair and it's breathing. Nobody home. Curator of these quietly banal and disturbing objects is Jacqueline Millner. The artists are from Victoria, Western Australia and NSW. *Pathology of Home* opened at the Performance Space Gallery January 17 and tours to the Linden Gallery Melbourne 13-30 June and Cullity Gallery, University of WA July-August. *VB*

Sandy Edwards weaves her own psychological photo-narrative from a series of black & white photographs of a young female friend in *Paradise is a Place*. The photographer's eye lingers at the edges of adolescence, evoking the not so familiar tensions of the girl's rite of passage. Befitting the narrative, tension is framed and paradise (far south coastal New South Wales) tamed. Photographs will be exhibited in the Palm House at Sydney's Botanic Gardens. February-March.

And at CCP's Helen Schutt Access Gallery, Melbourne, *Vast as the Dark of Night*, Danielle Thompson combines lyrical timeless landscapes with dark, dislocated fragments of the body. Nudes float in perspex and punctuate the narrative. Photographs vary in colour from dark purple to a cold-toned blue. February 1-24.

Book Review

Higher Than Heaven: Japan, war & everything
By Tony Barrell and Rick Tanaka.
Private Guy International, 304pp.
ISBN 0 646 23187 1.

Contemporary Tokyo is crammed with machines, many of which have something to say or a digitised anthem to play. Buses and trains, in particular, are constantly talking at their passengers. The ultra-busy Yamanote line, which circumscribes the metropolis, has each of its stations identified by its own saccharine sweet electronic tune. These are played over the PA as the train doors open. A dozing salaryman will wake up to change trains when he hears the Shinjuku station melody playing, just as an Australian kid starts looking for the ice-cream van when Greensleeves echoes across the neighbourhood.

East Japan Railways should commission a composition: *Suite for Electronic Keyboard and 28 Railway Station Public Address Systems.* It could be the greatest tragic work of this century if it actually evoked the terrible things which have happened at most of these places.

Yurakucho Station, just south of Tokyo Station, sustained a direct hit during US bombing in January 1945. Hundreds of people died. Most of the other stations burned along with their occupants during subsequent incendiary bombing raids such as that of March 9-10 1945. This raid started a firestorm which laid waste to sixteen square miles of the city, incinerated 97,000 people and left one million injured. Virtually all physical evidence of this destruction has been erased by the total rebuilding of most of urban Japan post W.W.II. Tokyo now contains few reminders of a past which, in many ways, does not bear thinking about. When this is coupled with the selective sanitising of high school Japanese history texts, it is not surprising that the events surrounding the Second World War should begin to sound like fantastic myths to any Japanese person born into the prosperous years since 1960.

With *Higher than Heaven: Japan, war and everything* Tony Barrell and Rick Tanaka show how a violent Japanese past has segued into a prosperous but uneasy present. The book charts the way in which the political and social forces and institutions which brought about Japan's war waging were reconfigured and rehabilitated immediately post war with considerable assistance from the occupying Americans. Japan bought a quick absolution for war sins by becoming the bulwark against Communist expansion in the Orient.

Yes, this has all been said before, but Barrell and Tanaka have written a very accessible work from a point of view outside the usual ambits of historians and political economists. This may have a downside in that academics may tend to dismiss this work, well researched as it is, because it is not extensively footnoted and cross referenced. The more important readership for this book, however, is the relatively young audience who listened fascinated to Barrell and Tanaka's *Nippy Rock Shop* broadcasts on Double/Triple Jay and subsequent radio documentaries on other ABC networks. Fascinating bits of social and historical ephemera are slotted into the main text via some pretty funky graphics to give this book a humanity and wry humour which is, to say the least, unusual in books dealing with war crimes and bastardy.

Tony Smith

OnScreen
film, media & techno-arts

Feature

Why pay for Pay TV?

Gil Appleton answers some frequently asked questions

Indications are that Australian viewers are not exactly flocking to subscribe to Pay TV a year after it began. Like most developments in the Australian broadcasting system over the years, the arrival of Pay TV was ultimately determined more by the availability of suitable technology, and by political pressure, than by any significant community demand or interest.

People are holding off to see whether this new form of television has anything substantial to offer them before they pay to subscribe; many remain understandably confused about how it works and whether its programs are any better than, or different from, what they can already see on existing 'free-to-air' channels or hire from their video store.

What is Pay TV all about?

Subscribers pay a one-off installation fee and a monthly fee which covers a basic service. For this they receive whatever external equipment is required (such as an antenna or satellite dish) and a set-top box giving access to multiple channels offered by the service provider.

Australia now has three Pay TV service providers: Galaxy, Foxtel and Optus Vision. Galaxy and Foxtel are working in a strategic alliance which involves combining some services, and complex contractual arrangements mean that some channels are carried jointly by Optus Vision and Foxtel. All three carry channels of movies, sport, entertainment and news, and Galaxy also carries three channels from independent content suppliers: an Italian channel, a Chinese channel, and the SBS World Movies channel. It costs extra to receive any of these channels, as it does to receive some premium movies and sports channels. Would-be subscribers need to do some homework to figure out which service combination would suit them.

Of the three delivery modes for Pay TV—satellite, MDS (a wireless method of distribution) and cable—the last offers the greatest potential in terms of both the number of channels and its use for lucrative telephony services, which is why the phone companies Telstra and Optus are going hell for leather to cable the most populous parts of the country. Which delivery system you get depends largely on where you live.

Who has Pay TV?

A survey last year of over 1000 people revealed only 6 per cent who were 'very likely' to subscribe, though this represents a substantial 300,000 households.

Last year, Galaxy was predicting 200,000 subscribers in its first year of operation, though in the first six months to June it managed only 30,000; by December 1995 it had reportedly achieved 62,000.

What sort of programs does Pay TV offer?

Experience in the United States and Europe has shown that sport and movies are the main attractions and the current offerings in Australia reflect this. The programming of the 25 channels listed in Sydney program guides at the beginning of January was as follows:

No. of channels	*Programming*
7	General entertainment including children's
6	Movies (some recent, many older)
6	News (including business news and world weather)
3	Sport
1	Documentary (travel, nature)
1	Music videos
1	Education

Perusal of the program guides for the Pay TV services is a dispiriting experience. News services are predominantly drawn from overseas feeds like the BBC and CNN, and a projected 'local' Pay TV news service will in fact have less than 20 per cent local content. Movies are overwhelmingly Hollywood product (not surprising given the direct links between service providers and major Hollywood studios); entertainment channels are dominated by US product, much of it ancient sitcoms and drama series. As would be apparent from this line-up, a major preoccupation of Pay TV operators is minimising program costs. In the US the average expenditure by Pay TV service providers on programs, with the exception of movie channels, is a mere 15 cents in the subscriber dollar.

A survey in October last year by the Communications Law Centre found:

- Out of nearly 4000 hours of Pay TV in a week, just 361 hours were Australian programs, and more than half of that came from the weather channel which shows still images of maps and graphics of various parts of Australia.
- Most of the rest was made up of sport on Optus Vision's Sports Australia, where between 40-55 per cent of transmission was Australian sport.
- Excluding the Weather Channel, Australian programs accounted for a mere 5.3 per cent of Pay TV time; on the movie and entertainment channels the figure dropped to 1 per cent.

By comparison, existing commercial channels have to carry a total of 50 per cent Australian content. Even in the cinema, 10 per cent of films released in 1994 were Australian. Commercial television networks, which long resisted regulation on the grounds that Australian programs were too expensive, now acknowledge that they are essential to a successful program strategy. Perhaps there may be cause for some hope in that Australian television audiences have grown accustomed to seeing their own culture reflected on television and may resist an unadulterated diet of US programs.

What is the potential for Australian creators?

The fact that we have substantial Australian content on free-to-air TV programming is largely due to government intervention over many years, via both regulation and production funding support. There is negligible regulation for Pay TV: services providing primarily drama are required merely to apply 10 per cent of their program expenditure to Australian-made programs, and all other forms of programming are free of regulation.

Pay TV currently offers few prospects for Australian film and video makers, and none at all for artists working in other artforms. The regrettable locking out of the ABC, which was committed to a high level of Australian content, leaves the field looking bleak. The question of Australian content on Pay TV is to be reviewed before 1997, and it will be very much in the interests of the cultural community as a whole to lobby for major change. Current Pay TV programming makes a mockery of the government's stated cultural policy commitments and threatens a re-run of the situation which prevailed from the start of TV in 1956 and gave rise to bitterly fought campaigns by the local industry to increase local content.

Who owns Pay TV?

The Seven Network and Kerry Packer's Nine Network have a stake in Optus Vision, along with major shareholders Optus itself and the US's Continental Cablevision. Ironically, a major reason why it took Australia so long to get Pay TV is that the government was nervous about the reaction of the existing TV networks, who worked very skilfully to delay Pay TV and stymie some of its programming initiatives, especially sports.

Telstra, which is still government-owned (though for how long?) is partner in Foxtel with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. At the time of writing, a merger between Foxtel and Australis Media, operator of Galaxy, was being considered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which said it had 'some concerns' about this proposal.

The prospect of Murdoch, who already controls more than two thirds of Australia's print media, getting his hands on telephony services and a gateway to the vaunted 'information highway' as part of his alliance with Telstra, has some people very worried.

Murdoch and Packer have done a bizarre deal whereby the rugby Super League for which Murdoch fought so hard and paid so much will also be shown on the Nine network; and although Murdoch has a 15 per cent shareholding in Seven, he has sold the rights to Fox TV material not to Seven, but to Nine!

People into conspiracy theories (and there are plenty of those among observers of Australian communications policy) are imagining some frightening scenarios, most of which involve variations on the theme of all Australia's media and telecommunications services being carved up between Packer and Murdoch, with Pay TV merely the stalking horse for future developments.

Is there any potential for innovative program channels?

Commercial networks are fond of saying that no-one wants 'arts programs'. They base this on low ratings for the ABC and SBS magazine-style programs presented as though 'the arts' were homogeneous, even though someone who is interested in ballet is not necessarily into opera, and visual arts enthusiasts may never go to the theatre. The most effective 'arts' programs to date have been those focussing on one artform such as SBS's *Book Show* and *The Movie Show*.

The roll-out of cable offers the possibility of almost unlimited numbers of channels, and this could present significant opportunities for specific interest groups and for viewers. With support from the government, artists, filmmakers, performers and arts companies could obtain access to spare channel capacity and develop experimental and innovative forms of programming designed to appeal to specialist niche audiences rather than a generalist audience.

What are the economic implications of Pay TV?

It will be years before Pay TV goes into the black. Australis/Galaxy reported a loss of $122m for the year ending 30 June 1995, during which it had the market to itself. Australia is a small market by world standards, and it is salutary to note that in the UK, one of two competing satellite Pay TV services went to the wall and the survivor, Murdoch's BSkyB, is still servicing an enormous debt. The start-up costs for Pay TV are massive: Telstra and Optus are outlaying hundreds of millions on duplicating cable infrastructure, spending many millions more on advertising in the cutthroat battle to attract subscribers, and paring subscription and installation costs to the bone, leaving precious little room for profit. Some industry observers believe that it is inevitable that we will end up with one mega-provider.

Is there anything good about Pay TV?

Perhaps the best thing about Pay TV is that if you don't like it, you can simply stop subscribing—the ultimate form of consumer choice. Other possible attractions include the lack of advertising (barred by the Government, though only until 1997), access to special interest or niche services, and the prospect of interactivity, at least with cable services. But for the time being, there is probably more intellectual stimulus to be had on the internet, and at considerably lower cost.

Gil Appleton is a freelance writer and consultant on media, communications and cultural policy.

Feature review

Once upon a time there was a country...

Eddy Jokovich puts Emir Kusturica's epic *Underground* in political context

On receipt of the 1995 *Palme D'Or* at the Cannes International Film Festival for his film *Underground,* director Emir Kusturica claimed that he was simply directing a creative response to the fifty or so years of life under communist regimes—a response paraphrasing the fascinations, consternations, passions, oppressions and, ultimately, the centrifugal nationalisms that resulted in the collapse of a country that was known as Yugoslavia. This creative response was criticised by his fellow Sarajevans as a manipulation of realism within communist Yugoslavia, an exercise that ignored the sufferings of the Bosnian people during the siege of Sarajevo, and the firm accusation that *Underground* is nothing more than an outlet for pro-Serbian sympathies. Consequently, as if to emulate the plight of the partisans depicted in his film, Kusturica has now disappeared to the 'underground', reportedly seeking French citizenship—regrettable, but perhaps an understandable action, given the nature of the wars of independence in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rise of 'ethnic' nationalism in the region.

Underground is an ambitious cinematic project sporadically portraying Yugoslavia over a fifty-year period, commencing with the bombing of Belgrade in 1941 as part of 'Operation Punishment' and the partisans' triumph over the Nazi occupiers in 1944, coupled with Marshal Tito's rise to power and the installation of his communist regime. It proceeds to explore the cold war period circa 1961, and the farce of the abnegation of the 'underground' partisans by the communist apparatchiks. Its finale takes place during the current war in Bosnia, at which point the hidden partisans resurface from the underground to defend 'their country'. If the subtext of *Underground* can be reduced to a simple solitary factor, it is the representation of Yugoslavism as an illusory scheme—communism installed by the victorious Tito, purportedly for the promotion of the proletarian paradise, only to be exposed as the veneer where militarist authoritarianism simply replaced privileged aristocracy.

But Kusturica is presenting more than this solitary factor—at every juncture, a confused collection of tangents appears—as if Kusturica is looking through a prism in search of new symbolic permutations and historical corollaries. On the surface, narrative representations of the sycophancy of the communist politburo and the failings of Yugoslav idealism succeed. Upon scrutiny, the presentation of salient historical points is, at best, haphazard, or, at worst, inaccurate, revealing a turgid nostalgia for the dysfunctional soul of a country, and misplaced regrets for the diminution of an ideal that, according to Milovan Djilas, was primarily utopian. (Djilas was Tito's right-hand man after the partisan victory in 1944 and regarded as a moral and intellectual architect of socialism; it is unclear whether the character of Marko Dren in *Underground* is a reference to Djilas.)

This idealism promised to deliver a brave new world to the Balkans but, as events since the death of Tito in 1980 suggest, failed to meet its obligations. Kusturica cultivates what post-war Yugoslavia long epitomised to the aficionados of international socialism—the proclamation of the authentic workers' state that rose from the ashes of an anti-fascist revolution; a state removed from the shackles of an oppressive royalist regime, one that snooked belligerently at the Soviet Union and developed a unique social and economic formula that travelled down the path of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* [brotherhood and unity]—the dialectical 'third-way' that was putatively placed somewhere in the divide between the east and the west.

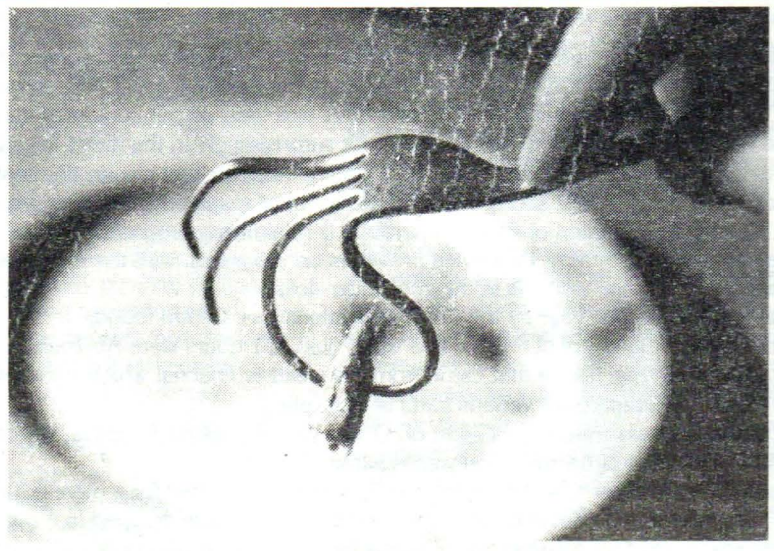
In reality, Titoism manifested itself as a free-flowing combination of the more subtle practices of Stalinist autocracy and brutalism, and restrictive free-market consumerism. Socialists in the west romanticised the praxis that existed in Yugoslavia, where text-book Marxist paradigms, workers' self-management protocols, and the rhetoric of the supersession of Yugoslavism over nationalism developed a social mechanism loosened from the confines of capital-based thinking. But, according to Slavenka Drakulic (Zagreb-based author of *How we Survived Communism and Even Laughed* and *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side,* which outlined western perceptions of communism and Yugoslavism, and the discrepancies between their theoretical and practical manifestations) to think Yugoslavism from without, and to live Yugoslavism from within, appeared as substantially different and mutually exclusive propositions—on one hand, processes of political expediency; on the other, practical and economic realism. In essence, Yugoslavia was an audacious experiment of grand social and political proportions, an attempt to unify three mainstream groupings of the southern Slavic region—Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes—into one political entity, a socialist federated republic.

Alongside these groupings, comprising two languages, two alphabets, and two religions, existed a kaleidoscope of nations, cultures, and languages—a Muslim majority in Bosnia, an Albanian nation within Kosovo, a Macedonian republic in the south, a Hungarian minority to the north, and disparate groupings of Ruthenes, Jews, Bulgars and Gypsies. In order to extend Yugoslav nationalism, Tito instigated a campaign of repression and the subjugation of disparate nationalist aspirations. Hence, a citizen became 'the Yugoslav', not a citizen of the constituent nations. Ironically, after the death of Tito, it was competitive nationalisms and political opportunisms that brought about an end to Yugoslavia. Kusturica makes little reference to these national groups, only crystallising the concept of the 'Yugoslav' citizen.

Further, *Underground* seeks to promote a supranationalist Yugoslav citizen above the national groupings contained within Yugoslavia's political boundaries. This supranationalist agenda, albeit admirable, is compromised and undermined through the liberal application of iconography ascribed to a Serbian culture; the wild-rose patch, slivovitz [plum-brandy], religious Orthodox motifs, et al. The simple syllogism is that, if Kusturica embraces the values of a pan-Slavic state in Yugoslavia, but then relies on Serbian motifs to espouse these values, his longing for the recall of Yugoslavia therefore must correlate to a longing for Serbian statehood. Simple logic; but, on the omission of specific cultural details, Kusturica leaves himself exposed to misinterpretations and malapportioned analysis.

This is not to deny *Underground* its cinematographic merits. Kusturica seduces his audience with arrays of visual metaphor that produce myriad corollaries from historical references. As an example, the vibrancy of the opening scene during the German raid over Belgrade operates as a gambit—a ruse where seduction occurs through visual and sonic interplay between the screen characterisations of the major political figures of post-war Yugoslavia. However, it is this visual seduction that invites an exposé of the sensitivities of the post-Yugoslav psyche. Portrayals of nationalism within cinema, particularly where contemporary issues are brought into question, arouse suspicions and skepticisms from those who maintain that their identity and history is misrepresented or untold. Irrespective of the good intentions of *Underground* and its cinematic excellence, it remains a flawed recital of Yugoslavism, and excludes more than it includes, leaving historical issues unclear and unresolved. The objections outlined by Sarajevans to Kusturica's work, rightly or wrongly, reveal a poignant by-product of the war-time apparatus. In neighbouring Croatia, President Franjo Tudjman decreed that protestations against the war campaign equated to anti-state and counter-independence activities. Subsequently, those activists working to oppose the mechanisms of war and ethnic nationalism were despatched to the front-line, branded as traitors, and tried for treason. Unfortunately for Kusturica, his Bosnian counterparts determined that ill-defined nationalism also equates to anti-state action, and have decided to tarnish him with the same brush.

Eddy Jokovich is the director of Australia Region Media, an independent media research and production unit, and the editor of Volte Face, *a periodical on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.*



Sydney Intermedia Network presents MATINAZE 1996: Survey of Australian Screen Arts
Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales
March 2 & 3, 1pm: "Zero Hour" performance by Barbara Campbell, Amanda Stewart & Stevie Wishart
March 9, 11am: Internet site survey with Sydney site authors
March 9, 2pm: Survey of film and video art including "Writer's Block" by Leon Cmielewski, 1994, 16mm film (pictured). Further information: 264 7225, fax 267 8539, email sinsite@ozemail.com.au

Interview

Internal landscapes

John McConchie interviews Rolf de Heer prior to the premiere of his new feature film *The Quiet Room* at the Adelaide Festival

Although it is approaching midday, a half moon glimmers faintly in the sky as it descends into the flat expanse of the Gulf of St. Vincent. Of all Australia's main cities, Adelaide's landscape is often revealed as starkly surreal; it's easy to feel like an intruder on an alien landscape. The beginning of a sea breeze is refreshing in the shade of a wide verandah, a perfect place to talk to filmmaker Rolf de Heer, best known for Bad Boy Bubby, *about his work.*

The setting is apt. His features, Dingo *and* Epsilon, *have capitalised on similarly surreal landscapes.* Dingo *contrasts the outback with the distinct streetscapes of Paris.* Epsilon *(yet to be released) also opens in the desert, using sophisticated technology to construct an alien subjectivity, that of a being who exists beyond our perception of time and space. This protracted sequence is a stunning seamless panning and tracking shot, depicting the transition of night into day and night again, viewed by a being who somehow exists beyond our natural laws. It achieves the sense of a different consciousness, rare in science fiction films, by using what the cinema does best: the manipulation of time and space.*

In contrast, Bad Boy Bubby *and his most recent feature* The Quiet Room *explore internal landscapes by presenting the world through different eyes. These films recall Francois Truffaut's fascination with the* enfant sauvage. *Bubby stumbles into our reality for the first time as an adult, having been isolated his entire life. Its own opening reel is unforgettable for its shocking viscosity.* The Quiet Room *picks up on the best and most claustrophobic sections of* Bubby. *A three-hander, it explores the sensibility of a child who has chosen not to speak, her pertinent commentary provided for us in voice-over. De Heer's last three features have undertaken different experimental approaches, each integral to the particular project.*

The Quiet Room *provided the starting point for our conversation. I asked the predictable: did the film grow from his own experiences as a father?*

RdH No. I have two children aged seven and three. I used to be a child myself. The film didn't start with first hand experience but through the relationship with my own kids and others, observing them, drawing on my own experiences and projecting them out, using internal dialogues, arguments and so on. The problem I posed was how to create the subjectivity of a seven year old who, in response to her parents' problems, has chosen not to speak.

JM Subjectivity does seem to be a major concern in your films in providing an outsider's perspective for an audience: a child's, an alien's...

RdH I'm trying to deal with it. It's tied up with my musings on the nature of cinema, its ability to create feeling and my capacity to deal with it as a filmmaker—I don't see myself as a film director. I have certain strengths and weaknesses, it's a matter of using the strengths to create something that is powerfully *cinematic.*

JM The opening of Epsilon *certainly achieves that.*

RdH That was unique. Developing a film—starting from need, like desire—is just hard, hard work. Digging through waffling thoughts... it's akin to ploughing. *Epsilon* was completely different. I saw the special effects footage at Digital Arts while I was doing post-production on *Bad Boy Bubby* and was emotionally moved by it. I was at a stage of regret about *Bubby.* I had enjoyed incredible creative freedom with that film and thought I might never have that kind of freedom again but still hadn't said half the things that were important to me. I was driving home in a dinky little mini musing about that, what I had just seen and—bang! There was that opening. I got home ten minutes later with the whole thing almost totally conceived, how to do it, cost it; hit the phones and virtually had the film set up two hours later.

JM You seem to have a unique process as far as feature production is concerned. Epsilon *was written as it was shot, and you were able to fund* The Quiet Room *without a script as well. Is this possible because you work in a niche area?*

RdH No. I don't think of it that way at all. I assess each project by its own requirements. I'm fascinated by the dynamics of art and markets and I have to satisfy both to make it work for me. If the next film costs $15 million, it brings its own commercial requirements...that's part of the process. At the outset, *Epsilon* was highly risky, but costing what it should (under $2 million), the money should be recouped. Because of the technology, we had to write as we went, try everything and use only what worked. That meant we ended up taking 61 shooting days on the opening reel. If you scripted the final film and budgeted it, it would have cost $10 million. *The Quiet Room* is intensely enclosed, has a cast of three, so the risks for the investors was OK. But I still needed to have the film highly structured before shooting: full script, storyboards and so on. *Bad Boy Bubby* was a good risk, under $1 million.

JM That gave the freedom to try all sorts of things, including using 32 directors of photography.

RdH Although there is one who dominated the film. But yes, each film is very particular, so it's a matter for juggling the requirements to get to do what you want. Of the six features, *Dingo* was the one where I had nothing to do with the writing, but I always loved the script, it always appealed to me.

JM It is also about misplaced subjectivities. There's still a continuum with the films you wrote or co-wrote.

RdH Perhaps. The first two features, which you haven't seen, were more conventional. I was concerned with my place in the industry, Hollywood and all that. Now it's the film that matters.

JM And places? Like working in Adelaide? You've been highly supportive of local actors and crew, and to short filmmakers for that matter; using Bubby *to work with so many DoPs, for example.*

RdH Well, I feel loyal to people rather than places, but people occupy places of course. So I do have a loyalty to Adelaide—product of a Calvinist upbringing or something—but if I can make it work, I will. There's the warm and fuzzies and all that, but its also pragmatic. Loyalty is repaid three times, you gain from a genuine investment. But it gets harder, things get institutionalised and all sorts of rubbish gets back to you. Basically you work with the people appropriate for each film, using the right people and approach to get results. Really, everyone has their own opinion about these things: like films, everyone has their own version.

JM Absolutely. I can have six contradictory opinions about a single film. I can certainly love and hate a Spielberg film simultaneously.

RdH Right. With *The Quiet Room* there were about 25 ways to cut it together, to explore how to create that subjectivity. The more we sustained the child's point-of-view shots, the weaker the subjectivity became.

JM Do you ever want to get out with a video camera just to try these things out?

RdH I think about it. I think about finding the time to study certain extracts in detail. The opening of Fred Schepsi's *Ice Man* had an enormous impact for me, for example. But...

JM Somehow I suspect you've found another way of doing just that.

The Quiet Room *premieres on March 7 at The Mercury Cinema, Adelaide.*

Black Man Down, directed by Sam Watson, 1996

Two Bob Mermaid, directed by Darlene Johnson, 1996.

These films are from the series *From Sand to Celluloid —New Works from Indigenous Filmmakers,* commissioned by the Indigenous Branch of the Australian Film Commission.

The films, each around ten minutes in length are from filmmakers who, as director Darlene Johnson observes "Have a Koori heritage, which allows them a personalised perspective on the subject". The subject matter ranges from the horror of Aboriginal deaths in custody to the conflicting emotions of a young Koori girl who can and does pass for white at the local swimming pool. The films will be touring nationally beginning in Sydney on March 19.

For further information contact Marianne Collopy on 03 9695 7205.

Interview

Jambo ('just cruising around')

Maryanne Lynch speaks with Jan Cattoni about a Marshall Islands filmmaking experience

The Pacific Documentary Project is a collaborative project between UNICEF (Fiji) and the Australian Screen Directors Association (ASDA). It is funded by AusAid and commenced in 1994. The project's aims are documenting youth issues in the South Pacific, training Pacific film makers and providing opportunities for beginning Australian documentary makers.
Jan Cattoni and Pete Johnson were two of the four Australians selected for the project in 1995. They went as a team to the Marshall Islands.

ML Tell me about the aims of the project.

JC The main aim is to produce work about Pacific youth for UNICEF. Training local filmmakers is part of it, but consciousness-raising is a priority.

ML Consciousness-raising in the Pacific or about the Pacific, or both?

JC Both.

ML What were the youth issues that were targeted?

JC The Marshalls has one of the highest youth suicide rates per capita in the world, it has the highest population growth in the world, 4.2 per cent, it has one of the highest fertility rates in the world and a really high rate of teenage pregnancy. So reproductive health and youth suicide were the issues we were asked to address, which is really hard when you go into a country that you don't know anything about, to try and tackle issues like that and involve youth in talking about these issues.

ML How did you go about it?

JC Pete Johnson and I were both in the roles of co-directors and co-producers. He did camera, I did sound, and I've got the main editing role at the moment. So, it was just the two of us with 120 kilos of equipment landing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, where English is a second language.

Our main contact was an organisation called Youth to Youth in Health (YTYIH). It's an non-government organisation, actually a peer education group, about Marshallese culture. There's nothing for young people to do, and they're really caught between Marshallese culture and Western culture. The first two Marshallese words I was taught were *jambo* ('just cruising around')—the title of our documentary—and *kamate* ('killing time').

ML So, on the one hand you were there to teach skills to young people— What age range were they?

JC 18 to about 22.

ML And on the other hand you were also there to make a documentary looking at youth suicide and reproductive health?

Video production on *Youth to Youth in Health* Pete Johnson

JC It was really difficult to do those two things ...

ML How long were you there?

JC Four weeks [and five weeks in Fiji]. We spent a week doing workshops with the YTYIH group and at the same time panicking about how on earth we were going to get our project done. But, the group, in the time that we were there, went from doing a non-edited style of program to writing the script, storyboarding it, shooting it, and editing it.

ML What about the other part of the project, the documentary-making by you and Pete?

JC Young people at YTYIH had to have a clean lifestyle. Access to young people for whom the problems were real was quite difficult. We didn't speak Marshallese, and most young people didn't speak English. In the end we were lucky to find some young people who had hard times and had pulled through.

ML How did you feel in your dual role?

JC It was a really hard balance and I'm not sure either of us achieved it too well. You get caught between what you're experiencing, and at the same time having to try and document some of these issues. Often I'd have a conversation with a young woman who'd tell me some really important things about her life and then when I asked her to talk to the camera, she wasn't able to do that. That's something that ultimately I had no problems in accepting, but it meant that in terms of the documentary we weren't able to get a lot of the material we'd have liked.

ML Did it throw up larger thoughts about documentary-making?

JC We were both committed to not being solely focused on the documentary, and we had UNICEF support in that. I guess it's at cross-purposes though, because mostly in a documentary context you're thinking about the end production. There's also this constant struggle with mainstream production values versus the importance of producing something that Marshallese people see as reflecting their community, like what language is used in interviews.

ML What was it like to come with the baggage of Australian culture into the Marshall Islands with its own mixture of cultures?

JC In Fiji we experienced quite a lot of hostility. There is a sense that even though geographically Australia is in the Pacific, we don't identify as a Pacific nation. There were a lot of questions about why Fijian film makers weren't being used for this project; from their point of view they were in a much better position to document those issues.

The Marshalls was very different, and I think that's because their major contact is the US. They have about 15 channels of cable TV, most of them from the west coast of the US, and even families that were really poor had television.

ML In setting up this project, was there much thought given to cultural differences?

JC Part of the reason we were picked was that in our application we were asked to list what aspects of youth culture in the Pacific we wanted to document, and we said we knew very little about it and one of the things we would do would be to consult widely and we'd try and produce a piece of work that people could own. But there wasn't the infrastructure there to do that—hopefully, some of our recommendations will be taken into account in the 1996 project.

ML What do you think of the project in relation to your own practice as a documentary maker?

JC Part of my interest was that I see the medium of video production as enabling people who might identify themselves as marginal to legitimise their experiences and also to ensure that such experiences are placed on the mainstream agenda; in different forms too. And yet, there's no guarantee that's going to make a difference. That was a real issue. You do go in, you take things, and then you leave.

Interview

Sharpening the edge

Annemarie Jonson interviews Amanda McDonald Crowley, new Director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT)

AJ First, could you tell us a little about ANAT—its roles and functions?

AMC ANAT was established as a project of the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide in 1985, and its brief is to support artists working across a range of scientific and technological media. As an organisation with a national brief to foster links between the arts, sciences and new technology, ANAT essentially acts as a networking, advocacy and service organisation. We are principally funded by the Australia Council, and we undertake a wide range of functions including intensive skills training programs, grant programs through our R&D fund, publication, and exhibition and conference organisation, for example, hosting the *Third International Symposium on Electronic Art (TISEA)* in Sydney in 1992. ANAT also maintains a database of artists working with new technologies throughout Australia, and we publish information in our newsletter and on our website. Since its inception in 1985, ANAT has been at the forefront of the movement to position artists as active participants in the 'information age'.

AJ You took up your position in November '95. Could you reflect on ANAT's track record prior to your directorship?

AMC ANAT has always been in a difficult position. One of its primary problems is that it's always been seriously under-resourced, so that, with its broad national brief, its profile is not what I think it could be. However, the outcomes of its training programs have been fantastic for artists who have skilled up and gone on to develop national and international reputations. Similarly, in the grant programs, quite small amounts of money have supported many innovative artists who have subsequently achieved national and international acclaim in the media.

AJ ANAT is based in Adelaide, yet the focus of much new media activity, and particularly now, multimedia development, has been along the east coast axis.

AMC I think it's an overstatement to suggest that the focus of activity has been on the east coast. There's certainly significant activity on the east coast because of the critical mass of people, but there are also exciting developments throughout Australia, exemplified by the fact that ANAT grew up in Adelaide, and that one of the first two successful Cooperative Multimedia Centre (CMC) bids was a Perth-based bid.

However, developing a higher national profile within the arts community, in industry and amongst the broader community, is something that's high on my agenda for ANAT. For example, I'm establishing a national advisory committee which will assist me to formulate policy on the development of ANAT's profile nationally, and that of artists working with new technologies across all artforms.

AJ As you're aware, recent cultural policy has established a range of initiatives to support the development of a multimedia industry in Australia. What is the role of ANAT in the development of such an 'industry'?

AMC *Creative Nation* had a very strong focus on multimedia. However this focus has been economically driven, and the support has predominantly gone to industry development, not to art and cultural imperatives. Many artists are understandably finding that problematic. ANAT has a role to play in making clear that the only way we're going to develop a sustainable industry is by ensuring that artists are integrally involved from the developmental stages. The CMCs for example should be supporting artists' research and development and providing digital skills training opportunities. We clearly cannot establish a genuinely innovative and viable industry unless artists have opportunities for R&D and experimentation within that industry sector.

AJ There's also been criticism of late of the Australia Council's response—or lack of it—to new media and technology-based arts practice in the wake of Creative Nation. *As director of an Australia Council funded organisation, what is your assessment of their response?*

AMC I'm pleased to report that the Council has recently provided ANAT with a one-off allocation of $90,000 to increase support to artists working in this area. It's not a vast amount, but it will double our research and development fund to $80,000. The funding will also work towards helping me to establish a national profile for the organisation.

I think the Australia Council was particularly slow off the mark in developing policy: I haven't seen any demonstration of any Australia Council policy on art and technology presented publicly to date. At the same time, Council was put in a difficult position, insofar as it was presented by *Creative Nation* with an imprimatur to support artists working with new technologies—in order to get 'creative content' onto the 'information highway'—but it wasn't provided with any financial resources dedicated to this area. As far as developing effective and responsive policy, it will be critical that Council looks to genuine consultation with artists—not just policymakers, but artists working with new technologies in formulating policy directions.

AJ What is the current state of technology-based arts practice in Australia?

AMC Australian artists have been experimenting with new technologies and digital media for many years, and there's a great diversity of practice, from installation work in conventional gallery settings, to online work, to video exhibition, to interactive CD ROM, through to electronic sound. There's also a groundswell of extremely interesting work at an 'underground' level in collectives like Clan Analogue who produce electronic sound and installation: work that doesn't fit into an 'art' milieu but is culturally very interesting. There are established digital artists like Jill Scott and Peter Callas who are absolutely at the forefront of these areas internationally. There's also online work: ventures like *Parallel* in Adelaide which runs an online gallery and a journal developing discourse around these areas. I'm particularly interested in supporting the grass-roots experimental edge of technology-based practices that are emerging in Australia.

AJ What are your plans for ANAT over the next couple of years?

AMC My first priority is to develop the profile of ANAT nationally, because I believe that by doing that you assist in developing the profile of artists working in new technologies. ANAT also has a role to play in enhancing Australian artists' capacity to network internationally, and I'll be furthering our relationships with international networks such as ISEA.
It's critical that we continue to support the development of art practices through our art R&D fund by providing direct funding to artists. But it's also critical that we develop exhibition opportunities for artists to present work in a critical context, whether that be in conventional gallery spaces—there's a major need in Australia for venues properly outfitted to show technology-based work—or online, which presents fantastic opportunities for experimentation with the medium. I'm particularly keen in this regard for ANAT to develop its online presence so that we can further develop the profile of artists and assist them to better promote and market themselves. The development of the field relies on the potential to promote, exhibit, discuss and develop a critical discourse around technology-based practices. I'm aiming to achieve that critically important balance between support for artists' production, research and development, and support for presentation opportunities within a critical discourse, while working to build the profile of the organisation.

Further information on ANAT is available on Tel +61 8-231 9037 Fax +61 8-211 7323 email anat@peg.apc.org. Web http://va.com.au/anat/.

Critically interactive

Previewing the Museum of Contemporary Art's *Burning the Interface,* John Conomos demonstrates artists' challenge to prevailing multimedia myths

In the wake of the *Creative Nation* cultural policy document, launched in October 1994, the much touted new media technologies of our post-computer epoch—especially the current hyperbole heralding the internet and CD-ROMs, amongst other popular forms of emerging computer-inflected media—require a sustained deconstructive analysis of the complex dialectic existing between electronic media, culture, gender and power.

We live in an increasingly mediated world where the computer and its related techno-utopian myths of artifice, control and rationality are instrumental in creating a sense of reality that is becoming more intricate, more contingent. Given that we are becoming more reliant on digital languages of representation—where the discourse between images and knowledge, cognition and epistemology is being radically transformed—it behoves us to formulate the awkward questions that analyse the cultural mechanisms of Western representation, questions about our socio-cultural institutions and ourselves and our prevailing dependency on spurious modernist paradigms and their legacy to Cartesian perspectivalism.

When examining interactive CD-ROMs as the popular mode of digital media technology, we have to ask why this is so? How do we precisely locate them in consumer culture, contemporary art practice and the older cultural forms and outcomes? How do we approach interactive CD-ROM art in a meaningful dialogic manner? If we are going to probe beyond the current penchant for defining CD-ROMs as something more than an expedient commercial down-loading technology so Australia may enter the post-broadcast world of satellite communications, then we should not avoid addressing the difficult cultural, gender and phenomenological issues. We need to remind ourselves (something that *Creative Nation* conveniently overlooks) that our academic and popular discourse about electronic media (including CD-ROMs) should negotiate the key problem of aesthetic and ethical abdication (Felix Guattari) and the substantial significance of the more marginalised artists and their oeuvres, artists who have been central (since the historical avant-garde) to the little understood, (in)visible historical narrative of electronic art.

The forthcoming show *Burning the Interface,* curated by media artist Mike Leggett and curator Linda Michael at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney is the first major survey exhibition of international and local artists' use of CD-ROM technology that seeks to address these critical issues. It will italicise through its 30 or so diverse examples the range of ideas, forms and approaches informing this new interactive multimedia medium.

Curatorially, as a comprehensive showing of interactive CD-ROM, the exhibition thankfully does not subscribe to the worst critical excesses of intellectual fashions of the post-aesthetic, post-auratic and post-philosophical strands of contemporary thought. For it also contests the glib euphoric double-talk and ethical solipsism that still characterise our critical approach to the digital arts and the persistent tendency to evaluate them in terms of the more established forms of cultural production. This signifies the hermeneutic necessity to question how many examples of new media—including interactive CD-ROMs—exemplify conceptual, formal and technological facets of a "boy's own adventure narrative" and the overall problematic cultural mind-set that the personal computer suggests "a dialogue with the infinite" (Iain Chambers), or if you prefer, the thematic premise of Disney's fully computer-animated feature *Toy Story* (1995) of "infinity and beyond".

Burning the Interface aims to advance popular and specialist interests in examining the potential of CD-ROM interactivity for experimental artistic expression and casts a fairly wide net over artists who are already navigating the medium. The curators decided not to include works that are archival/documentation or artist CV in emphasis, nor works that are primarily developed as computer games. From over 130 proposals from fourteen countries (publicised through the internet that is metamorphosing into a gallery space—a curatorial phenomenon that will rapidly expand as we witness the dynamic growth of cybersalons, etc.) the show will exhibit works from overseas artists like Eric Lanz, Luc Courchesne, George Legrady, and David Blair, and locally Troy Innocent, Phil George/Ralph Wayment, Linda Dement, Brad Miller and John Colette.

These works were chosen for their experimental engagement, reflexivity and humour and share a major conceptual and technical interest in using the CD-ROM interface to permit the user to navigate (with varying critical success) image (still and moving), word and sound, to experience differing levels of conceptual and technological immersion. In the main, this show is interested in exploring the complex aesthetic facets and possibilities of the CD-ROM interactive encounter and in presenting works that explicitly address a reflexive take on the limits, contradictions and experimental innovation of interactivity. It endeavours to go beyond *Creative Nation's* mistaken corporate emphasis of CD-ROM technology as a marketing/instructional medium.

Amongst the eight or so Australian exhibits, three examples of local interactive CD-ROM art come to mind : Michael Buckley's elliptical sound-driven *The Swear Club* (1994), Brad Miller's Deleuzean-inspired *A Digital Rhizome* (1994) and Phil George and Ralph Wayment's interactive installation meditation on cultural displacement and memory *Mnemonic Notations 5* (1996).

Buckley's humorous and inventive *The Swear Club* displays a diverse cross-disciplinary interest in experimental film, sound art, animation and graphic design. Its pronounced visual and verbal pun-encrusted concerns and minimalist audiovisual style reflect Buckley's non-didactic playful critique of the more familiar 'point and click' technological determinism that often flaws CD-ROM art. *The Swear Club's* Art Brut influenced graphic and typographic features are ideal for its autobiographical subject matter based on Buckley's personal father and son motif.

Miller's reflexive computer-generated screen and mouse interactive *A Digital Rhizome,* is structured on the central notion of the rhizome as stated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "schizo-analysis" philosophy, and represented by their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). The evocative digital images of this exhibit are based on sophisticated image-processing software and operate as a fairly reflexive digital collage. Its Quicktime movies, still images, sampled soundtracks and multilayered graphic design allow the user to form his or her own elaborate connections and links. Further, the artist's digitised appropriation of Deleuze and Guattari is structured on an unobtrusive interactive interface, so as we follow numerous flights of intensities and relations we have entered into an interzone where identity, the body, space and scale are in constant transition.

George and Wayment's *Mnemonic Notations 5* (1996) is an interactive installation in a darkened room consisting of a large screen, a fish tank, and a black plexiglass table where the user can utilise a mouse to manipulate the work's highly compressed collage images of cyberpunk mythology, postmodern science, Tantric Buddhist symbols, Celtic mazes and Orthodox Greek mysticism. Inspired by John McCrone's 1990 paper "The Ape that Spoke" this installation explores in vivid spatial and metaphorical terms George's long standing interest in postcolonial identity and memory. Between the table and the screen is the fish tank featuring carp that activate (via surveillance software) the installation's soundtrack.

The international CD-ROMs, like the local examples, feature an experimental inventiveness that suggests a questioning approach to the orthodoxies of modernism, postmodernism and the computer tools of interactive multimedia production. Characteristically, they also display a diverse array of thematic and formal interests: cybernetics, cultural histories, subjectivity, the body, autobiography, language, and sexuality.

Luc Courchesne's deftly constructed *Portrait One* (1995) features a female 'virtual being' conversing in three languages (English, French and German). The conversation that unfolds as we interact with the exhibit's minimalist interface depends on the answers, questions and comments we select from the available sets on the computer screen. *Portrait One's* 'face to face' encounter with the virtual subject resonates with irony considering the complex philosophic issues relating to computer-generated interactivity, choice, and participation. Nevertheless, its overall engaging textual approach suggests an inventive humorous simplicity in terms of interactive design.

Tamas Waliczky's *The Forest* (1994), like Courchesne's work, manifests an uncomplicated design approach to CD-ROM interactivity (particularly if exhibited as an installation). Its intricate 3D forest imagery and appealing soundtrack of bus or tram sounds suggest the work's prefigurative tradition of the 'ride' movie of the early twentieth century. In this context, it also suggests many links with virtual reality arcade games (especially the "third window"(Virilio) variety of racing cars and jet planes). Through its omni-directional 'clicking' design emphasis we can journey through Waliczky's atmospheric forest in any given direction. In another critical sense, interacting with *The Forest* resembles an elaborate long take or dolly shot in classical cinema: there is a pervasive sense of unstoppable movement as in the case of the celebrated extended long take in Murnau's *Sunrise* where the couple travel by cable car from the country to the city.

Finally, George Legrady's documentary styled *An Anecdoted Archive from the Cold War* (1994) represents an "inventory-archaeology" of home movies, personal objects, recent collage videos, archive propaganda films, and stories delineating the artist's own history in the context of the Cold War. The main structural motif that defines the exhibit's interactive interface are the floor plans of the Former Hungarian Workers' Movement (Propaganda) Museum Palace of Buda Castle (Building A) Budapest. These floor plans constitute Legrady's memory-aid text (echoing similar conceptual and formal interests in Woody Vasulka's subjective documentary video *The Art of Memory)* as we navigate through the various rooms of the artist's personal history. Its 'non-linear' subject matter functions as a paradox in the context of the CD-ROM's colourful linear floor plans.

Burning the Interface is not only a survey showcase exhibition of the more creative instances of personal CD-ROM art but it illustrates how these multimedia exhibits are transforming many of our assumptions about what constitutes art and to be 'human', and are an integral part of our 'lifeworld' and its growing non-neutral deep technological concerns and textures.

Burning the Interface, *Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney March 27-June 30*

Film comment

Beyond stupidity

Shaun Davies on the contradictions thrown up by Larry Clark's *Kids*

Larry Clark's *Kids* would have to represent a sociologist's worst nightmare; though perhaps explicable via the argument of economic or cultural determinism, it would simply be pushing it too far to perfectly justify much of what some of this film's *enfants horrible* get up to. Even if they were Noel Crichton-Browne's very own, it would still be difficult to drum up the least skerrick of compassion for the lead male characters. This film is confronting in the extreme; it won't leave you undisturbed and unshocked; the dialogue is raw, coarse and uncompromising, the action stark and brutal.

After having slimed his way into the bed of a *very* young, baby-faced virgin, the barely articulate, mantis-like predator, Telly (Leo Fitzpatrick) smirkingly hightails it out of her parents' large, well-to-do New York suburban home and then tells his best mate, the luckless, glue-sniffing Casper (Justin Pierce), all about it. Affecting connoisseurship, Casper—who has been waiting outside—sniffs his buddy's aromatic finger. And Telly blurts out that, mid-accomplishment, all he could think about was fucking the barely pubescent, uptown girl 'in the ass'. Social allegory? Proletarian pay-back? Better lock up your daughters! Whoops! Too fuckin' late!

Telly, unbeknownst to himself, is HIV positive and has presumably passed the virus on to the beguiled child—passed it onward and upward, that is. In a previous exploit, the 16 year old Jennie (wonderfully portrayed by Chloe Sevigny) has also lost her virginity to this complete stick-insect. Having never slept with another guy, she has, as she calamitously discovers, contracted the virus through her one and only fuck. Unable to track him down till many hours later, where she discovers him half-raping *another* unsuspecting young virgin (on a pal's parents' bed), the drug-fucked and lachrymose Jennie drifts into a stupor and lies comatose amongst the post-party bodies strewn about the apartment. Later, on impulse, Casper ('the dopest ghost') slyly slips her pants off and, in an agonisingly drawn-out and debasing final sequence, fucks her seemingly already dead, limp and unresponding body.

Violence, says philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, is a banal ontological fact: like knowledge, it comes only in the wake of an asymmetrical relation formed between oneself and another, an ethical relation in which the other always takes priority. The face of the other, having already asserted its primacy by commanding in its look: 'Thou shalt not kill!', lies infinitely beyond the grasp of comprehension and knowledge. Although one might just go right ahead and kill anyway, the face of the other remains indissolubly other, even in its demise; you can't make something yours by killing it, much less by just letting it die. Having viewed this film it would be hard to imagine anyone ever wanting to accept and embrace the kind of otherness ostensibly portrayed here, or to think for one minute that the violence depicted is in the least banal. But the greater evil—and this perhaps underscores the philosophical heart of the film—lies in the non-application of a body of knowledge formed after the fact of the ethical relation—one which may have otherwise been used in the preservation of life. For does this film not help bring into relief, however blunt and obscure, something familiar? A certain *sameness* rather than otherness? Perhaps our own tendency to violence and death—or to our having, through wilful and tenacious ignorance, allowed it to happen to others? Violence has many faces, some more covert than others; despite their nihilism, these kids must, in the face of a more cryptic and insidious malevolence, remain comparatively blameless. *Kids,* scandalising the US public health system, wastes no time sticking itself right back into its—and *your*—hidden-in-the-dark face.

"Stupidity (not error) constitutes the greatest weakness of thought", says Gilles Deleuze, "but also the source of its highest power in that which forces it to think". But make no mistake; no-one, this film tells you, not even the very cream of our youth (i.e. the ones who are all rich and thick) is safe, nor benefits, from stupidity, never seeming to spare a thought for the future. Ironically, Leon, an ageing and decrepit taxi-driver, advises the already devastated Jennie: "If you wanna be happy, don't think". Yeah, well, even though we *do* sometimes think about AIDS, often we just don't transform thought into (safe) practice, or create the conditions where it might quite conceivably be possible. So who, in the end, are the stupid ones here? Successive US governments *still* haven't developed any effective AIDS prevention strategies, i.e. set up proper needle exchanges, or free condom distribution programs for instance. Now they're really paying for it. The urban dispossessed were among the first to suffer the consequences of this buck-passing, political spinelessness—you know, the fatuous moralism of the 'Just Say No' anti-drugs campaign, and so forth. (On that score, one may recall Wilde's satirical "I always pass on good advice. It's never any use to oneself".) No use denouncing kids for not taking stock of the consequences of their actions when even the US congress (or, closer to home, the Carr government) refuses to. Although the theory of economic trickle-down is, well, just *porkys*—and a conscience salve for the grotesquely wealthy—HIV trickle-up, though perhaps deeply ironical, is certainly no illusion. The poor and disenfranchised in the US are not the only ones copping it now. "Whether the bourgeoisie wins or loses the fight," Walter Benjamin speculated earlier this century, "it remains doomed by the inner contradictions that in the course of development will become deadly". In this worst-case US scenario, he might, unfortunately, be proved right. If forced to think beyond stupidity, will the 'greatest country on earth' finally, belatedly, also begin to *act* with strength and compassion on this issue?

Kids is an R-rated film which all under 18s ought to have the right to see.

Shaun Davies is a writer, graduate student in philosophy at Sydney University, and health educator in Sydney's inner city.

Kids, *directed by Larry Clark, distributed by Village Roadshow.*

Enamoured and disgusted

Fiona Giles surveys US responses to Larry Clark's *Kids*

Kids wasn't the number one art house hit last summer in New York, but only because there was so much competition from the various screen-going subcultures who chose from Maria Maggenti's *The Incredible Story of Two Girls in Love,* Michael Radford's *Il Postino* and Wayne Wang's *Smoke.* Besides, New York never favours one star in its congested orbit for long.

The fact of Larry Clark directing his debut film did guarantee serious interest among feature writers; and the film's subsequent critical success has ensured a similar degree of respect in Britain and Australia. Clark's career has not always been so illustrious, since he is the photographer who, like Sally Mann, attracted notoriety for his erotic portrayal of pre-pubescents and teenagers. Clark's decision to take up a hand-held movie camera raised questions—and eyebrows. But given the hot button nature of the subject, publicity crossed over from reviews and director profiles to quasi-sociological essays: are teenagers in the US really this lost? This scary? If so, what should adults be doing about it?

The mainstream press gave *Kids* mostly favourable reviews, praising the *verité* over the *cinema,* but not discounting the low-angled intensity of Clark's direction, which fixates on the skinny vulnerability of pubescent torsos, even while their owners' behaviour invites judgement. Like his stills, the kids (played by non actors from the Washington Square Park area, where much of the film is set) are in equal parts indolent and innocent, confusing any quick or unthinking response. The characters' fragility is refreshingly unsentimental for an American film for just this reason: moving through the aggressive dissonance created by an average Manhattan summer day, the teenagers are unwittingly endangered by their environment, yet are themselves on their way to creating havoc. For such an allegedly hip movie the perspective of the lens is ironically that of the concerned parent: loving and disapproving, enamoured and disgusted. It is for this reason that the erotic kick of Clark's work is, to some viewers, disturbing. Even while a grown up audience despairs of their 'lack of standards' they are ever-so-slightly turned on.

Another refreshing feature of Clark's approach is the almost complete erasure of the social issue shopping list: class, race and gender. Gender disparities are touched upon, but only because *Kids* is a film about sex. The girls are uniformly victimised, except for one who escapes by luck, and, (the film suggests) not for long. But this comes over as merely accurate, devoid of enlightenment fantasies that girls fight back, insist on condom use, or disregard the enticements of male approval.

The chilling premise of the film is that this teenage subculture is not fuelled by any ideology at all (which may lend social workers false hope that there's still time to inscribe a liberal conscience onto a blank slate). The one racist incident, where the skateboard gang severely beats a black passer-by, is defused by the pleasure taken in the incident by an African-American skateboarder who hangs with the white boys. His loyalty is to ganghood over race, which is perhaps the one wishful ingredient in the film, given its release in the Year of OJ. Either choice would have been a lose-lose situation: the boys behave like skinheads, but without any credo, making the fight all the more senseless. Nor are the kids particularly oppressed by poverty or unemployability. They are fuelled purely by boredom and hormones. If any specific social malaise is identified, it is the absence of incentives to do better.

An Australian audience might be surprised by all the fuss that accompanied *Kids'* release, particularly in the States. While it invites the complex response of both seduction and recoil, it is less interesting in its development of truly gross yet sympathetic characters, which was the main achievement of *Romper Stomper.* Americans are more prudish, broadly speaking, than Australians, and easily shocked by unsentimental portrayals of teenage angst, especially its sexual aspect. And the endless public debates in Washington and the media about sex education and condom use for teenagers is a constant reminder that the 1950s still cast their shadow. To say that *Kids* resembles a cross between *Romper Stomper* and a safe sex infomercial is not to put it down, although it might echo Gary Indiana's response: "What's so shocking?"

The Hollywood tradition of angry young men movies, from *Rebel Without a Cause* to *Rumblefish* and beyond, romanticises the troubled teenager as the paragon of an individual in process—an Emersonian obsession in an urban setting. (Teenage black movies such as *Boyz n the Hood* or *Dangerous Minds* are more overtly political, even when they disappointingly conclude that the system will ultimately save the day.) Part of *Kids'* appeal is in its escape from the white-bread environment of American filmmaking. As Mike Figgis said in a recent interview on the making of *Leaving Las Vegas* (which was another pleasant surprise of 1995), there are a lot of stupid people working in Hollywood at the moment.

Recent great films in the documentary and faux documentary genres come to mind when watching *Kids,* confirming a new confidence and innovation in what was, until recently, an elephant's graveyard. To last year's *Hoop Dreams* and *Crumb* or Mizrahi's *Unzipped* and Jaglom's *Baby Fever* Clark adds a distinctive take that lifts the sticky corner of banal realism to uncover a suspenseful narrative on the preciousness and danger of ennui-ridden, cunt-struck white boys.

Fiona Giles is an Australian writer based in New York.

Book reviews

Red, recurring and mutating

Anna Dzenis traverses the evocative textuality of Lesley Stern's *The Scorsese Connection*

The differences between Marty and other directors is he doesn't imitate what he sees. It goes into him and it comes out as something entirely different—it's not distraction so much as feeding. Michael Powell once said, "He breakfasts on images".

Thelma Schoonmaker.

"He breakfasts on images." Thinking about Martin Scorsese involves thinking about films. And watching Scorsese's films invites reflection on the cinema. Lesley Stern's *The Scorsese Connection* is part of the BFI Perspectives series on contemporary cinema, edited by Colin MacCabe and Paul Willemen. Other books in the series include Fredric Jameson's *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System,* Paul Willemen's *Looks and Frictions,* Umberto Eco's *Apocalypse Postponed,* Sam Rohdie's *The Passion of Pier Paolo Pasolini* and Paul Virilio's *The Vision Machine.* The title of Stern's book is equally suggestive. While her motivation to write obviously comes from Scorsese's films, this is neither a biographical study nor an auteurist analysis. Stern's over-riding concern is with how these films make sense and how we make sense of that sense. She is most interested in the processes of reading and interpretation, particularly the sensory and circuitous way in which we engage with and experience the cinema and its artefacts.

For Stern the power of the cinematic experience is to be found in the bewitching, the dangerous, the phantasmic—images, ideas and characters, unhinged from their moorings, floating freely in our memories, in the textuality of 'the cinema'. This is echoed in her non-chronological structure and organisation which is slippery, tangential and philosophically dismissive of conventional boundaries and expectations. Provocative from the start, the book begins by discussing a series of endings: Stern reanimates the final moments of *Goodfellas,* posing a question of some significance for her analysis—how satisfying, and more importantly, how conclusive are such endings? Immediately the connections begin. Stern magics us back to the beginnings of cinema, to that famous final image from Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* where the gunman looks us in the eye and shoots. Then she recalls Sid Vicious in *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle* and the fantasy assault on his audience, which spirals us back to *New York Stories' Life Lessons* and its closing iris. "Almost always they are very cinematic endings—they remind us of other films, of other cinematic moments and gestures, and they remind us not just that we are watching a film, but that watching films is fraught with wonder and peril."

Scorsese's passion for certain films and filmmakers and the influences they have had on him is legendary. Stern teases out and elaborates some of these connections. Michael Powell's *The Red Shoes* is compared with Scorsese's *Raging Bull* as films about performers, bodies, totemic objects, rituals and the ceremonial. Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* is 'made' under the sign of Ford's *The Searchers,* resurrecting Ethan Edwards as Travis Bickle, exploring the irresolution of the earlier pathological narrative and repressed violence. Scorsese's *After Hours* is compared with Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* not only in their movements between 'home' and 'away' but in terms of their depicted and textual perversions. *The Wizard of Oz* is the direct reference for the prologue of Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* which also recalls Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* and focuses a predominantly formal discussion about "the cinema as a zone where techniques of memory and histories of technology as well as public and personal memory are inextricably bound up together". In comparing Scorsese's *Cape Fear 2* with J. Lee Thompson's *Cape Fear 1* (Stern's numbering system) Stern finds Travis Bickle who she describes as a resurrected Ethan Edwards reborn as Max Cady. Yet while she is interested in what the two films share and where they differ, much of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter.* Such tangential and sideways moves shift *Scorsese* from being a subject to a site.

In one of Stern's first extended comparisons she offers this anecdote; Michael Powell, watching some colour rushes of *Raging Bull* in Scorsese's apartment, commented "but the gloves are red", expressing his disturbance at their saturated colour. In the end the decision to shoot in black and white was made in order to capture the black and white grittiness of some of the 1940s boxing pictures. But 'red' remains important to Scorsese's cinema and 'redness' continues to weave throughout Stern's book, literally and metaphorically—shoes, gloves, blood, passion, heat, a red desert, a red sunset, a 'red-hot cinema', too hot to handle, incendiary, flames burning up the screen, the milieu of *Mean Streets,* the prologue of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore,* the credit sequence of *Cape Fear* and startling films like Brakhage's *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* and Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac.* 'Red' recurring and mutating. A colour, an image, affecting, connecting more than a body of work.

It is these issues of affect, fascination, repulsion, the delight, the thrill and the difficulty of looking, the tactility of the image, and the joy and pain of inescapable memory which obsess Stern. They lead her through theories of subjectivisation and horrality; Proustian concepts of time; ideas of 'the uncanny' and 'histrionics'; and issues of contemporary imaging practice. But in the end it is not theory that is on her agenda. As she winds her way to Scorsese and back again, meaning comes through juxtaposition and description.

For Stern is also a fiction writer and her prose in this book is as sensuous, evocative and potently descriptive as the images and the ideas she presents. In this sense her book can be located in the history of descriptive writing about the cinema which goes all the way back to Manny Farber. 'Boxed' quotations woven into the text from Maya Deren, Nietzsche, Raul Ruiz, Jean-Luc Godard, Freud, Derrida, Irigaray, Michael Powell, Robert Mitchum, Alexander Kluge, and Scorsese, amongst others, speak for and comment on the text; sometimes even taking it somewhere else. Particularly riveting is Stern's own unfolding parallel drama written throughout the chapter on the Cape Fear films and *The Night of the Hunter.* Her attempts to write are thwarted by an all too real Travis Bickle/Max Cady figure, tormenting and threatening the author in the middle of the night. These autobiographical passages intersect with the films' analyses, and with it these cinematic monsters transcend the boundaries of the frame.

The Scorsese Connection is a speculative book, well placed in this series. It provides an opportunity to observe an interesting thinker as she thinks about film. We engage with Stern's sensibility as she engages with Scorsese's sensibility. I'm sure Scorsese would not just see himself as the nominated subject of this book, but would also recognise his own creative processes in its kinetic, complex and meandering textuality.

Lesley Stern, The Scorsese Connection,
Indiana University Press and The British Film Institute, 1995
ISBN 0-85170-513-8 pbk/512-X cloth

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Literate ears

Mike Leggett reviews Kerckhove's *The Skin of Culture*

One of the most quoted aphorisms of the century, 'The medium is the message', comes from Marshall McLuhan, joint founder of 'media studies' worldwide and anticipator of the 'new technologies'. Derrick de Kerckhove, associate of McLuhan and now director of the Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, in his recent book, *The Skin of Culture,* continues to use aphorisms. Besides being economical with language they impose that moment of reflection which allows the reader to explore and extract a full meaning, if not several. Such interaction is at the core of de Kerckhove's concern and is both the form and content of his book.

The discourse covers the 'era of television' to the 'Age of the Mind' (or the collective intelligence made possible by the meeting of minds via the net). The work of various theorists and scientists, many unfamiliar but intriguingly presented, aid in the development of the description. The currently converging aspects of our technologies and systems of communication are inflected by de Kerckhove's acknowledged expertise on language and literacy theory. The alphabet as software for the platform of Western culture is the paradigm maintained—literacy is the attendant who has strapped us into a straitjacket. Other cultural practices and beliefs are either similarly trapped or provide clues to movement for the new social architectures.

He describes, for instance, two modes of listening: "...oral listening tends to be global and comprehensive whilst literate listening is specialised and selective...Greek tragedy is nothing but the literary and dramatic response to new sensory conditions introduced by alphabetic literacy". Similar conditions accompany every new technology, and are tracked to the present day with much extemporising on the consequences of developing world-wide telecomputers and other "psychotechnologies". These "define any technology that emulates, extends or amplifies the powers of our minds".

The cultural shift that comes about with a new medium marks movement away from the (literate) "private universe of mind to the public world of the cathode ray tube". It is here that for the first time a collective intelligence is being developed and tested. It is where modes of 'listening' are being re-defined and he mentions the work of some 'media' artists, though too few—David Blair's *Waxweb* project for instance—who develop in the oral tradition many of the issues raised by this book.

Empowerment and the ability to participate is raised at various points but little reference is made to the 'psychotechnologies' developed by the corporates through the earlier period of the 'Age of Information' and which were, and remain, significantly participatory—8mm film, sound recording, video and more recently the handycam and snapshot photography phenomenon. Practised at a popular and artisanal level these recent mediums might have provided illustrative as well as evidential material.

Maybe it is De Kerckhove (or this reviewer), who is happiest with the sections that communicate in the 'literate' tradition. Besides various cognitive aspects of ourselves, topics also include an insight into Japanese culture, and a description of the bogey-world of neural nets. As a long-time and frequent visitor to Japan he usefully describes the phenomenon of *ma,* which "connotes the complex network of relationships between people and objects". Based on analogue rather than digital processes, these nets respond to a range of values, rather than the binary values which characterise the digital computer, and mimic the human brain's skill at comparing patterns of interconnections between thousands of sets of variables. The series of interconnected neurodes or receptor/decision points adapt and learn. Already neural nets have many industrial applications and move ever closer to the HAL machine of Kubrick's *2001.*

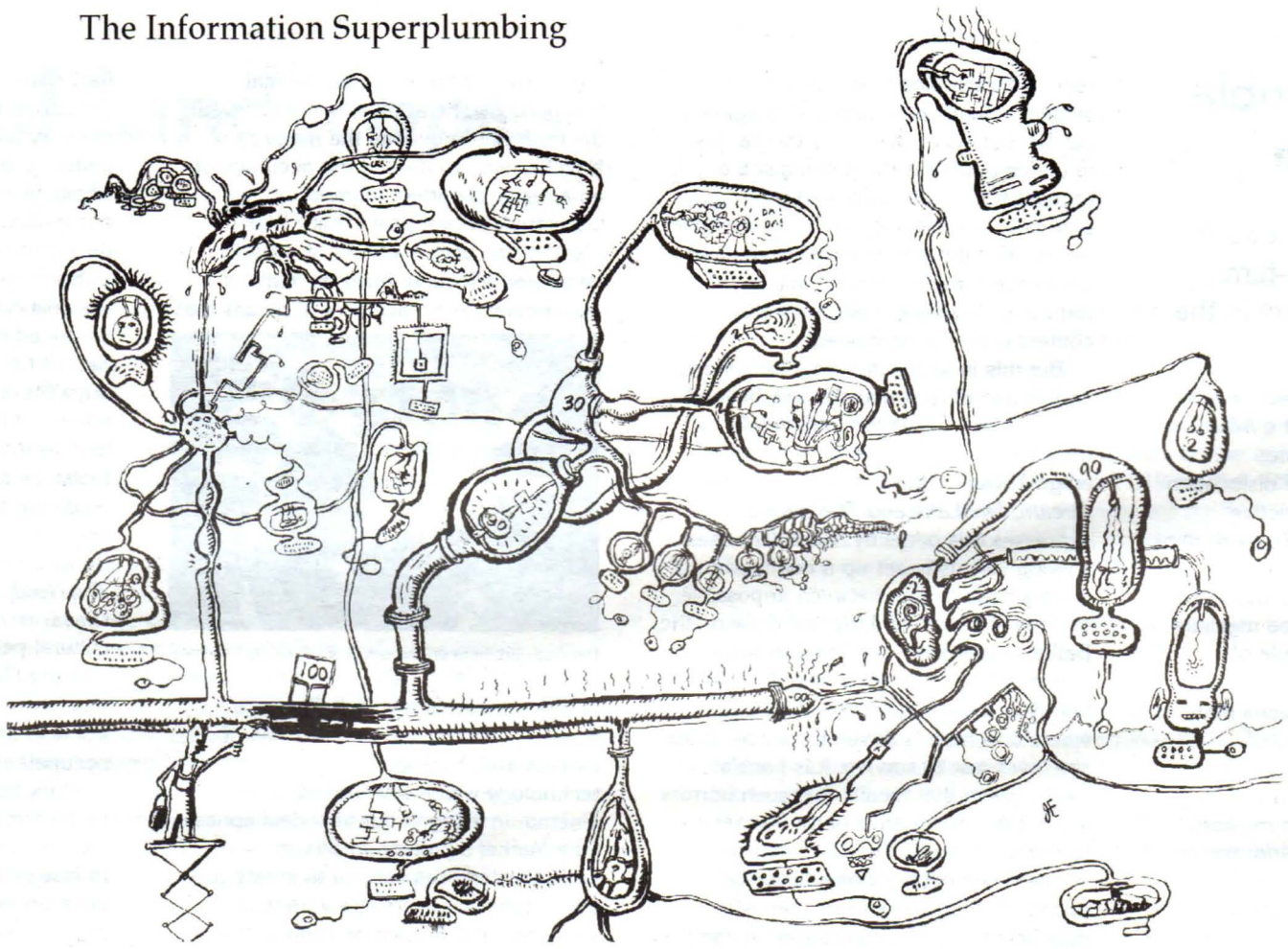
De Kerckhove suggests that we "create political mechanisms to protect universal access and freedom of expression as well as right to privacy on the net", having established a few pages earlier that as an organic, self-organising entity, "Our obsolescent political notions are going to be thoroughly trashed by it". The creation of many such mechanisms are long overdue—and we are yet again confronted with the option of the commune. De Kerckhove's general optimism may overcome, but he advocates 'business' as the 'collective mind' to determine and build the wired world he clearly favours. In support of this notion we should remember that it is a commercial computer network operator that the German government has recently made moves on in order to restrict access to the internet's vociferous newsgroups.

Ironic that it was a German, Georg Lichtenberg, who in developing the art of the aphorism in the 18th century devised one which the advocacy associated with the McLuhan Program would appreciate: "There are many people who won't listen until their ears are cut off".

In his book De Kerckhove addresses the psychological and cultural most convincingly—by directing us away from the prescriptive of the literate ear and towards the associative of the oral ear—again with another aphorism: "Our neglect of the ear may be one of the prices we have paid for literacy".

Derrick de Kerckhove, The Skin of Culture: Investigating the New Electronic Reality,
Somerville House Publishing, Toronto.
ISBN 1-895897-45-9 Pbk
The writer visited the McLuhan Program in Toronto and ISEA95 with the assistance of a travel grant from the Australian Film Commission.

The Information Superplumbing



John Hughes' *History of Walking* can be found at http:// hepworth.cfa.unsw.edu.au/hist.walk/walk.html

On the net

Virtually Stelarc

Http://www.merlin.com.au/stelarc/

The Stelarc Web site is a triumph of simplicity. Given the weighty complexity of the technological and theoretical terrain inhabited by Australia's most enduring and original performance artist it could easily have been otherwise. Images of the artist suspended sixty metres above a Tokyo street; operating his robotic third arm; or microfilm representations of his internally implanted 'stomach sculpture' elicit the kind of fascination reserved for the truly exotic, in respect of which Stelarc is in a league of his own. The artist's Web site is useful in that it allows the viewer to understand something of Stelarc's intentions in making works of art which can be so viscerally affecting as to obscure the intellectual property which supports them. It does so with the simplest of devices.

The Home Page presents an arresting collage of images from Stelarc's performances which can take some time to download, so after an initial visit it is advisable, if using Netscape, to switch off Auto Image Loading. The menu offers a selection of documents, each a brief statement from the artist, alluding to a particular phase of his work. Titles include: *Amplified Body, Fractal Flesh, Obsolete Body, Redesigning the Body, The Hum of the Hybrid* and *The Shedding of Skin,* among others. The statements are succinct, transparent and provocative. For example:

It is no longer a matter of perpetuating the human species by REPRODUCTION, but of enhancing male-female intercourse by human-machine interface. THE BODY IS OBSOLETE. We are at the end of philosophy and human physiology. Human thought recedes into the human past.

Stelarc's preoccupation is with the transcendence of the body beyond its biologically determined, psycho-physical limits in preparation for an extraterrestrial future. On this point he is quite explicit, particularly when referring to his *Shedding of Skin* project, the intention of which is to develop a synthetic skin capable of photosynthesising chemical nutrients. In Stelarc's work, Deleuze and Guattari's *Body Without Organs* strives to find a material form.

Off the Earth, the body's complexity, softness and wetness would be difficult to sustain. The strategy should be to HOLLOW, HARDEN and DEHYDRATE the body to make it more durable and less vulnerable.

Elsewhere the artist has suggested that to remain on Earth would be a suicidal mistake for the human race and that the best option is extraterrestrial migration facilitated by a hybridisation of biology and technology of the kind speculated on in Stelarc's work. In holding these views the artist finds himself in the company of luminaries like American spacecat Dr Timothy Leary who, since his 'halcyonagenic' days in the 60s, has busied himself as an advocate for and investor in the intergalactic removal business.

Stelarc proposes, without a hint of the romantic, that redesigning the body should be driven by its need to match the efficiency of technology, which at present it does not. Instead of moaning about post-modern disorders such as 'information overload' we should hybridise machine and body so that the human form can function efficiently in the face of unrelenting, technological forward motion. Once the skin is shed we literally begin to exist outside the obsolete construct of the self. Even our dreams, imagination, images will run more efficiently in a technological as opposed to a biopsychic medium. According to Stelarc:

Virtual reality technology allows a transgression of boundaries between male/female, human/machine, time/space. The self becomes situated beyond the skin. This is not a disconnecting or a splitting, but an EXTRUDING OF AWARENESS. What it means to be human is no longer the state of being immersed in genetic memory but rather in being reconfigured in the electromagnetic field of the circuit—IN THE REALM OF THE IMAGE.

The Web site, which also contains brief biographical notes, forces the visitor to engage with the ideas which dwell behind the raw shock of Stelarc. In this respect it is well conceived and designed with a minimal elegance by Gary Zebington of Merlin Integrated Media. Having gained an insight into the motivations and intentions of the artist one is better equipped to appreciate the power of his performance work. However, those who enjoy the exquisite kiss, the quiet joys of digesting a long lunch or the sensation of time as vapour in daydreaming may not be so enthusiastic about Stelarc's preferred future. Indeed, some would suggest that Stelarc—who has unsuccessfully applied for inclusion in a NASA mission—should get on board the next departing Timothy Leary Intergalactic Express.

I have secretly held until now a hairbrained theory that Mars was once occupied by Europeans who, having expunged that planet of all carbonaceous life to the point of a chafed redness, transmigrated their way of life to the nearby blue planet. This would explain the current preoccupation with effecting a similar scenario here on Earth in the late 20th century. Stelarc's work and the *Blade Runner* ideas informing it represent the most blatant form of abdication of responsibility for the viability of human life cloaked in a rational, dispassionate discourse. Having visited his Web site I suspect my hairbrained theory is at least as plausible as his nightmare vision and, for the record, I for one have no intention of surrendering my organs nor quitting the exquisite kiss.

Boris Kelly

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Previews

The unimaginable brought to life

John McConchie previews *In Spaces Unsuspected*—film, video and electronic art in the Adelaide Festival

If there is any single connection in the diverse offerings that forms the Adelaide Festival's film season *In Spaces Unsuspected,* it is a theme of dislocation. This is not intended as a reductive comment: the season is diverse with films from Australia, Eastern and Western Europe, Japan, with a feature from Israel and Tunisia thrown in for good measure. The selection includes a couple of international premieres (Rolf de Heer's *The Quiet Room)* as well as films that have already had at least limited releases, such as Tracy Moffat's *Bedevil.* A variety of genres have been selected: features on both 35 and 16 mm, work shot directly onto video, a performance piece by Adelaide artist Stephen Housten, shorts both local and international, experimental work including a retrospective from the Brothers Quay as a prelude to their inaugural feature *Institute Benjamenta,* and a comprehensive selection of electronic art. Even a current release, Emir Kusturica's extraordinary *Underground,* has been included, an indication that program director Cecelia Cmielewski has aimed for works which may sit somewhat uncomfortably together but consequently are required to enter into an intense dialogue with each other.

Eastern Europe's tentative experiments with Western democracy form the most obvious examples of dislocation. It also reveals that this is not so much experienced through space, but history. The former Yugoslavia currently represents the bloodiest outcome of ancient wounds both real and imagined, but for that very reason it is the hardest to understand: it is the unimaginable brought to life. Our own media certainly prefers to represent the Balkans in ethnic terms (as if those concerned weren't all Caucasian), therefore something *naturally* inevitable. History in this context is rarely mentioned.

But this is where the program's thesis comes into play. It extends well beyond issues of representation into its role as historical process: time, memory and enigma. Gary Lane's trilogy of shorts *The Stream, The Lake* and *The Bridge* expresses this perfectly. Each film uses striking visuals to set up a conundrum of protagonists caught between impossible choices. The first and the last draw on the Balkan experience: a bridge no longer connects but becomes a site of callous betrayal, a beautiful forest stream is where a woman is driven to murder those she loves just to survive. It is Lane's centre-piece that recalls that such horrors are not the prerogative of the former Communist block. *The Lake* depicts Western democracy's own historical aporia. A young Jewish woman who conducts tours of a concentration camp is horrifically attacked by a neo-Nazi. Her successful attempt to escape leaves him drowning in a lake. Should she save him? In depicting history as *personal* aporia, Lane succeeds in representing it not as linear inevitability but as a riddle, as profoundly disturbing as the oracles of the Ancients. History is not what we remember, it's what we forget.

This is also central to *I Was Hamlet,* in part an extended interview with the German playwright Heiner Müller. It is impossible, he says, to speak truthfully about what was East Germany. He can't condemn it—everyone else does—nor defend it. It represents the *cause celebre* of the moment, the ultimate criminal state, unique in that its secret files have been exposed for all to see. Its real function now, he argues, is not to reveal the truth but to overlay the memory of Nazi fascism, to *disrupt* the accuracy of an already imperfect memory of Germany's recent past. That *I Was Hamlet* also uses a variety of digitally generated effects to build on Müller's commentary is no accident. It recalls that

The Quay Brothers on the set of *Institute Benjamenta*
Jill Furmanovsky

ultimate essay-film—Chris Marker's *Sunless*—which examines the role of cinema and, by implication that technology which will supersede the cinema, in filling in our historical aphasia. Like Marker's project, *In Spaces Unsuspected* uses cinema to investigate these aphasic effects in a variety of situations: the women of Tunisia, the experience of contemporary Japan, the experiences of Australia's migrant and indigenous peoples.

As Marker shows, it requires extremely sophisticated accounts to successfully apply concepts like aphasia, repression and foreclosure to history, let alone to connect the massive shifts of historical process to the intimacies of personal recollection. Accordingly, the program undertakes an exploration in interior worlds, mapping phantasmagoria as a mirror of more material forces. Included here are diverse films: Chantal Ackerman's *Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 60s in Brussels,* and Rolf de Heer's *The Quiet Room.* It includes a selection of electronic work curated by Kari Hanet under the rubric of *New Territories,* dedicated to notions of memory and identity. It also provides the perfect place to insert the Brothers Quay, whose films extend the Surrealist's pre-occupation with the unconscious into their own uniquely visceral landscapes.

Such intersections of the personal and the political lead to two Adelaide produced shorts: Tony Kastanos's *In Search Of...* and Patricia Balfour and Joya Steven's *Atavistic Traces. Traces* renders this intersection in mythic terms—the newly dead gathering up the footsteps of their mortal lives—thereby rendering the familiar as strange as an analogy for the migrant experience. Liz Burke's salute to Australian horse-racing, *The Needy and the Greedy* traverses similar terrain from a very different cultural perspective. And anyone familiar with the films of Ross Gibson and the videos of Geoff Weary and Mark Jackson will also understand how their own pre-occupations fit this theme.

Mark Hawker's *Zombietown* returns us to the former Yugoslavia, specifically Belgrade. It demonstrates how resistance to history's relentless tanks genuinely does occur in the least suspected places. In this case it is Belgrade's youth adopting a post-punk culture centred on a quasi-legal radio station, an act of cultural defiance in the face of the inexplicable, and in a city that should by rights be browbeaten and haunted but is surprisingly dynamic.

The relationship between memory, record and technology which marks out the cinema's unique powers has been given full throttle. Given its context within a festival dominated by live performance, this provides a particularly suitable emphasis.

In Spaces Unsuspected *screens at the Mercury Cinema, Adelaide March 7-13 with session times of 5.30, 7.30 & 9.30pm plus Saturday March 9 at 2.00pm.*

Driving me queer and crazy

Colin Hood samples road movies and cine-rites of passage from this year's Mardi Gras Film Festival

An unrestrained initiation into the excesses of the seventies now on BBC 2. Karim launches himself into the London scene and a variety of new experiences. There's strong language and explicit sex. Hey man! It's The Buddha of Suburbia.

"Performative enactment" of identity (racial, sexual, professional) would be a sad cliché these days if we didn't also consider the ongoing constraints of censorship and the problematic spaces and times in which these performances take place. You can have your safe places, to consolidate ethnicity, play of object-choice and career path—guided by institutional and communitarian rules and ideologies—but safe times and identities are always, always, just around the corner.

Roger Michell's 4 hour adaptation of Kureishi's first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* is co-scripted by Michell and Kureishi (who went to the same high school as the composer of the film's incidental music, David Bowie). Held off from TV viewing in Australia owing to a rather tame 'orgy' scene, the lavish film narrative spans five years in the lives of a 'post-colonial' English family (Indian dad, English mum), the farcical decline of the left and 'democratic' theatrical experimentation, and the familial matrix (real or imagined, extended, nuclear or theatrical) which determines—in part—the choice of partners, careers and political persuasions. At the cross-roads of choosing between gender politics and 'real' politics, Karim, the main character of the film, opts for a sometimes confused but definitely queer stand-off. The post-glam rock soundtrack is a must-hear.

Madagascar Skin

The final seconds of *Thelma and Louise* have been read by some film critics as a sublime moment of the feminised road movie. But for me, it's just another road movie cliché, just another breezy, not-so gorgeous freeze frame with feminist interpretation falling out the window and flat on its face. As Michael Atkinson remarks in a 1994 essay from *Sight and Sound:* "Thelma and Louise couldn't have existed without a tradition of macho-dominated interstate rambling to counteract". And not unlike the most contemporary outpourings of the genre—*Kalifornia, Gun Crazy, Pink Cadillac*—the wheels just fall off under a "trunkload of undigested images from older movies".

"You're just a life support system for a cock". Thus spake Valley-Girl Amy to crazy hunk Xavier. Refuelling the collage of Warhol, trash-independent and ballistic *homme-fatal* that made *The Living End* a tragi-comic success, Greg Araki's *Doom Generation*—subtitled "A heterosexual movie"—had me giggling for half an hour or so before the puns and visual bric-a-brac started to repeat on themselves. But watch it anyway—if only for the hilariously gory road-stop shopping scene cobbled from *They Live!, Aliens,* and reportage from the LA riots.

Postcards From America is snappy cut-and-paste ficto-documentary on the life and times of gay artist and activist David Wojnarowicz. The animal imagery, collage, and activist performance that dominated his later career is absent from a film that deals mostly with psychobiography, a brutally erotic entrée into prostitution and drag culture along New York's Hudson River, and the homo-poetics of hitch-hiking. The flashbacks to domestic violence and childhood wear a little too much of the celluloid. Besides, who wants to look at pudgy-looking ten year olds when stories and portraits of queens and hunks are really the main attraction.

Tales of tough love and working class gay sub-culture are played out superbly in Chris Newby's *Madagascar Skin.* Hampered only by the excess of surreal metaphors and over-slick editing, the film focuses on the homogeneity of narcissistic body-culture and the developing relationship between two disenfranchised 'working class' men who work out their differences and affinities in a deserted sea-side cottage.

Last year's festival included a superb documentary by Chris Schembri on the history of Sydney Drag Culture, from the late forties to the present. *Show Girls* finesses a remark by Warhol ("Drags are walking archives of the feminine ideal"), to highlight the depth of community involvement in displacing popular perceptions of the ideal woman into new political and cultural domains. I am amazed at the reluctance of the ABC or SBS to screen this remarkable film.

This year, *Shinjuku Boys* puts a Japanese spin on girl-to-boy drag and club culture, documenting the lives of 3 *annabe's* (ideal-man hosts) at Club Marilyn in Tokyo's Shinjuku district. The *Bishonin* (ideal boy-girl) looms large in Japanese comic books and the imaginations of Japanese adolescents. It should come as no surprise to find that the principle clientele for Kazuki, Tatsu, and Gaish—the three Elvis-quiffed hosts who are the subject of this documentary—are predominantly heterosexual women, alone or simply on the loose, shelling out big time for binge drinking, karaoke or just plain conversation.

Other highlights of this year's festival include *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (for *Go Fish* fans), *Ludwig 1881* (recounting the true story of mad King Ludwig's trip to Switzerland with a young actor who recites Schiller in its original setting) and Robert Leacock's co-directed *Catwalk,* an insider's doco on Claudia Schiffer, Cindy Crawford and Christy Turlington.

Previews

Light moves

Paul Andrew previews the MCA's early film seasons

In the shadow of 1995's centenary of cinema which barely caused a whimper in Australia, Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art has reclaimed some of the legacy of early film for a constellation of screenings, exhibitions and events scheduled for April to July.

In keeping with its curatorial approach of reconciling historical context, contemporary artistic practice and emerging artform developments, the MCA's *Exposing the Origins: Cinema 1894-1915*, researched and curated by Barrett Hodson, promises to be the most insightful and comprehensive public program of world pre-cinema ever staged in this country. Developed under the auspices of Cinematheque curator David Watson, the event will allow audiences to see early films in their original formats with musical accompaniment.

Inspired by illusion, magic and the dexterity of film pioneers, most notably the wonderful repertoire of French cineaste Georges Melies, *Circa Cinema* will comprise 100 production stills mapping Melies' prolific film output—an oeuvre that stretched the boundaries of film's early rhetoric and imbued filmic language with a poetics of strangeness. Presented simultaneously with this photographic exhibition will be photomedia installations by contemporary artists whose works refer to Melies and the altered ways of seeing that early cinema presaged.

The main focus of the season will be two imported programs *Before Hollywood: Turn Of The Century Film From American Archives* and *Red For Danger, Fire And Love: Early German Silent Films*. Highlights of the *Before Hollywood* film program include the beautiful Annabelle dance films made by the Edison Company in 1895 which explored the possibilities of hand colourisation developed by French film company Pathe. *A Visit To The Spiritualist, How They Rob Men In Chicago*, the amazing gargantuan *Smashing A Jersey Mosquito* and the electrifying and thrilling *Electrocuting An Elephant* are some of the films that have survived. These will be paralleled with extensive material from other overseas sources and from the National Library and the National Film and Sound Archive.

The MCA event promises to be a timely remembrance of things past on the eve of the technological future. The current wave of multimedia is, in a sense, a repetition of film's origins: today's filmmakers play with the sophistry and software of newly emerging digital media technologies in combination, sometimes, with real-time film. With the new technologies of the image and the recent resurgence of the popularity of the short film, audiences today can start to imagine and judge for themselves—some hundred years later—how these flickering images of early cinema began to change modes of perception.

Early film was a medium at once vital, theatrical and mimetic where lips moved, eyes blinked, mouths swallowed, noses sneezed, foliage swayed, feathers ruffled, frocks frou froued, heads were beheaded, elephants electrocuted, water flowed, potions bubbled and trains, planes and automobiles approached, departed or crashed all in the absence of spoken word and without synchronous sound.

While attempts were made at synchronous sound, early films were made in a paradoxical space which didn't permit synchronicity. This was due not primarily to the technological inability to record and reproduce sound, but more to the difficulty of public amplification. Synchronous sound as we know it today, and what may be termed the narrative fait accompli, were left to the mind's ear. (Paradoxically however, silent films were never truly silent even in the absence of musical accompaniment—the machines of iron which pitched light into darkness and put friction in flight also shuddered noisily.)

Early scores and improvisations echoed the primacy of film's original image-specific repertoire—more grabs than narratives. The music which came to accompany these grabs comprised abstracted beginnings middles and ends, at once open-ended and permissive. The asides and whispers, gasps of wonder, amazement and glee, and sighs of tragedy from film's earliest audiences were the metascripts which self-governed early films, and permitted playfulness and interruptions. (Today, these same interjections have become surreptitious and clandestine, for a fear of interruption and a perception that given narratives are sacrosanct.)

Unfortunately, relatively few films survived the dawn of mechanical reproduction due to prevailing institutional attitudes towards the original and unavoidable temporality of film. Film, by virtue of its medium—a nitrate-based product—was unstable, flammable and difficult to store or archive: its fiery entropy had even claimed the lives of some of its earliest audience members.

So, in the absence of a comprehensive archive of the prolific output of early filmmakers, we are left with residues which will inform an archaeology at once wonderful and speculative. It is with this in mind that the MCA hopes this event will reveal that these early little films are closer to magic than photography.

Film's early audiences gathered and anticipated the theatre, the drama, the comedy, the tragedy, the magic, the death and the illusion that preceded film—but not for the smell of humanity nor for the turning of viscera inside out, nor for the arm's reach of the platform or stage, the sound of breath or heartbeats, the meeting of eyes, or the smell of performance. They gathered for the shuddering of light projected from machines of iron nerve into the darkness where bodies collided with the frottage of technological wonder. What will today's audiences feel in the light and music of these little films?

Reviews

Immersions and navigations

Kate Richards surveys recent multimedia works in Sydney

Experience of multiple media is as ancient as a feast day with dance, ornament, incense and orality. Three recently installed artworks in Sydney—*Frontiers of Utopia* at Roslyn Oxley9, *Epileptograph: The Internal Journey* at Artspace, and *Mind's Eye—a journey into sound* at the Australian Steam Navigation Company Building, The Rocks—provide leverage for thinking about contemporary multiple media works with a component of viewer interaction.

For an interactive multimedia (IMM) work, success can be gauged in the combination of the various media, ability to produce an experience of immersion (intellectual and/or emotional) and in the challenges presented in navigating the architecture.

Jill Scott's disc-based *Frontiers of Utopia* has female characters speaking from different temporal and geographic locales: Irish-Catholic rural Australia circa 1900; modernist urban America circa 1930; Aboriginal outback Australia circa 1930; Italian immigrant Australia circa 1960; contemporary Sydney electronic artist; expatriate Chinese professional in the contemporary Australian desert. The trajectories of their lives meet in the space of the work.

Frontiers is structured in an accessible way, appropriate for its intended museum exhibition. The viewer discovers through the characters' individual addresses to camera the symbolic objects contained in their suitcases, and through their interaction with other characters across time and space in two-hander video sequences. As with Scott's previous *Paradise Tossed*, there is an illustrative use of contemporaneous media, and a thematic interest in the role of technology in women's lives and in the seminal moment of realisation. At Roslyn Oxley9 the work was shown as touchscreen plinth-mounted, with simultaneous projection making the best of laserdisc video sequences.

Isabelle Delmotte's *Epileptograph: The Internal Journey* is composed of elements from a continuing project. *Epileptograph* maps the internal space of an epileptic reviving from a seizure. Suggesting the impossibility of representing what is the moment of electrical ex/implosion in the brain, Delmotte has concentrated on the slow rebuilding of consciousness.

On display were several large transparencies, beautifully executed, and simultaneously amorphous and finely detailed. Horizontally displayed text chronicles the experience: the loss of identity and the painful reawakening; a soundscape, textured, hypnotic, jagged, contributes to an atmosphere seeking to emulate the turning inside-out of the mind. The work is successful in suggesting the sense of the struggle to regain consciousness coupled with the desire to manifest precisely this experience through media that in their electronic processes replicate the synapses of the brain.

A really immersive and interactive experience, *Mind's Eye*, by Nicholas Wishart, Peter Woodford-Smith, Joyce Hinterding, Vaughan Rogers and Stephen Hamper was accessed through a low-tech wardrobe door. From there, the interface is the sophisticated construction 'listen and touch', as the hapless punter mediates a journey of aural and sculptural exploration through a pitch-black labyrinth. The sounds are varied in tone, pitch and amplification, producing a dimly perceived spatial differentiation we visual people usually get via sight.

My party quickly joined hands and shuffled on. Others, alone or with tendencies to claustrophobia, fared less well. Outside, the success of the installation could be measured in hearing usually blasé first nighters affected to the point of freak out. *Mind's Eye* worked physiologically, delivering a gut-level experience that stimulated and confronted in ways that more intellectualised works rarely do.

Kate Richards lives in Coledale and is in danger of becoming a multimedia convert.

It's no secret: Kids are doing it for themselves

Colin Hood reflects on the concept and culture of the "student exhibition" and reviews recent work by graduating COFA media students

In the teaching space, nobody should anywhere be in his place (I am comforted by this constant displacement: were I to find my place, I would not even pretend to teach, I would give up).

Roland Barthes,
Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers

And so you think: strange preface to a review of a student screening by College of Fine Arts students (December 4, 1995)—but give me a moment or two to elaborate and possibly fixate on an interesting paradox.

Having taught art and media theory to a number of students whose film and video work was presented at the John Clancy Auditorium at the University of NSW, I was fascinated by the event that took place. Firstly by the strange absence of representatives of the art theory department, and secondly, by the presence of a certain collegiate spirit—created by and for the students themselves with the help of some very talented film and video makers within the department of media studies of the College of Fine Arts.

> Question: None of those art theory courses I taught you "appear" [yes, I did perform the scare quotes] in your work do they?
> Answer: (shy but certain) No, not really.

I am not implying for a moment that art and media theory do not impact on studio work at all (for it is already at work in the studio itself where the approach to teaching is both practical and theoretical). However I would suggest that the top-down model of teaching which has been imposed on so many pro-active students and auto-didacts—with the folding of a binary tertiary education system into schizoid professionalism—has strangled rather than opened up the academy to other 'outside' circuits of exchange: educational, financial and cultural. We no longer know what constitutes 'training' for arts and media students within the University archipelago—a predicament which should concern both academics and artists alike.

It's very difficult for me (as a lecturer, journalist and student) to speak of this event as a screening of student work. If the academy produces talented 'monsters' through their own peculiar acts of transformation and feed-back mechanics—then maybe it's time they were allowed—in a manner more enduring than mere carnivalesque inversion—to set more of their own agenda. So I speak for a moment or two as one of those monsters before I retreat backstage to put on another hat and face—continue with the review of the event as it happened.

Galea McGregor's *Meantime* (Super 8/betacam, 8 min), was probably one of the highlights of the evening. The layering of sound, image and text in this experimental and poetic genre has now attained a degree of sophistication which was difficult to locate in the early 80s. This is partially due to the massive injection of experimental cinema poetics into the mainstream—*Nadja* being a more recent example (as pathetically gothic as it may appear), with its utilisation of the 'toy' Fisher Price video camera (utilised more adeptly in the films of Sadie Benning); also the availability of more sophisticated recording and synthesising technologies.

Yet it was the quality of the monologue texts (in the context of the film) that was particularly striking for me. Take this section—"Monologue for eyeball boy"—from McGregor's *Meantime:*

> Boy: I never really thought of that before but I guess it makes sense now that I think of it. It must be such an unconscious movement of the eyeball that makes the world seem smooth. Of course, when I walk, everything moves, but it seems just regular—not jerky like those running hand held camera shots. They can make you feel quite sick. Like sea-sickness really. Or motion sickness. That's the same ... So I wonder If I could hold my eyes still in my head—at a fixed point—then the world would seem quite out of control—quite wild and irregular. And if my eyeballs were still, these flat cement planes that I tread every day, could give me motion sickness— I mean, I could get sick from just walking down the road. And then, maybe, it I did it enough, I could get used to it. I could get skilful at seeing this way. Then I'd be surfing the city streets.

Tim Slade's *Drivetime* (film/video, 3 min), is an hilarious vignette which has to be seen and heard. A car passing down a dimly-lit street, the narrator trapped in the boot of the car, ringing out from his mobile for—among other things—release from his rubbery and rusty congestion. Remember the *Seinfeld* episode where Kramer asks the car-thief—via car phone—to return his gloves? Well take it and run with it.

Shades of the strobe-edited painterly collage from the work of Stan Brakhage: this was my initial impression of Lucy Lehman's *Five Hundred Acres* (Super 8/video, 9 min). The kino-eye runs rapidly across an Australian landscape woven with the facts and fancies of uncompromising familial psychodrama—spoken without the banal sentimentality of the standard diary film.

A final note: the complexity of self-reflection—both in cinematic style and spoken narrative are now finding their feet in work that will—hopefully—save the short experimental genre from a slow death; give some fresh impetus to exploration within more (financially) ambitious film projects.

Reviews

Shorts in the open air

Philipa Veitch slips into Flickerfest 1996

12-20 January, Bondi Pavillion

Seeking a way to avoid devastating new year type scenarios, ie. Sydney Festival and the new year sales, I ventured down to Bondi Beach to sample the annual Flickerfest short film festival, which seemed like a good bet, promising to be both *outdoor* and *international*. Narrowly missing the opening party, I braved the throng queuing to purchase a ticket and with some difficulty, procured a seat on the far right of the screen, accustoming myself to the novel (for a cinema) semi-circular seating arrangement. Several minutes were spent trying to fathom the inscrutable program, overflowing with words like "unique", "beautiful", "witty", "superbly animated", and "whimsically offbeat", which avoided saying anything about what the films were actually about. Then, left breathless by the introductory speech, the audience lolled back and gazed with expectation at the gently undulating screen, accompanied by the intermittent flicking on and off of lights in the windows above it.

The festival opened with suitably grandiose footage of the solar system and cosmos, resplendent with images of distant galaxies and flames shooting from the sun in slow motion. The audience settled back and collectively drew back on their cigarettes, noting for future reference that the pleasure of watching a film can be immeasurably enhanced by smoking. Despite the promising start, however, *In The Time Of Angels* (David Alexander Anderson, UK) proved to be disappointing. With an overdose of pretty and well-executed animations of clock mechanisms turning, objects materialising on tables and pens writing, the story of a woman involved in some type of medieval/occult/ karmic romance had all the pathos of a Kleenex commercial directed by Peter Greenaway.

Fortunately for us all, Program One also included the excellent *Gbanga Tita* (The Calabash of God), directed by Thierry Knauff and winner in the best film category. Pared down to a single take, static camera, location sound, a face, a voice from the face and from others not visible, *Gbanga Tita* did not overwhelm with elaborate narrative or sophisticated photography. It presented a man, Lenge, in a forest in Cameroon, telling a story to some children, a story about two children who lose their uncle's calabash in the river. He begins, first speaking this story of the uncle's calabash, and then turning it into a kind of sing-song chant with a repeated refrain. At the perfect time, voices off-screen begin singing and the man, Lenge, looks at one and then another. The song concludes and the film ends. While the story held little significance for the audience in Bondi, the film engaged nonetheless.

Gbanga Tita seemed to work more like a piece of music, capturing attention without going to great lengths to do so.

The touring program traversed the familiar constellation we have come to expect in the short film genre, in particular the "fucked up relationship/friend/flatmate". As well we were presented with a number of excellent films that seemed to refuse categorisation to remain mutant genes in the short-film pathology.

Many of the films in the former category succeeded in twisting a kind of original and sickeningly humorous perspective out of these relationship scenarios, and (I think) engaging the audience with disturbingly familiar vignettes on inner city relationship problems. I'm thinking in particular of Fiona Samuels' *Bitch* (New Zealand), and Scott Pattersons' *Lessons In The Language Of Love* (Australia).

The Bulgarian animated film *Conservfilm* (Zlatin Radev) was one good example in the latter category. Beginning with a *Blade Runner*-style descent into a city at night (in this case made from cardboard), the film unfolds as a tale of the political fortunes of a totalitarian state inhabited by tins of preserved fruit and vegetables. I recall a horrible scene where a dissident can of cherries is caught scrawling some cherry graffiti by a soldier in the ruling tomato party, before being tortured by a gruesome array of can openers.

Other films worth noting from the program include *Travelling At The Speed Of Light* and *What's Going On Frank?*, the first about a man who is inexplicably teleported to an airport, Dunk Island, and a women's shower. *What's Going On Frank?* is a story about the superbly daggy Frank, who catches sight of himself walking ahead in the street, and then spies on himself living in his home and watching his favourite TV programs.

Flickerfest 96 made for some very interesting nocturnal beachside viewing, free of white goods, and unmarred by the usual bad weather. You can catch it in Broome, Adelaide and Perth.

In all, Flickerfest features some 76 films and videos ranging in length from one minute to 25 minutes. The program includes an International Short Film Competition Touring Program (including films from Belgium, Mexico, UK, USA, New Zealand, France and The Netherlands), a program of new films from Scandinavia, International Student Film Awards, International Film Program (including the Australian films, Audacious, Rufus *and* Swinger). *Poets in the Dark features films responding to poetry and the festival includes the first International Multi-Media and Gaming Exhibition incorporating CD-ROM and computer games projected on the big screen.*

Flickerfest 96 opens at Sun Pictures, Broome February 8-11, tours to Adelaide East End February 15-18 and Perth at the Camelot Picture Garden February 23-26.

Phobias, fashion and hope

Mike Leggett visits the 12th IMZ World Congress: Sydney 19-25 November 1995

The Internationale Music Zentrum in Vienna is a forum and information network for music and dance executives in the television and recording industries. The people in the room—buyers, impresarios and executive producers—were probably the closest many artists would ever get to reaching a television audience.

The test tape on the screen freezes the conductor in the act of shaking the concertmaster's hand.

The public television channels represented here are frozen in the electron stream of the information highway as perceived in its internet test-bed stage. Congress sessions were intended to explore the implications of this and other technologies and the impact they would have on the mediation of the performing arts

An archive of some 200 program tapes and a row of booths for previewing them: all were empty.

Independent program makers, the other main group represented at the Congress, deal with anyone who helps to raise their budget. They will become media publishers, matching artists with audiences using the most appropriate medium: book, cable, CD-ROM, cinema, computer network, gallery.

In the multi-channel environment it becomes possible for the consumer to observe, or even live with, another culture.

If publishers are encouraged to nurture their local talent, encourage difference and diversity, the matrix of mythologies from the Irish-language soap opera to the Czech home improvement item, all with English sub-titles, this will become compelling competition for attention on the international networks.

IMZ Vice President asks, "Where are the Asian cultures at this Congress?" IMZ President replies, "They don't need us."

Robyn Archer introduced the final day of sessions, "The Artist and the Media", in terms of the "current tensions between the artists and new technology" and the effect this was to have on "the richness and danger of live performance".

Technophobia was omnipresent—the main concern that artists working in the performing arts should, it seemed, make sure the new technology was incorporated into their work. Lazy arts administrators of course encourage them in this belief, feeling that if multimedia is the flavour of policy then of course all artists should be using it.

Hans Peter Kuhn, the sound artist, gave a presentation which successfully demonstrated that performance people like himself have been integrating multimedia into their work for many years. As a performance artist he had always worked with the tools appropriate to his needs using the approach which gave the audience...the chance to listen.

Then with a staccato and rapid delivery aided with the authority of the slightest of mid-European accents, he developed a wide-ranging analysis and critique of technological development affecting the arts over the last fifty years. From television to net art, all were demolished quickly as being private forms quietly destroying the broader cultures they touched, their 'significance as culture' being suspect as the outcome of political decision. This process placed technology in the service of the more irrational human behaviours—the regressive, the defensive, the paranoid—which had managed to place 'creativity' in the position of being a threat to global survival. Scratch, dub and techno he identified as being more socialised, politicising forms, with 'astonishing things' on the horizon. Such glimpses of optimism he extended to include the post-historical period which we were now entering: "writing, memory and history followed reassuringly linear patterns. Using non-linear media, post-history would be the outcome", about which he felt optimistic'!

The lecture integrated three projected video images of Hans Peter Kuhn standing at the podium whilst four channels of surround-sound FX overlayed his amplified address.

Philippe Genty introduced his well known oeuvre as bringing "puppetry into the adult world", and he emphasised its physicality and its 'magic'—the inner place, and the outer, or what Peter Brook called 'empty space'. "Theatre must find other languages", he felt, and contemporary dance and the work of artists like Laurie Anderson progressed because of the 'disintegration of words'. The mission of 'le audiovisual' was simply to explore the achievements of theatre!

On tape, a naked woman struggles to hide herself inside an enormous brown paper bag—having succeeded, the bag transforms into wodges of fluff flying in the air.

The final session showcased Australian artists. Sydney multimedia producer Bill Leimbach described the 'market-driven area' of multimedia with a zany CD-ROM production linked with 'world music'. Melbourne artist Ian Haig extolled the value of writing code, deploring consumer software and the notion of the Artist in a Shrink-wrapped Box, and showed extracts from *Astro Turf*, the 'kooky-looking' Flintstones of the 21st century. Julie Martin of Bondi had already given a short demonstration of live performance in conjunction with projected images, computer designed to enhance three-dimensional illusion. Michael Buckley, another Melbourne animator, showed extracts from the sublime *Swear Club* which "elevates the vulgar and precocious 5 year old performer to the status of cultural icon—on which you click to 'Shut-up!'"

This part of the Congress was remarkable for the absence of TV executives, who clearly considered that actual demonstrations by practitioners of the recent technologies, on CD-ROM or straight out of the computer, were clearly beyond their briefs, especially as the work shown was made by 'the local talent'. Hard-pressed as ever, these executives, with lists of international contacts to see before jetting-out, what more can a poor artist expect? Well there may be comfort in the fact that these 'determiners of cultural significance' are to metamorphose, as broadcast gives way to narrowcast cable and as fragmentation of 'the audience' continues. Those of us working at the edge, cutting or joining, have not really known audiences as any thing other than the kind you build and re-build. The computer network technologies, for instance, offer some further potential. The purveyors of cultural spectacle are unlikely to endorse a medium which *a priori* requires active response, where their notions of audience are based wholly on consumption. The videotape recording as artefact of performance spectacle remains their stock-in-trade—it seems they feel that technology simply aids or embellishes that process.

At the end of the (long) day, it was not at all surprising that no one considered how the *audience* would be changed by the technologies and their use of them, and therefore how their *expectations* of live performance would be changed. The sub-cultural precedents are there, they have been actively feeding the dominant culture's fashions. But the convergence of television and the computer is shortly to move into the mass scale and therefore a different dimension. From which time 'new technology' will become 'new performance'.

Multimediocre

Eric Hewitt endures the Third International Interactive Multimedia Symposium in Perth

The Third International Interactive Multimedia Symposium was held over four days at the Hyatt Hotel in Perth, January 21-26. A myriad of sessions ran concurrently in four different conference rooms of the hotel with a major central session occurring every now and then in the main ballroom. Very much the format you see at many of these conferences, especially the ones focussing on multimedia. And haven't there been a lot of those lately? Seems like every time you turn around there's one on, and its the biggest and best and for god's sake, you'd better not miss it or else you're gonna wind up in the information superditch. With a title like "The Third International Interactive Multimedia Symposium", one may well have been forgiven for thinking that this was an all embracing encounter with multimedia from around the world with speakers and experts from all fields.

In fact most of the speakers were Australian and many of those from W.A. It was also captioned "The Learning Superhighway" (don't you wish they'd discard that "life's a long road" metaphor). The caption actually referred to the fact that this symposium was primarily focused on uses of multimedia in education and issues surrounding multimedia as an educational delivery tool. In accordance with this, nearly all presentations were of this theme.

Typical of the sessions were "An Interactive Multimedia Approach To Disseminating Engineering Standards" and "Open Math: An Integrated Course for the Teaching and Learning of Foundation Mathematics". Many others were similarly specialised and I'm sure that even some educationalists would have found themselves searching for subject matter of direct relevance. The education professionals did indeed make up the bulk of the audience. The number of multimedia artists and industry people who did attend, may well have found the pickings relatively slim in terms of new and relevant information.

Some of the exceptions dealt with more across-the-board subject matter. One in particular by Mr Z. Youlo entitled "A Maintaining Solution For Publishing Documents On The World Wide Web" addressed a very real problem: web server maintenance of links once changes have been made. His organisation has designed a database node solution which automatically updates links thereby greatly reducing maintenance needs. Welcome news if you are running a webserver or maintaining a website. In general it was surprising that internet issues did not receive more attention than they did.

The gee whiz prize was taken by the people from the AMES Research Centre at NASA who demonstrated some pretty amazing three-dimensional techniques to illustrate processes in fluid dynamics. Art for science's sake, you could say. It's funny how science and education end up using art if they want people to absorb information or pay attention for substantial periods of time.

It's impossible to attend all sessions at a conference of this scale. Thus, despite some of the intriguing rhetorical titles such as "Multimedia On the Net, On Disk: Are The Universities Ready For It?" and "Clinical Medicine: Can The Computer Replace The Patient?" one was forced to pick and choose those of most pressing interest.

The only artist I could find in the whole four day program was a certain A. Lusk, who delivered a paper at Tuesday lunchtime, "Virtual Reality or Virtual Unreality". Mr Lusk's presentation meditated on virtual reality and its implications for art, artists, concepts of illusion, postmodernism and the nature of representation—centrally, the notion that the lines between reality and illusion, art and everyday-life are becoming increasingly blurred. I would have thought a glance at an Oprah Winfrey Show audience would have demonstrated this truism, never mind flash 3D walk-through environments. But the new environments are interactive too, and thus the audience is no longer simply a passive recipient but now a powerful participator in production. The individual genius (dictator?) is banished in favour of the democracy of authorless interactive collaborations. Like ants making an anthill.

This was an interesting paper, for me at least, and I came away wondering why there had not been more of this sort of debate at this symposium. The universities, after all, are home to many extensive art, philosophy and literature faculties, many of whom have taken an active interest and energetic participation in multimedia production and debate. They were conspicuous by their absence. As for international developments in this field, who knows? Murdoch University's wonderful publication *Continuum* has, for me, run one of the best forums for debate on these areas in Australia in recent times.

By the end of day four I'd picked up quite a lot about cognitive tools, educational psychology and empirically tested learning behaviour models, (largely against my will), but precious little in other areas. Perhaps the educationalists should have broadened their vision and the scope of debate in relation to what multimedia and online interaction is and can be.

Film reviews

Lou Reed in *Blue in the Face*

Blue in the Face
Directed by Wayne Wang and Paul Auster
Miramax Films, Distributed by New Vision
This quick-take sequel to Wang and Auster's *Smoke* (*Blue* was shot briskly immediately after completing the first film) is a rough mix of documentary and improvised narrative fragments. Although it doesn't seem to add up to much other than a sentimental Brooklyn celebration (Lou Reed leading the way with a funny deadpan chat to the audience) and a little more musing on smoking (Jim Jarmusch very droll as he enjoys his last cigarette and reflects on how movie Nazis held their cigarettes), those who liked the first film will enjoy returning to the tobacconist setting and the odd combinations of personalities and intersecting events. Much depends on cameo appearances. Michael J. Fox and Lily Tomlin acquit themselves eerily well. Roseanne Barr is an improviser lost without scripted gags and co-producer Harvey Keitel only nods supportively as his fellow improvisers have to slip into monologue. Despite the many obvious weaknesses, it's easy to be seduced by the humour, the flights of fancy, John Lurie's music, Harvey Wang's video segments (interviews with the real locals) and a great number of memorable lines. Apparently the Faber scripts of *Smoke* and *Blue in the Face* in one volume are selling well. *Blue*, though, is a very different film from its precursor and the word sequel can only be applied loosely. Missing is Auster's weird interplay of coincidence and motive for which improvisation, chancy and fateful as it can be, is no substitute. KG

War Stories
Directed by Gaylene Preston
Ronin Films
This film uses a familiar plain speaking, plain filming documentary approach. Each of the subjects against a black background addresses an off-camera interviewer, their stories illustrated with personal photographs and archival film. What makes it remarkable is the level of intimacy director Gaylene Preston and interviewer Judith Fyfe have achieved and the fascinating stories these seven women (among them, the film-maker's own mother) have to tell. All the stories are about the women's experiences of the second world war in New Zealand. In particular they speak frankly about their relationships with absent husbands, with soldier-lovers. and about the painful adjustments they and children were forced to make in new lives with traumatised husbands and fathers. The film has been very successful in New Zealand and was a prizewinner at last year's Sydney Film Festival, not least because it sharply focuses our attention on a shadowy decade and places so eloquently at its centre the silenced generation of women who became the idealised and sometimes repressive mothers of the 1950s. VB

The American President
Directed by Rob Reiner
Castlerock Entertainment/
Universal Pictures
Before writing this review, I thumbed through Newt Gringrich's tome *To Renew America* to see if he had anything useful to say about environmentalism. In the few odd pages that he canvassed the subject, he trounced it by rejecting out of hand all forms of regulation, and rendered the concept meaningless by opting for a cost benefit analysis as the basis for all decisions on environmental policy.
I raise Newt's views in the context of this review because *The American President* is an overtly political film that has as its contextual basis the process of politics in the USA. The film could only have been made in Hollywood and has an upbeat ending which suggests that reducing fossil fuel emissions and controlling the spread of assault weapons is manifestly possible, providing the political will is there to realise such a goal.
The film could (and perhaps should) have been set in Camelot but the location is Washington DC and Rob Reiner, the director and producer, has stuck with it. The plot concerns an unlikely love story involving the President (played by aging heart throb, Michael Douglas) falling for a lobbyist (Annette Bening, notably, partner of pre-eminent Hollywood leftist Warren Beatty).
Rob Reiner has indicated in an interview that he commenced making the film prior to the Republicans gaining control of Congress. At the time, Reiner thought he was making a film with a liberal slant and that, after the election results were known, the film would turn out to be an extremely expensive countercultural movie. As it is the film has been popular with Republicans (as much with the Democrats) even though that particular audience doesn't necessarily agree with its political message. As Reiner would have it, Republicans are attracted to 'ideas' films.
What Reiner is doing with this film is giving critical impetus to the Democratic agenda to re-invent government in direct contrast to the current catchcry of the dominant revolutionary conservative movement, which seeks the de-invention of government.According to such a view, less government is better government because it permits greater private enterprise management in thehandling of public resources. This it seems is the coming Newtopia. Paradoxically, the film itself is Newtopian in its formulation, in that it is large on rhetoric and ultimately unable to deliver. Its feelgood approach to American politics is devastatingly undermined by the current political situation in the US where all the environmental advances over the past thirty years are in the process of being de-invented—for example, the repealing of significant US environmental legislation. *The American President* is a schmaltzy, romantic film which, looked at from the position of an environmentalist, remains politically problematic. Peter Lowe

Soundtracks

Rachel Portman and various artists
Music from *Smoke*
Miramax/Hollywood Records 162 024-2
Smoke was one of my favourite movies of '95. As well as arresting performances by Harvey Keitel as cigar store manager Augie and William Hurt as his writer customer Paul, the soundtrack, an eclectic mix, provided a lot of the enjoyment. Composer Rachel Portman helped to create much of the atmosphere that underpins the scenes between Augie and Paul. As Augie reveals his daily photography obsession to Paul, Portman's subtle marimbas and keyboards heighten the intimacy between them. The soundtrack also features a very hip *Brooklyn Boogie* by Louis Prima as the opening theme and Tom Waits in his best growl, singing *Downtown Train* and the poignant *Innocent when you dream* which plays an emotionally climactic role. Other highlights are Screamin' Jay Hawkins *Hong Kong* and an exquisite recording of Shostakovich's Prelude and Fugue No 1 in C Major played by Tatiana Nikolaeva. Where else can you get Jerry Garcia—singing with soaring guitar *Smoke gets in your eyes*—Group Home's techno *Supa Star* and Shostakovich on one CD? And it all fits. Robert Lloyd

Exotica
Original Motion Picture Soundtrack
Music composed by Michael Danna
Varese Sarabande VSD-5543
Movie soundtrack albums are not always generous even in the age of the CD. Tracks can be short to the point of abrupt, production standards variable and there can be some curious omissions, like the absence of Leonard Cohen's key contribution, "Everybody knows", to the soundtrack of Atom Egoyan's powerful *Exotica*. However, at some 55 minutes and with several tracks running between four and six minutes this CD feels like a reasonable approximation to the spirit of the film, alternating between Armenian folk music, Armenian and eastern-influenced dance music (for *Exotica's* 'don't touch' lap-dancing club and recorded in Canada and India) replete with a house-shaking bass, plus a more predictable, tense almost noirish string theme with sad lyrical clarinet passages. The tone is threatening, true to the film's suspenseful shaping, erotic, and poignant. But something other than the Cohen song with its ironic eroticism is missing, something I really missed—Steven Munro's subtle sound design with its layers of disturbing urban noise. There are times when you wish the producers would lay down soundtrack straight from the film, dialogue and all, especially when the household CD player can be used to play only those tracks you want to listen to, if, say, the dialogue palls after a while. Some signs of improvement are evident in the transformation of bitty soundtracks into orchestral suites (Roszas, Tiomkin, Morricone) and in radical interpretations, like John Zorn's of Enio Morricone's best. KG

Newsreel

AFC Fellowships and Schemes
The Australian Film Commission has announced 57 fellowships under the Distinctly Australian Initiative worth a total of $975,000. The Fellowships are designed to provide career development opportunities for writers, script editors, writer/directors and producers.
The AFC's Women's Program has also announced the latest recipients in the Film Technicians Scheme and the New Technologies Support Scheme. The Technicians Scheme supports women already working in technical positions at mid career level who are trying to make the step to senior creative roles or to feature films. The New Imaging Technologies Scheme allows for one-off grants to enable women working in the area of new technologies to upgrade and transfer their skills to multimedia production.
For further information contact Tracey Mair on 02) 368 0408.

***The Language of Interactivity* conference**
The AFC's Language of Interactivity, from April 11-13, will examine the emerging language of interactive media. Moving beyond the business and technology of multimedia, a mix of national and international speakers will examine the ways in which disc-based and online works convey meaning. The conference will be a chance for developers, writers, designers, educators and film and media makers to discuss the creative opportunities emerging in this new form. Sessions will be held in the following topic areas: branching structures; interface metaphors; navigation; screen design; sound; game language; programming; museums and kiosks; and time and duration in multimedia.
All program topics and speakers are yet to be confirmed. The cost is $200/$100 concession. For further information and registration contact Vicki Sowry at the AFC.

10th WA Film and Video Festival
The Film and Television Institute's 10th WA Film and Video Festival, running from 5-16 March, is an industry and community based event designed to showcase, promote and support West Australian film and video production. This year the Festival will highlight the talents of industry filmmakers and young filmmakers.
Along with film, video and multimedia screenings there will be foyer installations, forums and talks by guest speakers, including a Small Screen/Big Picture seminar on the weekend of 9-10 March, promoting the values of TV production.
Opening night on 5 March at 7.30 pm, at the Film and Television Institute's Lumiere Cinemas, will feature *Leaving Home*, part of the *First Person* series, a co-production between Open Channel in Melbourne and the FTI. The series enables participants to tell their own stories with a home video camera. *Leaving Home* is the story of a woman forced to leave Wittenoom, the asbestos mining town in WA closed down by the State Government.
Closing night, March 16, features the presentation of the Lumiere Awards, including a $5000 prize for the Festival of Perth's Most Promising Filmmaker of the Year Award, and a $2000 prize for the Department of the Arts Award for a Multimedia Project.
Further information is available from the FTI's Natasha Vukelja on 09 335 1055

Digital Aesthetics One
The international symposium *Digital Aesthetics One*, running from 9-13 April at the College of Fine Arts University of NSW, is billed as "an opportunity to participate in a debate investigating the position of aesthetics within the realm of digital creation and consumption". The symposium will "examine the position of all human senses in a post-analogue context".
Speakers include Orlan, the Parisian artist known for aesthetic surgical experimentation on her own body, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, Mark Dery *(Wired* contributor and author of *Flame Wars)*, Allucquere Rosanne Stone (who wrote *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age)* and local theorists McKenzie Wark (author of *Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events)*, John Conomos and Jane Goodall. Registration is $350/150 concession. For further information contact Werner Hammerstingl on 03) 9728 1162.

Boothlite
Roving film festival, a node on the WWW, edit suite, sound environment and CD-ROM distribution facility in a box, the prototype of *Booth*, supported by the Hybrid Arts Committee of the Australia Council, will out at the *Digital Aesthetics* symposium.
Showing at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery at the UNSW College of Fine Arts and produced by Mutleymedia, the prototype, called *Boothlite*, will be the first showing of the results of an extensive cross-state collaboration of Australian new media artists. A limited-operations version of the projected touring booth, *Boothlite* will demo the essence of the *Booth* idea. The project sets out to address the circumstances for the production, exhibition and distribution of time-based work, and to fabricate a venue which not only exhibits work in a different way but calls it forth in a different way as well.
Come Easter audiences get to see how such a box might work. Think custom culture, think vendor culture, think trucking culture and watch for the refresh rate…
For further information call Kathryn Bird on 02 365 4809.

Melbourne Cinematheque
The AFI/Melbourne's Cinematheque 1996 season, an extensive program ranging from Brackhage to Duras to Powell and Pressburger, commences on 7 February at the Union Cinema, Melbourne University. The film which inspired *Reservoir Dogs*, Ringo Lam's *City on Fire* kicks off the bill, together with Hong Kong director Wong Kar Wai's *As Tears Go By*—an idiosyncratic take on *Mean Streets*.
Along the way, the program takes in a array of cinematic riches: the comedy of Keaton *(Steamboat Bill Jr*, 1928), the late director Derek Jarman's last film *(Glitterbug*, 1994), DW Griffiths' *The Mothering Heart* (1913), pioneering abstract animations by Oskar Fischinger, documentarist Wiseman's verité exposé, *High School 11* (1994), Pasolini's directorial debut, the melodrama *Accatone* (1961), great noir classics such as Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), the surrealistic *The Hearts of Age*, directed by and starring Orson Welles, 7 years pre-*Citizen Kane*, Chantal Ackerman's feminist road move *Les Rendezvous D'Anna* (1978), and Nicholas Ray's wonderful dissection of 50s Americana *Bigger Than Life* (1956).
A feature of the program is *Cantrill's Filmnotes* 25th anniversary screening on September 18, which will feature a cross section of the avant-garde filmmakers' body of work since the beginning of their partnership in 1960 (further details of which in a future issue of *OnScreen)*.
On March 20, the Cinematheque moves to the State Film Centre. Further information and program details are available from Melbourne Cinematheque Tel/fax: 03 9650 2562.

Letters

3/1/96

Dear Editors

I read in your December/January issue that the 1960s were 'virtually filmless' *(Serious sight gags*, by Fiona Giles). This is hardly funny to a person who made a lot of films and was involved in the production of many others in that much maligned decade.

But I'm not writing from purely personal pique. It seems necessary here to restore to the record a whole body of work that predates the Australian feature film production revival of the mid-seventies, a body of work almost totally excluded from the program that Ms Giles wrote about, a 'history' of Australian films at MOMA in New York.

A number of significant gaps in that 'history' can be filled by consulting the 1972 edition of the catalogue of the Sydney Film Makers' Co-Operative. It reveals that there were then well over 200 locally made films available for rent from the Co-Op. Some of those were made between 1970 and 1972 in the flurry of enthusiasms and radicalisms leading up to the election of the Whitlam government. However, a great many of the films in the Co-Op's library (and, I would argue, some of the most original) were made in the 'filmless' 1960s. These films cover a very broad and eclectic range, from extremely short to feature length, from entirely abstract to straight documentary, from expressionist to conventional narrative forms.

Some of these now invisible films are indeed gauche and on purely aesthetic grounds I can understand that some people might prefer they were left in oblivion. However, these 'bad' films, with their generally primitive technical and formal strategies, reveal a state of cultural and political depression more clearly than any assertion of mere filmlessness, and any genuinely historical survey of Australian film making must surely include some of that work if only to show where we have come from.

But not by any means all of those films of the 1960s deserve the obscurity into which they have fallen. Although made in a different spirit from those made now, and in spite of minimal technology and non-existent budgets, some films from the 1960s hold up extremely well in terms of stylistic and formal sophistication as well as raw energy and overt pleasure in the processes of film making.

Most of my own work from the 1960s—which is as variable in quality as all the work from that period—was made under the umbrella of Ubu Films, a production, distribution, marketing, proselytising co-operative partnership of filmmakers. From its base in Sydney, Ubu Films' screenings spread from Brisbane to Adelaide. When the Sydney Film Makers' Co-Operative was formed in 1969 it took over and built on the activities of Ubu Films. It does seem to me that in Sydney especially the development of many people's interest in films and ambitions as filmmakers were built on the platform erected in the first place by Ubu Films.

There were of course filmmakers who thought that we of Ubu Films were politically naive (from the 'old left' perspective of the Waterside Workers' film group) or just totally undisciplined and self-indulgent (from the perspective of the bureaucracies of the ABC and the Commonwealth Film Unit). My point now, at this far different remove in time and techno-political space, is that we were all part of an alternative politics of film making, even if we couldn't see it then, and are now part of a history that is totally irrelevant to a culture that seems determined to go round in circles until it disappears up its own virtual arse (don't get me wrong—I think computers—and electronics generally, are fantastically useful tools).

Before I close I want to emphasise that it is not Fiona Giles or her article that I am critical of but the program she was reporting on. When I first saw the list of films published in AFC News I was horrified by the inclusion of some of the works, which in my view are abominably weak examples of commercial film making, and by the exclusion of some fine examples of 'non-commercial' film making. I wrote to the AFC along these lines at the time.

Yours sincerely, David Perry

Taking shape

Keith Gallasch surveys the 1996 Sydney Festival

Content aside, this was the first Sydney Festival in the ten years I've experienced them where I felt that a festival was really happening, that there was a sense of focus, of purpose and of some communality; no mean achievement for artistic director Anthony Steel in a city not spatially conducive to festive intensity, with a limited budget and inadequate and often inappropriate venues. The press response was much more positive than usual and it would appear that ticket sales are likely to have increased this year.

The turnout for the big free events on the Opera House forecourt was phenomenal, even frightening in the case of fireworks-propelled El Comediants, a Catalan performing group. The extension of the free events beyond musical concerts in the park and the usual street theatre was a significant and widely appreciated gesture.

Venues weren't always right. The MCA's American Express Hall might do for weddings and receptions, but it isn't right for cabaret even though some of the acts like Fado over-rode the inadequacies the space. The Metro lacked the intimacy the Nuyorican Poets and their followers are used to in their home cafe. The Everest kept us at a distance from Meryl Tankard's *Songs with Mara* (see page 32) unless you were in the front row, in which case you were provided with plastic sheets to protect you from the dirt-kicking leg show early on and, later, water hair-whipped across the stage. Jeff Koons' *Puppy* was fine, fun and floral in front of the MCA at Circular Quay but Maria Kozic's inflatables were less visible and Robert Longo's flailing figures on a billboard high on the side of a building were lost. Nonetheless, the sense of occasion at the Quay was palpable. With the Opera house at long last a part of the festival with its free forecourt performances, Ningali in one of its theatres, plenty of street performances and a short walk to *Mind's Eye* (see page 14) in the Rocks, the festival has achieved a sense of place attractive to locals and tourists. Steel is already thinking about what he'll do with Circular Quay in 1997.

My resistance to the otherwise universally acclaimed *The Steward of Christendom* was exacerbated by being plonked in the front row of the York Theatre directly beneath the brilliant Donal McCann's nostrils anxiously watching his spittle trajectories. This didn't improve my reaction to a conventional play of the madman-locked-in-his-cell-revisited-by-the-past type, replete with wooden blocking and signalling lighting, but it was redeemed by one and half excellent performances and, without a doubt, delicious prose. No plastic sheets were provided. Was it ticket-selling bloody mindedness on the festival's part not to take out the first row or two in each of the Seymour Centre's very odd theatres?

I managed to see El Comediants' *The Devils,* early in the season when the crowds were at something like a manageable 8,000. The performers displayed excellent crowd control and many of us were able to follow them (or be pursued), dancing beneath the fireworks, flicking sparks away from clothes and hair, enjoying an ancient festival of the night with its blunt celebratory sexual imagery, a giant playful dragon, wild, rough percussion and beautiful pipe playing. The work's kinship with that of Adelaide Festival guests Furas dels Baus was obvious, linked through the subversive spirit of carnival, but without the latter's sense of threat or its curious sexual politics.

The Dutch company Vis a Vis occupied the same space more conventionally, using the Opera House steps as auditorium for the audience, but filling the forecourt with a three story building (evoking in fact something much taller). Before long the building tilts towards the audience, levels out and the performers are revealed stranded on the roof after being thrust violently through it in a malfunctioning elevator. The 'intelligent' building has them in its grip and a battle to survive ensues. While spectacular and crudely funny (the air conditioning system devours a dog and a man) the plot plods and the characters are dull and stereotypical—the ruthless businessman, the sexy secretary, the frumpish wife etc.

Outside the Quay, *The Stars of Illusion,* a collection of international magicians proved patchy but worthwhile and, in the case of the Pendragons, spectacular as she (in a see through perspex and metal box) is sawn in halves by him and she wriggles straight through his chest—enough in this for case study especially of Mr. Pendragon's monopolising of his wife's talent, she being only one of two female magicians on the program. All the illusionists proved that schtick is still the first and foremost sleight you need to pull off all too familiar tricks. Some schtick was better than others. For me the best of the night was Otto Wessely, a Viennese virtuoso who skilfully mangled most of the usual magician repertoire and gave away a few of its obvious secrets.

The show was overlong and at the performance I attended the audience not too generous with the applause. Mr. Pendragon reminded them that he was real, that this was not TV. As a little boy in front of us observed, "They did that bit with film!"

Spoken Word got a boost from the presence of the Nuyorican Poets in an all too short, very brisk show, the highlights of which were Emily XYZ and partner in tightly rehearsed, rhythmically precise poems that had them speaking across each other, slipping back into sync and sharing comic refrains, especially in the politically sharp *Frank Sinatra Walks Out* (available on a 45rpm disk at Sydney's Red Eye Records for $4.98 and well worth it). Mike Tyler, a kind of fidgety, wandering, method-actor kind of poet provided the only moments of improvisation (saying he'd never seen a row of cinema complexes like that across the road: "I get the feeling some of those films don't like each other") and audience participation with his "I am not a suggestion box, I do not have a slot ..." The brevity of the performances denied us the opportunity of discovering whether or not there was real substance in these confident performer poets. (The Fringe Writer's Festival, *babel,* at The Paddington Town Hall, offered a fine alternative range of Australian poets and novelists, and got a very good turn out.)

Mudrooroo's *The Aboriginal Protesters Confront the Proclamation of the Australian Republic on 26 January 2001 with a production of* THE COMMISSION *by Heiner Müller,* was a significant part of the festival, attracting large audiences, and promoting debate—mostly about the play. There were few quarrels with the production: the switching between the stylised fragments of Müller's play and the casual naturalism of the actors debating the issues was effective, the acting and directing impressive. Late in the rehearsal of the Müller play the company decide that it does not meet their personal and political needs as indigenous people, and they abandon it for conventional protest.

While this was for some a powerful ending, it could be argued that Müller didn't get much of a go, and nor did some of the issues the play raised. The decision to reject a play about historical Jamaica on the grounds that Müller was sexist and that the performers should be working on plays about their own country is understandable. However, there is a strong aboriginal playwrighting tradition here already starting out with Jack Davis and Kevin Gilbert and continuing with Eva Johnson, Cathy Craigie, the work of Kooemba Jdarra, Yirra Yarkin, Jimmy Chi, Ningali Lawford and others. Further, The *Aboriginal Protesters* gives little room to the considerable talents of Rachel Maza and Justine Saunders, largely because this play is about men—about an ageing ex-alcoholic dangerously ill charismatic who can bully and patronise a naive young public servant raised by whites (and declare him in the end, 'a man') and lead the campaign for the rejection of the play on the slightest of grounds. The dedication of the opening performance to the late Heiner Müller seemed inappropriate. All that aside, you had to be there to get into the debate.

The presence of what looked like a powerful incipient aboriginal theatre company in *The Aboriginal Protesters* and Ningali Lawford in her solo show added a long awaited dimension to the Sydney Festival. At both performances the sense of occasion and community was striking. While the Sydney Festival is still small in comparison to its peers in Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth, it is developing a personality of its own with some challenging work at its forefront.

Travelling light

Robert Lloyd learns from Philip Glass's solo piano concert at the Sydney Festival

After spending a lot of the 80's touring with my ensemble, lugging marimbas, vibraphones, keyboards, drums and sound systems from place to place finding ways to tour with less equipment became of great interest to me. Philip Glass has solved it.

During Philip's recent trip to Sydney to play a solo concert at the Opera House we had organised to have lunch together at his hotel. It was too crowded. The Opera House bistro was suggested. I asked, "Do you want to get your music now for tonight's performance?" "No I keep it all in my head." and this is how he played his Opera house solo piano concert.

The audience at his concert was a wonderful mix—from pink hair to blue hair, from techno fans to classical music lovers. The concert began with "Opening" from the CD *Glassworks,* a gentle exploration of minor chords played in a two against three rhythm between the hands. "Wichita Sutra Vortex", usually played as an accompaniment to match the rhythm of Alan Ginsberg's reading, had Glass moving into the musical mid-west with hints of old cowboy songs.

The next piece, originally written for a play based on Kafka's short story, was the five-part "Metamorphosis". It explored consistency in tempo, dynamic range, and rhythm within a mood of dark brooding. In contrast, The Six Etudes are Philip's most diverse piano writing to date. Each Etude (of which there are a planned sixteen) approaches piano writing from different angles. Running melodies and punctuating chords in the right hand over driving motifs in the left characterised Etude Six (the piece commissioned by the Sydney Festival). Other Etudes featured changing meters and rhythmic contrapuntal movement (I also heard snatches of *La Belle et La Bête,* Glass's latest opera with film project).

I was taken by the simple beauty of Philip's playing of "Kneeplay 4" from *Einstein on the Beach* making me feel again the joy of just playing the piano. Did other pianists in the audience go home and play after the concert?

The performance ended with an arrangement of an aria from the last scene in the opera *Satyagraha* with the crowd clapping for more.

Philip Glass has an intimate connection with his work and as a composer is able to take some of his best compositions back to their musical core and rework them for piano. I imagine he gets a lot of satisfaction playing his works in such a personal and direct way as his Opera House concert.

I look forward to hearing the rest of the Etudes. He's hoping to get them finished in time for a 60th birthday concert at Carnegie Hall later this year—just a short taxi ride from his home with no music to carry!

Robert Lloyd is a Sydney based composer.

Travels in puppydom

Nicholas Gebhardt barks and bites after Philip Glass's performance at the 1996 Festival of Sydney

When so much time and money is devoted to various forms of family entertainment, and the summer season seems dominated by a range of infantile productions in which animals once more get to be humans and humans get to be inflatable dolls, one wonders about the efficacy of large scale cultural events like the Festival of Sydney. The *Puppy* mentality seems to be flowing through everything, as though Jeff Koons' brief visit to bestow his blessing on the finished structure and on those hardy volunteers who planted and dug and generally made the thing grow, left an indelible mark on the minds of those festival organisers he pulped with his abrogated thoughts on art.

In a pre-Olympic city, governments and bureaucrats tend to lose the plot; or rather, recoup the plot wholly for the purposes of displaying the power of the State to influence every event, to take over every event, every available site, for the purposes of restructuring or replanning the city in the name of the Olympic moment. To become the spectacular Olympic city is to remake the city as the site of an ancient Greek temple devoted to shuttle diplomacy and multinational sponsorship; a city in which all cultural production is simply about preparing us for that luminous, pyrotechnic point in time when the international technocratic juggernaut rolls into town on the crest of the millennium; along, of course, with the return of the *Puppy*.

Under these conditions, with economic, urban and cultural restructuring reaching a feverish level, the Sydney Festival is like a test run, a preliminary attempt to organise events in which artist and audience enter into a relation of mutual acquiescence in which everyone agrees to "feel good" for the sake of a State that desperately needs cultural currency to balance its expenditure on making something suburban look and feel like a "city of the gods;" it's a process of cultural upgrading that, much like frequent flyer points, demands a certain allegiance to the flag based on that strange fiction of the unity of the social world. In this context, difficult events are, for the most part, avoided or obscured. While events that produce the image of 'the people', of culture as an accumulation of aggregates that, in effect, argue for value on the basis of an appeal to the laws of technology and the market, are promoted as the 'best in the world'.

That the Festival organisers chose to bring Philip Glass here as a solo piano act demonstrates a remarkable degree of cynicism. Or maybe it was just a stroke of marketing genius. Whatever the case, the concert raised a series of important questions about musical culture, about art, but particularly about the way in which the administration and funding of the arts increasingly refers back to 'the popular' as the rationalisation of a regressive and conservative artistic sensibility. This was a concert devoted to sycophants and spin doctors: an easy listening extravaganza reconfigured as the highest of art where, according to the unsigned program notes, we were witnessing "the most acclaimed American composer of our time"—playing a series of transcriptions and solo piano works badly.

It was one of those concerts held together by momentary points of possibility or the memory of other events, other works, that have actually transformed the field of musical composition. It was as though, in trying to resurrect the spirit of Liszt, Glass has forgotten or simply ignored his own reorganisation of the compositional plane along the lines of cinema. The music-theatre works, *Einstein On The Beach* and *Satyagraha* both mark out important shifts in the image of sound from the phonographic sound event to a microphonic sound tracking. His decision to play excerpts from these works, along with several mundane piano pieces, marked the concert for what it was: a celebration of the vacuity of a bourgeois art world that continually reduces composition to a compilation.

It's odd that an unremarkable pianist should be privileged over people like Chris Abrahams, Keith Jarrett, Cecil Taylor or Paul Grabowsky; and just as odd that the Festival should attempt to ratify its populist agenda within the domain of serious art by commissioning the sixth of the piano etudes that Glass played on the night as though to simply confirm its 'commitment' to great works of art. More than anything, this demonstrated that what really counts for most government-run arts festivals is the privilege (never mind the nationalism) of a "world premiere"; that overwhelming desire to precede the global cultural centres in establishing the conditions for aesthetic production as the sign of a transcendent state culture.

Come as you wannabe

Colin Hood interviews photographer and writer C. Moore Hardy

It is said by some that lesbian sexuality is differentiated from others by the absence of a penis. I say that lesbian sexuality uses women loving and fucking other women as its pivot no matter where, when or what with, the phallus inclusive.

Jasper Laybutt, *Meat Slices*

C. Moore Hardy was down in the photographer's circle when Vanessa Wagner was hosting this year's Drag Race for the Sydney Fringe Festival. Responses to the show were mixed—it was Bondi after all—from full-on homophobic outrage to delighted cat-calls and laughter. It makes you wonder how it's impossible for some people to suspend disbelief in view of such talented furry tummied MC chit-chat and the array of costumes and talk-back coming from SAL stewardesses, 12 year old 'street girls' and the best of import drag stars.

With photographic work featuring in three exhibitions for 1996, Hardy should make a major impact on gallery-goers and club dwellers over the next 12 months. And deservedly so. Beginning her career blazing paparazzi paths through 80s nightclubs, bars and various inner city sub-cultures (she did the first cover for *Sydney Star Observer* in 1979), Hardy has settled into mid-career portraiture in a manner befitting a 'mature' lesbian with less time to party as hard as she used to. "I've more or less turned it completely around, doing portraits of people who don't mind being photographed. I still do rallies and protests, marches and Mardi Gras which remain important events, from a documentary perspective—I still have a passion for performance work".

Hardy is clearly impressed by the diversification and higher standard of lesbian erotica being currently produced. "The quality of images is a lot better—especially when you compare the original *On Our Backs,* which came out of America and exhibitions from the late 80s, to what's happening now."

Tracey Parry—for *Capital Q Weekly,* January 16—writes on the rise and diversification of girl drag, using The Larmay Sisters as a prime example: "Their shows are sexy, glamorous, highly choreographed, and theatrical. The girls may often be seen shedding stunning gowns or tacky frocks to reveal a glittery showgirl costume, or peeling off a man's suit to show a transvestite-like ensemble of suspenders and fishnets, replete with feather boas, over-the-top wigs, and sequined eyelashes."

When it comes to the question of drag (specifically: "Is biology the destiny of the best of cross-dressing?"), Hardy's response is clear and articulate. "I think what's happening now is that there is a larger percentage of lesbians doing drag. Male drag has become almost a given within a tradition of cross-dressing. I still find a lot of drag very humorous especially when it goes beyond just plain dressed-up lip-synching. I remember going to a girls' drag show in Buckland Street. Two women dressed as boys dressed as drag queens. It was really quite sophisticated—and tremendously entertaining as well."

Alan Davies is curating a retrospective of Hardy's work—from the last ten years—as part of a State Library of NSW exhibition, Sydney Contemporary Photographers. *Hardy's photographs, along with those of William Yang, will appear in* Absolutely Mardi Gras *at the Powerhouse Museum, while* Calendar Girls *will be on show at the Lizard Lounge in Oxford St.*

Tauri & Shane 'Sister-Brother' C. Moore Hardy

Brett C. Moore Hardy

The Lamay Sisters C. Moore Hardy

A new song and dance

Eleanor Brickhill experiences Meryl Tankard's *Songs with Mara* at the Sydney Festival

In a search to develop an expanded awareness of human physicality, many contemporary dance artists find the boundaries of their familiar territory becoming blurred and indistinct, as if the more well practised and known a body's motions become, the less fertile grounds they are for engendering meaning. Meryl Tankard's *Songs With Mara* doesn't so much blur these bounds as step over them, leaving them largely intact.

Within the series of 16 or more traditional and contemporary Bulgarian songs and instrumental pieces, inspiration for the movement seems to come not so much from the words, which have a simplicity of their own, but from within a compelling unity created by the dense homophonic voices and syncopated instrumental texture.

The first view of the dancers shows the women seated, spaced around an earth strewn stage, some with their own private pool of water at the foot of their chairs. With naked backs to the audience, they are lit as if to suggest an intimate female sensuality. They are still for a long time. Slight measured gestures—fingers at the back of the neck, stroking long hair—might wish to convey hidden sensual depths, but later it is certainly the complex sound textures, the movement of plucked strings and percussion and voices of Mara Kiek and the dancers that are immediately engaging.

Reminiscent of her Pina Bausch experience, Tankard's *Songs With Mara* embraces a body image that has a familiar stylised elegance. Lyrical abandon in the upper body and arms, an ingenuous angularity and awkwardness of legs, all enacted with a classically well turned ankle, seems to do for the female image what short black frocks and stilettos have also done. There's restrained passion conveyed by boundness: knees close together, a motif of hands tied at the wrists, the classic baring of the throat proclaiming vulnerability. Only the movement and weight of long hair expresses escape, tossed in arcs, drenched in the shallow pools, hurling water drops over the stage. These flung trails catch the light, making their own dance.

Choreographically one interesting piece uses a canonic progression, where the women, one by one, start a deceptively simple, imitative sequence of gestures. Travelling across the stage, their movement "voices" come together and separate again in small waves. At the side of the stage the men play a vigorous drumming.

The dancers sometimes enact working or washing motifs, the villagers' sweat and toil perhaps reflected in the strategic aesthetics of water and earth. Because of the staging of some of the songs, it's easy to read the role of Mara herself as if she is every rustic Bulgarian village's wise woman. Her presence seems almost nurturing, setting rhythm and pace for a lot of the action, and as we know many of these performers were not previously skilled singers, their vocal work seems quite special and has enviable richness.

There was evident challenge in presenting both dancers and singers alike in a non-competitive, "communal" tradition. Everyone worked together and often you couldn't be sure what the performers' speciality was until their individual expertise was revealed in more virtuosic material. Even so, the worlds remained largely separate. Intimacy and warmth in a smaller venue than the Seymour Centre's Everest Theatre might have fostered a more complex fusion. The relationship between a highly virtuosic theatrical tradition and the apparently simpler, more ritualised toing and froing of everyday existence was often expressed incongruously in an assumed rusticity and a coyness between the men and women, lying awkwardly with both the plangent vocal technique and more seductive body image.

Between inner and outer worlds

Progress reports from Cath McKinnon and Jenny Kemp on creating new works for the Adelaide Festival

As the Adelaide Festival draws near, Australian writers, directors and performing artists—Jenny Kemp, Red Shed, IRAA, Meryl Tankard, Magpie, the *Ethereal Eye* collaborators amongst others—are pulling together new works that will be put to the test by premiering up against already acclaimed international works. As tough as this can be, a festival can play nurturer, offering support, challenge and profile.

Cath MacKinnon co-director and writer with Red Shed Theatre company, hard at work with script revisions and the shooting of filmed segments, outlines the ingredients of *Station 2: Eye of Another:* "There's two ways into it. One is the storyline, the events of one night. Jude and Bing who have been kicked out of the warehouse where they live and are on the street; a taxi driver, girlfriend and son are caught up in domestic tensions—he's on the road driving his taxi; Nick, a young policeman working at a new station has problems with his family. It sounds like naturalism but it isn't."

Asked then if the work is presented in a fragmentary way so the audience pieces it together, Cath says, "I tried to give a different focus to three different story lines not necessarily as individual points of view but more to do with particular environments, belief systems, the facts and fictions and confusions of those who are held within these environments. It's about how two people and the rest of society come together and deal with each other. I'm working on the structure at the moment. I've put the characters inside a fence and outside the fence and patrolling the fence, a metaphor for a state of mind and where you feel you are in relation to other people. I don't think you'll notice that as you watch the performance.

"For the audience it will be like a puzzle. They'll be trying to piece together what happened on the night from different versions. They'll also be working out what is fiction and what is fact. At different times most of the characters talk to the audience. On the night there's a slashing, a stabbing and a shooting. Action takes place and sometimes it's 're-wound' and reviewed. The external framework is like a court but abstractly, in a dream-like state.

"We're trying to work with film to explore the illusory nature of how we create ourselves. At the moment we're experimenting and playing with it. We've just started to work with the script. We'd like a lot longer to play with it. But we're very clear where we're going. The final decisions on the visual elements will greatly alter the way the piece will come out, giving a whole different feeling to it."

Jenny Kemp also spoke about her creative process, the stages of development in her new work and her preoccupation with consciousness and the psyche, though in a different way from Cath McKinnon.

Jenny started work on *The Black Sequin Dress* three years ago. Barrie Kosky knew that Jenny, as she puts it, "needs a long gestation period especially because I've got to make that transition from writer into director.

"Last year, we had a creative development period that involved the designer, actors, composer, writer/director. Really what I was doing at that time was testing out the writing, the structure and a whole lot of things. I was really working as a writer and sometimes having to call up the director in me in order to test something out. Sometimes you think, hang on this isn't working but it might be where the actors are coming from so if I shift where they're coming from then maybe it can work. This bit isn't working but maybe if a sound comes in or music maybe it will work rhythmically".

The performers include Mary Sitarenos Margaret Mills, Natasha Herbert, all of whom Jenny has worked with before, plus Ian Scott, Greg Stone and Dancework's Director Helen Herbertson. "There are four women in a way playing the same woman. Helen doesn't speak but she is about my age. I really appreciate her presence both physically and the age of her and she's helping me with the choreography. Last year I worked with her on a creative development at Danceworks on a project of hers so there's a bit of a dialogue occurring between us and we're interested in the crossover point between theatre and dance."

I asked Jenny to talk about her need for particularly intuitive performers. Is it because there isn't any conventional narrative or character grid for them to lock into and that they need to be open to her vision? "A lot of the work is dealing with time—memory and looking at a single moment and going deeply into that moment. It requires a sense of inner rhythm and not so much to do with a socialised time-frame.

"I spend quite a bit of time working on a storyboard, building the *mise en scene* before the creative development period. After, I come in with a pretty strong structural offer some of which has been drawn from the paintings of Paul Delvaux. That's my offer to the performers so they know what this world is. The writing doesn't change much. It's more to do with working on layers—an emotional layer, a thinking layer, a physical layer, all going on at the same time. To build the *mise en scene* requires a real kinaesthetic sense from the actors. They've got the text plus I've set up a block of work in the morning which gives them the grids that exist in the space. Every time they get lost or wonder what's going on I end up talking for probably half an hour. Then off we go again. That might happen twice a week. I'm continually dropping clues."

Complementing this, the design process of Jenny's work is complete very early, in this case by the creative development period with a version of the set installed and tested. Consequently the performers get to 'live' in Jacqueline Everitt's design for a long time.

What about the multiple playing of one women by four performers?

"It's a way looking at the functioning of the psyche creatively and what its struggles are and what are its possibilities. In what ways are thought and emotion or thought and memory or desire and dream catalytic. So there are four women. It seems to need that many to create a landscape of the psyche.

"I'm also interested in image and the deepening of an image the way the Jungian writer James Hillman talks about it. At any moment what seems important is that there is some sort of duality or ambiguity or more than one thing happening rather than a didactic form. I'm really trying to attend to the complexity of the psyche and allowing that to be something that doesn't have to be overwhelming."

Asked whether *The Black Sequin Dress* is at all autobiographical, Jenny muses, "Less so in this work but at the same time as being less in it, you could also argue that there's more of me in it. In terms of what actually happens to the woman it's very much a theatrical construct, so none of the conversations are ones I have had. None of the thoughts are things that have come directly out of my life".

I suggested that the power of *The Call of the Wild* was in the way it worked as a reverie. I wanted to know if this would be the case with the new work.

"Yes, but I'm also concerned with the relationship between the inner and the outer world and I think that I've probably attended to that a bit more thoroughly. There should be moments where the audience thinks, 'Ah, now this is really what it's about', or where it really grounds or appears quite real"

Would those be moments of direct conscious address to the audience or moments of naturalistic exchange? "That sort of thing. It's where I'm pushing the parameters a bit, so I think, okay I can go in all the way in there, but I'm not going all the way in unless I go all the way out there. I have to find what 'in there' or 'out there' are and what their relationship to each other is. That's what I'm examining really."

KG

Red Shed Theatre Company, Station 2: Eye of Another *by Cath McKinnon. Performers: Dennis Moore, Leah Purcell, Eileen Darley, Grant Piro, Sid Brisbane, Ulli Birve, Sally Hildyard. Director: Tim Maddock. 251 Wakefield Street, March 4-8*

Jenny Kemp, The Black Sequin Dress, *composed by Elizabeth Drake, designed by Jacqueline Everitt. Performers: Mary Sitarenos, Margaret Mills, Natasha Herbert, Ian Scott, Greg Stone, Helen Herbertson. Scott Theatre, March 5-10*

Be very amazed

Leafing through the 1996 Fringe Festival program is a delirious experience:

There's the old hands (AmazingBobWeird LittleJimeoJonathanMorganDowne); fresh fringe hits (WA's Artrage have sent a busload, Melbourne acts include Judith Lucy, Black Rose "Melbourne's funniest band", *Desire* by Alex Brown, Snuff Puppets *Scary* which it *is);* there's a flock of a capellas and standups (hilarious, bent, anarchic, post-pc, Jewish, and 'of stature'); the ever-popular percussive ensembles (notably Wakaiki Ichiro Demon Drummers of Japan, Pablo Percusso, SA's own *Homebrew* and Cuba's hottest *Sierra Maestra).* No end of youth art ("high-energy, singing, dancing, uncensored, and operatic"); acres of naked flesh; ideas serious and satirical; there's blokey stuff (including the generic *A Man's Story* and *Blokes,* the Bunta Boys' *Happy as all Buggery,* Melbourne's Redrock Theatre in *Cock and Bull Story* and the more appealing for my money, *Men Who Knew Too Much).*

Blokey is countered by plenty of girlie stuff like Kelsey Voss's anti-road romance *Roadkill,* Penny Arcade's *Bad Reputation* ("an exploration of rape, sexual abuse, harassment and the failure of feminism to address the way modern women betray each other")—pack a lunch for that one—and the intriguingly titled (in a pack of punny-funny ones) *Leave My Hair Alone* by Chand Sherma.

There don't seem to be quite as many of the one-man, one-woman shows that used to hold 80's Fringe programs together. Same goes for busking and street theatre though there's still quite a bit (including Strange Fruit's *The Field,* Legs on the Wall's shopping show, *Clearance,* and an audience participation nightmare *Ladder Walk of Death* in which UK's Mark Segal walks his ladder with millimetres to spare over the prone body of a volunteer. Ideally, to be followed by Rudy Coby, the magician for people who hate magic.

There's a fair smattering of themes involving sex and still plenty of chocolate (among them *Margo goes to town* from the UK and *Human Chocolate* by SA's own Seething Physical Theatre and a larger number of mixed artform works *(Pieces of Time:* piano improvisations with text and vocals; and Fringe Underground) and multi-media works, among them *The Aviary* from multi-arts company F.A.D. Essensual Arts (spoken word, visual art and sound) and Secret's *Beyond the Door,* a series of Bunuellian stories by SA's Mad Love Inc.

This Fringe also boasts the largest gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual and performance artists assembled at an Australian arts festival. The program includes performances by Tjapukai Dance Theatre and contemporary dance/music performances by Sanguma Dance Company and Drum Drum from Papua New Guinea and Northern Territory.

There are new Australian plays, one-acts and playlets and Obie winners from the USA and interesting looking programs from Canada's Direct Call and full figure theatre companies. Hattie Hayridge, star of *Red Dwarf,* is coming. There are modern interpretations of Greek tragedy, new takes on Albee, cutup Shakespeare, a pinch of Po. Freud gets more than one mention and it wouldn't be a Fringe without a little bit of

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Zone Kronos

David Harrington speaks with Nicholas Gebhardt on the eve of the Kronos Quartet's Adelaide Festival performances

Kronos has become synonymous with shifting the ground of musical thought; less a quartet that simply reproduces work and much more a site of musical discussion, a zone that composers and musicians and producers and filmmakers pass through on their way somewhere else. Violinist David Harrington is adamant that Kronos is a process where ideas about the composition of sound in the twentieth century can take shape and emerge for the first time.

DH I want music that comes from the furthermost reaches inside the composers that write for us. I want a music where the composer's ears are almost turned inside out, listening inside to the sounds that no one can hear. And the reason I would want anyone to write a piece for us is because I would think that person had a certain ability to express evidence about what it is to be alive right now, that maybe no other person would be able to express. For me each of the major new pieces that is written for us becomes a challenge for the next work. For example, recently composer Tan Dun wrote a magnificent piece for us called *Ghost Opera*. Terry Riley heard this piece and said it was one of the best pieces he'd heard in 20 years. And I talked to Terry Riley and he's working on a new piece and you can sense that there is a dialogue going on between his experience of hearing Tan Dun's work and the relationship that we have, and now he knows we can do things he didn't know we could. It's that sense of a search for the next step. A lot of the people who are writing for us are very generous in that way. It's a good time. We're constantly thinking about what it means to be a musician in our time. For me that's changing almost every day, because possibilities seem to be expanding infinitely and in a way you have to be more selective. Because there's more to choose from. I'm pleased that the world of quartet music is so passionate and so interesting. I can't remember a time when as many fantastic and different points of view have been focusing on one medium.

NG Is it a general ferment in contemporary music, a shifting quality in the type of music being written, or is it specifically related to what Kronos is attempting to create?

DH We like to think of the composer as that person who brings the first contact with the experience that is notated. That person has been there first and heard at least part of it first. And that person can provide us with a great deal of evidence and information that we can bring to our work on that piece. For me, the tone of voice of the composer, mannerisms, so many things go into making our performance. And we use all those things and many more as the point of contact between Kronos and the composer we are working with.

NG Is the question of relationships central to the movement between the structures of these new works and the image of sound that comes from bringing disparate elements into conjunction?

DH Well, shortly after we did Steve Reich's *Different Trains* in 1989 we became a totally electric group and so now we travel with our own sound person. And working things out with the sound engineer has become a major part of many of our rehearsals and all of our concerts. And yet, the basic dynamic within the group is what it's always been. So I think bringing a range of unconnected things into the relationship is something we have been doing for seventeen years.

NG Some strange mutations are taking place in the music world. Is Kronos pivotal in marking out a new range of musical possibilities?

DH There is definitely something going on right now. At the moment there are fifty seven new pieces being written for the Kronos by composers from every part of the world. And I think that our new project, *Released,* represents music that is important for each of us in the group. There is a sense that in each case we are celebrating a relationship with a composer and with an audience. This is a way of expanding the reach of the quartet that will allow people to gain entrance to our world.

NG But how much of this expansion into new regions is simply driven by market demand and how much constitutes a real shift in musical thinking?

DH There was something very interesting that came out in the paper yesterday. The comedian Roseanne Barr has been prevented from performing at Carnegie Hall because the people that run Carnegie Hall were afraid that she might say something objectionable on stage. And my wife said to me, "Didn't you do *Howl* with Allen Ginsberg at Carnegie Hall?" Anything that Roseanne Barr would say has already been said and then some in *Howl.* Which is true. We played there a year and half ago and the reason I wanted *Howl* to debut at Carnegie Hall is because, firstly, it's one of the most panoramic visions of a country assembled by a poet and, secondly, for many years it was outlawed. And so I think it's safe to say that the group and most of the composers that are writing for us are very concerned about the inner workings of the music we're involved in, the symbolisms that are involved in musical experiences.

Doing the funky octopus

John Neylon previews the 1996 Adelaide Fringe Festival visual art program, 23 February-17 March

Previewing Adelaide Festival Fringe programs has always seemed like doing the Funky Octopus with fogged-up goggles and program coordinators whispering sweet everythings in your ear. So meet the new (1996) Fringe. Same as the old Fringe? Well, in its heart of hearts I think the spirit of 'let's ride into town and put on a show for the folks' tradition remains alive and well. There is the usual smattering of sensitive, personal odysseys and group-ins and if the 'new technology' component has transitioned from fax art to cyber snorting then the technology show-and-tell tradition lives on.

Despite this the 1996 Fringe has a fresh look to it, attributable in part to the Festival's relocation from the Lion Art Centre to Adelaide's East End and the participation of a significant number of Aboriginal communities from across Australia. At face value the program appears to be a relatively 'pomo' discourse-free zone and Fringeurs in need of some seriously anxious, ironic or abject experiences might need to slip into the Art Gallery's Adelaide Biennial or the Experimental Art Foundation Bookshop for a stiffener. Given Artists' Week's implosion, the three day Low Fat Forums may stifle a natural hunger for some art talk festing. But I imagine the intellectual dynamic of this visual art program will flow largely from informal exchanges between participating artists as they rub shoulders on the footpaths or eye each other off over short blacks.

A new look is evident in the complexity of programming. For Di Barrett, Coordinator of the Visual Arts Program, the coordination bit has meant in part tracking down and securing venues, matching artists with said venues (heavy political turf) and exercising creativity in scheduling in most venues; two of the programs straddling the Adelaide Festival period of 1-17 March. So the 1996 program, given the open access, no curators' culling policy, can be read as a sort of barometer of what's hot and who's hot to trot and comfortable with the DIY principle around Festival Fringe time. On this basis, Adelaide, in line with Fringe Director Barbara Allen's vision of a festival with a strong centre defining communities' senses of place within regions, is learning to relax in its role as sea-side rendezvous for ideas and traditions which blow in from suburbia, the interior or cyberia.

The East End of Adelaide becomes a cultural bazaar. The post-industrial Gerard Goodman Building (familiar to 1994 Adelaide Biennial visitors) will be back in harness (as the Inbarendi Gallery), along with the Eckersley Building (Fringe Gallery), and many and various alternative spaces, none more exotically labelled than The Nut Sundae Gallery (above the Banana Lounge) and the Ripening Room (basement of the Banana Lounge). Arterati in search of Ra Productions' *Embryonic Sensory Reconstruction* at the ETSA Gallery, *Stir Fry* at Tapas Bar or the *American Prints* at Anima Gallery will have the value-added experience of moseying through cappuccino canyons and across pasta prairies, drawn inexorably into the throbbing maw of the Fringe CBD.

But this cultural cauldron, like the program itself, bleeds pretty heavily at the edges. In visual programming terms it will catapult viewers into alternative, recycled art spaces, artists' homes, svelte commercial galleries and outdoor sites. Outer suburbia has a healthy presence. The *Port on the Fringe* program will be well worth the cruise down Port Road with incentives including *Perceptions, Distance,* an exhibition by country based South Australian artists presented in the S.A. Country Arts Trust's very stylish New Land Gallery. Like a long-distance view of the Port? Take it in from the Eagle on the Hill pub balcony as you head up to the Hills to see *Under the Shadow of Light* at the John Dunn Fine Arts Gallery.

Visual Arts Coordinator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts program, Lee-Ann Buckskin, can be well satisfied with the strong lineup (I counted at least twelve projects) in terms of its diversity and representation of communities from urban and outback South Australia and other states. It includes *Desart* (a rich, composite, art and craft offering from Central Australia); *"Kupa Piti" Kunga Tjuta* art and craft produced by a group of traditional women and men from Coober Pedy; *Ngarrindjeri Art,* a diversity of work from the Upper South East; fabric art from Ernabella; *Yalata Inspired* from the Yalata Aboriginal community, west of Ceduna in Far-West South Australia and *Tauondi,* The Aboriginal Community College at Port Adelaide presenting student works. Buckskin drew the program together but she admits that the commitment to be involved in the Fringe really flowed from the artists and their communities. As she points out, "Many of the groups work in relative isolation. Participating in the Fringe is seen as a fantastic opportunity to showcase work to large audiences and also to meet and exchange ideas with other artists, both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal".

Cyber-heads will be able to taste the tech and get some Hot Java licks at a number of computer-based presentations. The big word is Cyberfringe, an ambitious, interactive linkup between a Fringe Website (with its program and hot goss data base), lurking robotic cameras and 'third parties' who may be inspired to swarm a little. Lap top the night away!

What else? I tried grouping them: photography, textiles, the graduates, recyclers, totally green, hands on, mainstream, piping voices, pure country, designer dreamings, groupies, suburbia/sluburbia, the overseas contingent—in the course of which I discovered category '?' to accommodate such shows as *Half-Man, Half-Woman,* Donna Confetti (DepARTment of INDEPENDENT ERECTIONS and *Traversal* (The New Museum Of Serious Artists), which just goes to prove that some visual artists haven't forgotten how to do the Funky Fringe. My long distance (and goggles fogged) punts are going on *Solitary Spirit* (featuring the art work of prison inmates), The Fringe Group Solo Show (growing by the day) and the elegantly titled *Low Fat Forum,* a three day squeeze-in upstairs at Cafe Borghese, which may take us all back to where Artists' Week began.

John Neylon is an Adelaide-based art writer and researcher and regular art reviewer for The Adelaide Review.

Art, risk and rock

Peter Anderson at Brisbane's Livid Festival, November 25, 1995

In a way, even the idea of separate 'performance art' pieces at an event like the Livid Festival is a little bit out of whack. It's not as if there really needs to be something more than the performance of a twelve hour rock festival, with all the mass spectacle of thousands of people, the mixtures of sounds from six stages and around 40 music acts...not to mention the market and food stalls, the busy drink tents, and the inevitably impossible toilet queues. This is a context which has little room for planned nuances or small gestures, everything is dominated by the 'bigness' of rock performance.

However, the inclusion of performance and other art works in the Livid program is a relatively subtle move, a way of forcing a large audience to 'accidentally' experience art, and providing an opportunity for artists to confront a much larger audience than usual. But there are problems, not the least of which is the interaction of the art and this particular audience.

At events such as Livid there are moments of performance that seem primarily directed at generating 'colour and movement': clownish, face-painted, stilt-walking type of stuff, not unlike using flags and banners to 'animate' shopping centres. While stuff like this might be visible, it isn't clearly doing anything all that interesting—but who is it meant to interest? A specialised 'art crowd', or thousands of people more familiar with the conventions of rock music performance?

One strategy within this context is for performance artists to adjust to the circumstances, to become another 'act'. This would appear to be the route taken by Debacle's reprise of elements of their piece *Country Style Livers*. Turned into a hardcore music act with a few incongruous theatrical elements left hovering around the edges, Debacle put on a show that not only managed to compete with, but at times overshadow the band performing on the adjacent stage.

For some performances, such as Sidetrack's *The Measure,* there were major technical problems. Under these circumstances, it became difficult to disentangle the performance from the hesitant start and the attempts to solve the problem. The Sidetrack performers' complex movements within a grid of orange witches' hats, were also regularly intersected by 'viewers' treating the space as a zone to be infringed—most commonly in the form of piggy-back races. Notes on this performance in the Livid program indicated that "the seductive and ritualised tedium of this event alienates or draws the spectator into an intricately constructed game of obsession and intrigue". Perhaps, in this environment, some spectators were alienated and drawn into the game as new random participants.

This sort of 'interaction' runs the risk of becoming dangerous, as it seemed to be for George Pinn's *brightly coloured Lycra moving objects:* three performers in almost fluro Lycra tubes—blue, yellow & orange—with height extensions and polystyrene body attachments (to disguise their human form) were encountered by the crowd. Reactions ranged from lack of interest to touching, prodding and tripping the performers, as well as assault from a distance with thrown beer cans.

Fractal Theatre's *Bloodless,* built in its own stagy violence in a sort of *Mad Max II* meets butoh piece, concerning birth, death and tribalism. Under the circumstances, its operatic scale, pyrotechnics and giant gestures gave it a presence that stood up well in the arena. In the more subdued atmosphere of the Livid Lounge, Contact Youth Theatre's *Use By* mixed live performance with projected WWW interaction, a much less grand but no less successful theatre piece.

The ability for performance work to fit into the rock festival environment seems partly to be determined by either the scale of its spectacle, or its willingness to gesture towards existing conventions of rock music performance—in the post-ZOOTV environment, what sort of things work? Something that should have worked was *In Your face,* Craig Walsh & Jeremy Hynes' massive sculpted heads with live video projections and verbal assault on the crowd. But after an initial 'Wow, check this out' response, the crowd seemed to quickly lose interest, either heading off to find another beer, or calling for the next band. While this kind of work has the potential to find a more integrated place in the festival environment, like most of the performance work here, it seemed to have become trapped within the status of a not-very-welcome support act.

Be very amazed

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Berkoff. Two actors from Moscow's Russian Actors School (On An Empty Stomach) are doing O'Neil and Chekov. The Japanese acts are eclectic and include percussion, dance, mime-dance, sushi tasting and clothing art.

Fringe Live in the Park kicks off with a concert featuring The Badloves, Cruel Sea, Dave Cranney and the Coral Snakes, Tumbleweed, Monster Magnet and top South Australian bands Big Things Flying. The rest of the music program includes improvisations and local compositions from Acme New Music, four contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bands on the one bill *(Black in One)* an er-hu player from China, 12 Danes playing visual sound and comedy, The Finland Trio Toykeat and virtuoso bass player Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen in trio with Adam Nussbaum on drums and Ulf Wakenius on guitar.

Funny Business, an international comedy festival appropriately sponsored by the *Adelaide Advertiser* culminates in *The Final Sunday* when the un-funny acts are presumably lined up and shot in the glorious surroundings of Glen Ewin Estate.

The Fringe has literally taken over Adelaide's cosmopolitan East End and every other venue lying idle. Some are identified by number only. Annabel Giles is at Venue 64 (The Garage behind the Austral Hotel). They've even saved the Gerard Goodman building from demolition and turned it into a theatre for works by the likes of Sue-Ann Post *(Anyone Out There).* There's opera at the Wonderland Ballroom and in an intimate space amongst the original timber banana ripening rooms of the old Charlicks building is the Banana Lounge, cabaret-style setting for Paul Capsis *(Burning Sequins),* Maria Mamona *(Confessions of a Nun),* Brand X Theatre. There are poets on Popeye, a show at the Glen Osmond Silver Mine and performances at Adelaide Zoo. There's even a Fringe Underground.

Pick up your Official Guide and be amazed. Be very amazed. *VB*

Adelaide Fringe Festival, February 23-March 17
(08) 231 7760
e-mail: fringe@adelaide.dialix.oz.au
Cyberfringe: http://www.va.com.au/afringe/.

Looking for that M.I.D.A.S. touch

M. Billson on a new funding scheme for popular music

On October 30 last year, in a neat bit of grandstanding as part of the launching of the program for Australian Music Day (Saturday November 25th), the Federal Minister for Communications and the Arts, Michael Lee, announced funding to the tune of $500,000 for an investment loan program to operate exclusively in the contemporary music area. Modelled on the extremely successful Canadian FACTOR program, which has seen a ten year investment of $13 million in independent recordings instrumental in the early careers of such successful artists as k.d. lang, Loreena McKennitt, The Tea Party and even Celine Dion, the Music Industry Development Assistance Scheme (MIDAS) will make available funds to Australian owned labels, artists, managers and producers to help bolster the budgets and, thereby, the quality of recording. It will provide funds for increasing promotional capabilities and marketing including regional, interstate and international touring, with loans repaid by a small levy on each unit sold. As well, smaller grants will be made available for recording demonstration tapes by artists and songwriters.

I say there was a certain grandstanding involved because, as yet, the mechanics of the program haven't been worked out. Michael Lee threw down the gauntlet for the music industry to match the government contribution, and those groups—APRA, AMCOS and the other royalty and revenue gathering agencies—are still discussing exactly what they will contribute. More importantly, MIDAS's national advisory committee, the body of industry professionals and business people drawn from all sectors and states, who would select the successful applicants, has yet to be established. And just when the scheme actually goes 'on stream' is unclear, though it is ostensibly to be this year.

The man who has pushed hardest for MIDAS to happen is Dobe Newton, the ebullient frontman of local folk/rock band The Bushwackers, former head of the Victorian Rock Foundation and Acting Program Director for MIDAS, who learned of the Canadian FACTOR scheme a few years ago when touring that country with The Bushwhackers. He's been lobbying furiously to get things happening, as he explained from Canberra before taking the band off to Tamworth and the recording of a live album.

"MIDAS was set up specifically to try to overcome the difficulties of contemporary music fitting into existing grant subsidy programs within the Department of Communications and the Arts. It's an investment program. For the first couple of years of FACTOR everyone was still finding their way, but we're very lucky here to be coming on board with the example of Canada having already entered the field. I'd be reasonably confident that within eighteen months we'd have some pretty good data to be able to go back to investors with significant results."

As to the makeup of the national advisory committee, "If a national broadcaster—and I hope somebody will—comes on board and says, 'All right, we're going to put in half a million bucks', that organisation will be able to nominate somebody to the Board. There'll be music industry bodies and on the local level, panels that would include the local music industry association co-operating jointly with Ausmusic, through which MIDAS would be auspiced (though a completely different entity from Ausmusic). The National Board would be made up of a representative from each state and territory and another four or five people, likely to be drawn from the major supporters. Obviously the federal government would at least have observer status, but it would be up to each state government and the local industry association to work out who would be their representative".

Which all sounds terribly vague and bureaucratic, and all that can be hoped is that it doesn't all get bogged down in red tape as another government quango. It certainly won't be a case of peer assessment, which is bound to make the choices contentious if and when the scheme gets off the ground.

The range of support programs to be administered by MIDAS are as follows: a Professional Songwriters Demo Program; New Talent Demo Programs (both non-recouperable grants); On the Road Tour Support Program, working at State and National, International Showcase and International Tour Support Levels; International Marketing, including participation in international events; a Radio Syndication Program; Multimedia Grant Program; and Indigenous Marketing and Industry Business Development.

The Recording Loan Program comprises three elements—direct Board Approval, which is assistance to Australian-owned and controlled record labels with a proven track record operating nationally and internationally; MIDAS Loan Program, by which Australian-owned or controlled labels, production companies, producers, managers and artists with MIDAS-approved distribution can apply for funding for the production of professional recording intended for commercial release; and Independent Artists' Recording Loan, whereby funds are available for the production of independent releases by unsigned Australian artists without distribution, recording a minimum of five songs with an Australian producer, the recording to be commercially available.

"A program like MIDAS fills the gap," says Marcella McAdam, the head of Ausmusic NSW, "I know of three bands with good airplay, both commercial and community, touring pretty well, getting a lot of media coverage but who found themselves unable to follow up interest overseas, unable to capitalise on it with a tour or even a promotional interview tour because they physically didn't have the dollars to get across, one to Japan where they were charting, another to the UK. That's where the MIDAS On the Road Tour Support Program could facilitate an overseas tour."

The biggest problem with the scheme is that it is essentially commercially driven. Only artists and acts that are producing music that is seen to have strong commercial potential, acts preferably with an already proven track record, will receive loans. Once again those artists working at the edges of contemporary popular music, whether experimental, avant-garde, death metal or Gothic, will be marginalised, a shortcoming Dobe Newton readily admits.

"The loans for recording or international touring will actually be decided on the basis of commercial potential and nothing else. It would be at the smaller grants level that the more experimental artists would get some kind of support. Until such time as the scheme proves itself, we're really only realistically working with something in the vicinity of a million dollars, so there isn't a lot of money to spread around. This means the loans will have to support things that have the potential to at least earn that money back. Otherwise we end up with some really great product and no scheme."

Jazzwatch

If News Ltd's *The Australian* is to be believed in their roundup of the next six months in jazz there is nothing of much note to go and see and no one going to see it. Fortunately we know this to be nonsense with '96 looking so far every bit as exciting as '95 was.

A phenomenal lineup for the Perth festival sees a mixture of Jazz and World Beats being presented. ECM recording stars Dino Saluzzi from Argentina and Brazilian Egberto Gismonti are playing exclusively for the festival at this stage. Joining them from Cuba is one of the original mambo kings himself Tito Puente and his Latin Jazz Ensemble, Sierra Maestra, described by *Wire* magazine as "the essence of Cuban dance music". From Tanzania popular singer Remy Ongala and Orchestra Supermatimila play their wonderful mixture of Jit and Soukous. The master bass player Niels Henning Ørsted Pedersen and Trio are also in Perth. N H Ø P has been the first port of call for many touring US Jazz players while in Europe, working with such luminaries as Miles, Chet Baker, Lee Konitz, Oscar Peterson, Dexter Gordon...

The Adelaide Festival is also picking up Tito Puente, Remy Ongala and adding the virtuoso Cuban trumpet player Arturo Sandaval. Good as this is, it is not "seventeen days and nights of mind blowing, foot stomping, mouth screaming euphoria" as one press release put it. That a major arts festival with decent backing could not bring someone of the calibre of Bill Frisell or John Zorn is ridiculous. Nancy Sinatra (why not Frank) and Malcolm McLaren, who are also playing Adelaide, is just not good enough. (Nancy's cancelled. ed.) Complain loudly to Barrie Kosky and the Patron of the Festival, Her Majesty The Queen Mother (true).

Other tours of note are The Houdinis, Blue Note hard bop style from the Netherlands, and the excellent Finnish group Trio Toykeat.

Two regional NSW events of note are The Kiama Jazz Festival (Feb. 2, 9-11) and the Central Coast Jazz Festival March 1-10 centred around Terrigal (March 1-10), both of which put on a good mixture of traditional and mainstream jazz. Terrigal's appeal is unashamedly populist with James Morrison's Big Band, Doug Parkinson & the Brass Machine, Billy Field and the Bad Habits Band, Andrew Oh Band, Canberra School of Music Ensemble, Wanderlust; blues from Psycho Zydeco, the Mighty Reapers and the Foreday Riders. Jazz and computer music workshops and a jazz gospel church service are also offered.

Tours in the offing but yet to be confirmed are Kirk Lightsey in April, Sheila Jordan possibly in March and maybe another Telstra Jazz Festival in Sydney.

Ashley Russell

Perth Festival: NHØP, March1; Tito Peunte, March 2; Remy Ongala, March 3; Egberto Gismonti, March 4; Dino Saluzzi, March 5.

The Houdinis: Byron Bay Feb 8; Armidale Feb 9; Kiama Jazz Festival Feb 10; The Basement Jazz Club, Sydney Feb 11,12; Canberra Feb 13; Peter Gaudion's Jazz Lane, Melbourne Feb 14; Kalgoorlie Feb 15; Perth Feb 16,17; Geraldton, Feb 19.

Sierra Maestra: The Basement, Sydney 14 Feb; Festival of Perth (various venues) Feb 15-21; The Star Club, Adelaide Feb 24-25; The Continental, Melbourne Feb 29 & March 1; The Metro, Sydney March 2.

NHØP: Bass Note Club, Brisbane, Feb 24; Basement, Sydney Feb 25-26; Collins Street Baptist Church, Melbourne Feb 27; Peter Gaudion's Jazz Lane, Melbourne Feb 28; Festival of Perth March 1; St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide March 2; plus master classes in Sydney at the Basement Feb 26; Melbourne at Bennetts Lane Feb 28, Perth March 3.

Trio Toykeat: Harbourside Brasserie, Sydney March 6; Peter Gaudion's Jazz Lane, Melbourne, Mar 7-8; Armidale, Mar 9; Cafe de Lane, Sydney March 10; Kuranda, Queensland, Mar 12; The Bass Note Club, Brisbane Mar 13; Southern Cross Club, Canberra Mar 14; Jazz Club, Kiama Mar 15; St Peter's College, Adelaide Fringe Festival, Mar 16; Arts Centre, Kalgoorlie, March 17; Port Hedland Arts Centre W.A., Mar 18.

The composition of practice

A conversation between Ion Pearce and Nicholas Gebhardt

We kept missing each other. Or conversations would take place on the phone, on a street corner. Our interest in music is almost at the point where it is gone, at the point where it arrives so to speak. And yet, the same problems keep reappearing: in what way is the life of the musician a series of conceptual arrangements or events? At what point does the creative life pass into something else, become a question of response, of ethics, of a different political philosophy?

A discussion

One thinks of Shostakovich rediscovering Bach in 1950, wondering what could be done now that Stalin was dead. What little inventions were possible after so much that seemed impossible.

From these encounters a process of musical thinking begins to emerge, marking out the movement from instrumental praxis to musical thought. It wasn't even possible to get involved in border disputes, to find the time to make empty demands on the basis of identity. We couldn't even listen any more; well, not the kind of listening we were used to. There would be long silences of course, a type of continental drift between abstract and concrete elaborations that involved looking at particular artists' practice, their individual ways of problem solving as musicians. And the trip to Indonesia might have been an aside, we don't remember, couldn't even tell you who was around at the time; but suddenly there were all these facts, examples of genocide, repression, agitation, government treaties, the constitutional principle of *dwifungsi* (*dwifungsi:* the dual function of the military in Indonesian politics) all caught up in the practice of composition, entangled; a complex system of production that made it increasingly difficult to locate the work as it is in itself.

Performance in Indonesia

The ever present monitoring of artists and events within Indonesia seems to indicate two things: firstly, anxiety on the part of the status quo due to growing demands for civil liberties, combined with the impending issue of succession. Secondly, it points to the inherent political potential within some traditional and many contemporary art practices that are inseparable from the everyday practice of living and its concerns. These concerns include land reform, distribution of wealth, environmental issues and political freedom and...

Then we spent time amongst friends. Considering the things we might leave out? Or how to combine those elements that at first seem so mundane? To carry on a conversation in which nothing is ever the answer to a question the answer to which is always another question? A forced movement that produces only blocks of opinion, banal descriptions of childhood...

It is essential for me that the various elements don't just provide differing representations of the same material or ideas. It is possible to simply end up with an inert parody of the interdisciplinary, of the multicultural.

A work in progress—*Practice*
The Performance Space, 1995

Another statement of fact: whenever I'm working with material I try to analyse how it's working rhythmically in time, whether it is regular or irregular, collapsing or moving out, whether it is moving towards a super fast inert state or whether it becomes completely smooth. And inside all those categories of course there are ambiguities: whether one compositional stream can be seen as smooth or segmented.

I reply: it's easy to produce new sounds. It's difficult to make those sounds necessary to musical thought as it takes shape through an analysis of the modern state.

I've taken various musicians, principally a violinist, and got her to talk about her technique. I narrowed it down to a part of the instrumentalist's technique, the bowing action. And even then it went down to the actual connection between the fingers and the bow itself which I see as the critical point that could be applied to the body and tools and therefore could apply to other practices as well. I got her to talk about that connection and how she went about achieving its function. I tried not to represent her technique, her practicing technique, but take that again and reconstruct it into something that could work on another level.

Music and Politics

We are interested in music. In enabling a conversion (a conversation?) to take place between diverse assembled elements. And for each thread of the conversation (a conversion?) to push or pull the invention towards potential points of departure. Redundancy and repetition in a sense have become a pre-occupation.

What about the Timor Gap Treaty which the Australian Government signed with the Indonesian government right in the middle of the Gulf War at the same time as the foreign minister condemned the takeover of small states by larger states on the basis of resource exploitation?

Of course, it's naive to think you can represent the complexity of someone else's struggle. But you can find ways of applying or practicing certain forms of political analysis or critique.

I'm interested in the physical action, the technique of playing or a given technique. Because I was trained as a classical musician, that training was interesting not so much from a musical point of view, but more in terms of the effect of that type of training, the effects that it can produce. This got me interested in a whole lot of things, such as how musicians took their musical practice into other parts of their lives, how they were to make use of it.

The idea of practice carries with it certain regimes, certain expectations of rigour, of a disciplinary apparatus.

In creating a multi-disciplinary work, it is easy to set up this situation where you make connections between various modes and say, look, this actual figure moves across this break point into this other mode and once there it's taken and carried within another mode. This could be entertaining, but essentially banal, providing no movement outside an obsession with a praxis of integration and wholeness.

Art and Capitalism

To what degree is a modular structure endemic to a technocratic society in that everyone talks in modular terms where all codes are translatable into any other code? And to what degree is this image of art simply a replication of a deregulated global market?

The only way that I can talk about it, is as a problem that emerged with my performance *Practice*. Initially I had attempted to arrive at a model that could be translatable across different modes.

Which is ultimately what everyone wants to do with everything, in digital productions, in politics, through organisations like the European Union or the North American Free Trade Agreement where currencies and exchange become interchangeable.

I quickly abandoned that approach because what I ended up with is something that can only be described as useless. Basically the model that I thought was *Practice*, that operated in this imagined multi-disciplinary space, quickly became extremely uninteresting, flat, useless. So I changed tack and asked each performer to completely submerge themselves within their own particular practice and skills and take it to the nth degree. At this point of absolute saturation, I found that a whole other level of composition begins to arrive.

***discontinuous*, a performance installation, Solo, Indonesia, Sept '95**

To what extent have you brought about a collective or collaborative process as a musical and political concept that encompasses the potential for dissonance (and dissidence) as well?

Often work in Indonesia will be realised in the form of a subtext or using other performance guises such as street performance or multiple authorship to avoid stringent performance restrictions. The complexity of these inventions makes it difficult for a visiting artist to grasp what is being said and it is only by following the threads of an invention from rehearsals to event, to discussions, collaborations and the business of living (the performance event becomes minor) is it possible to grasp a very different form of arts practice. This continuous, rather than our more event-oriented idea of arts practice and the momentum that it generates has caused me to look at questions of 'stasis and momentum' within my own practice.

I was telling a friend about our discussion and she said, "It's a process of finding out what's necessary in your life, that's how you start to create a political life. Finding out what's necessary and what is not necessary is obviously very hard, but I think that it lies in an attention to the detail."

I really had to rethink my whole idea of cultural exchange. To me it was almost in some ways an impossible project. And because I've been involved in a number of festivals here and there, I've come to question this whole idea of exchange and exactly what is being exchanged. Again it's that same thing, if the notion of exchange comes through an accepted model of what exchange should be or how we should go about creating this text that we can all be a part of, basically the result is absolute suffocation. It drives me to distraction and...

CD Reviews

Kuchinoha
performed by Makigami Koichi
TZADIK CD tz 7208
Australian distribution: Birdland 02 299 8527
TZADIK is a thrilling new CD series of recent and significant archival works with composer-musician John Zorn at the helm as executive producer. Artists include Alvin Curran, Harry Partch, Ikue Mori, Fred Frith, Yuki Takahashi and Derek Bailey. If you caught ABC TV's under-promoted *Improvisation* series recently (and already being repeated), you would have been lucky enough to see Zorn, Bailey and others at work. Particularly appealing in the TZADIK catalogue are the Radical Jewish Culture and New Japan Series. At some 43 minutes, *Kuchinoha,* the first of my TZADIK experiences, would appear an a ungenerously short CD but it's rich and rewarding performance from Japanese vocal artist Makigami Koichi (leader of underground band Hikashu) unaided, as the blurb says, by effects, overdubs and edits, There are barely any words in the performance, instead a brisk stream of solo voices, angry, whimsical, theatrical (vis a vis Noh, Kabuki), cinematic, animal, lyrical, elated, angry and suffering, with snatches of popular and traditional Japanese song and Tuvan throat singing, which the performer learnt in Mongolia. It's intense, even exhausting listening, sometimes like a Three Stooges soundtrack, often witty and moving. (Adelaide Festival's *The Singing Map* features Shu-de, throat singers of Tuva.) KG

John Surman
A Biography of the Rev. Absalom Dawe
ECM 1528
An archaeological music; melodies poised in the crack between two kinds of light, two kinds of texture; landscapes that drift and curl, gathering around points of near silence. John Surman is an English woodwind player whose improvisations on soprano and baritone saxophones, alto and bass clarinets, as well as keyboards, operate along the line of folk song, medieval drones and religious chants. The history of solo woodwind improvisations has mostly been bound to the work of jazz players like Albert Ayler or Marion Brown, and it resided in their ability to push the instruments to the nth degree, finding extremes of timbre, of volume, expanding the role of overtones and multi-tones pioneered by Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane. Using multi-tracking, Surman folds the various woodwind textures through a series of melodic layers that let the sweet, melancholy sound of his playing emerge from the pulse of his breath and the movement of the keys. It's part of a general shift in musical thinking centred on a lot of ECM artists that marks out an intensified tonality, that finds its movement in subtle shadings, in minuscule rhythmic divergences and slight dissonances. NG

Paul Grabowsky Trio
When Words Fail
Origin OR010
Paul Grabowsky is staking out a formidable pianistic and compositional territory. His control of both the vertical and horizontal planes indicates a presence that is rebuilding the force of improvised music across a range of musical fields. The distinctions between melodic lines, harmonic movement and rhythmic structure continually transform the very process which they are meant to determine, as though each formal element is bound to become something else, to alter the process by which it takes its place in the trio. The relationship between the three timbral forces, drums, bass and piano, provides a conventional combination from which to rebuild the idea of a trio. In this sense, Grabowsky's approach is more an invention of a complex collective musical thinking (something which is also apparent in the work of the Australian Art Orchestra) rather than simply the site of an egotistic display of technique that a lot of improvised work becomes. NG

Australian Art Orchestra
Ringing The Bell Backwards
Origin OR008
Based on songs by Edith Piaf, some German pop songs and two songs of the Holocaust, this other Paul Grabowsky project takes over the history of the big band and subjects it to all kinds of textural and structural treatment. This is very much a late 20th century project, imbued with the spirit of fragmentation, of memory compiled and reconditioned as the sign of a world history, of a global economy that can incorporate or combine any number of elements to produce variations, modifications and dislocations in its structural imperatives; an aesthetics of deregulation that moves across the frayed edges between Duke Ellington and Irving Berlin, between dance music and the dense orchestral complexes of Stravinsky, Bartok and Messiaen. These compositions operate along a series of migrational paths and attempt a post-colonial collectivisation that make musical irony and pathos its two defining poles ultimately passing into each other. There are problems: in Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, there are times when the rigorous dissection (and often dissolution) of form seems to cave in on itself; the irony is reduced to the technical mastery of styles, the pathos a wringing of hands, and the force of the instrumental playing only ever demonstrates the versatility of the musicians, never exceeding their claims to an individual voice. It is a type of functionalism that undermines the compositional plane that Grabowsky sets out to create. *Unter Dayne Vayse Stern* is striking for its dirge-like quality that builds line upon line only to collapse in on itself; *Immortal.Invisible* combines fragments, bursts of expressionism, fragrances, little dance-like figurines, into a type of 'chaosmosis.' NG

David Lumsdaine
Cambewarra Mountain
Tall Poppies TP083
Soundscapes are peculiar phenomena; either they act as a kind of preservational form into which composers can pour all their ecological ramblings about the depletion of natural resources and the need to create zones of sound that maintain a pure form of 'nature,' a kind of controlled natural environment; or they sustain a suspect spiritualism that also uses the full force of a technocratic culture (with all its analogical and digital power) to argue for a pristine natural environment freed from culture; or, like the work of Rik Rue, they attempt to work with the conjunction of microphony and 'found sound' and actively take up the question of composition in relation to various meteorological forces; forces that function as textures and timbral elements within quite formal compositional structures. Lumsdaine's recordings are of a high quality and attempt to produce an accurate natural history of a given area. That the actual recording of the particular 'soundscape' is entirely predetermined by the capacity to render that landscape as a sound object means that the claims for 'nature' are framed by the technological potentiality of a global military-industrial complex that has gone entirely digital. Lumsdaine's soundscapes remind us of the degree to which the image of life (and land) is bound to the assumption of technological transparency where all forms and events are encoded as signs of the technological transcendence of an informatic world order. Lumsdaine's inability to deal with the history of recording at either a conceptual or compositional level imparts an ideological naivete that leaves one wondering what distinguishes this from the myriad sound effects CDs currently available. NG

Sound Traffic Control 2CD Compilation
Swarm of Drones
Sombient 0953
Drawing on all the forces of minimalism, trance music, algorithmic and screen based composition, of acousmatic work in general, this compilation arches its way along the edges of dissonance, flirting with the technocrats, yet all the time refusing the encompassing effect of most ambient music. These are sound works built from subtle shadings, eaves and slight overhangs; a whole geometry of sounds that continually form and reform around multiple perspectives, across different sonic fields. Some of the pieces, like Steve Roach's *Shard 1*, or Janis Mattox's *Soli Deo Gloria* creep and slip through different levels of disappearance, colliding with the influx of noise into music through aleatoric processes and sampling. Other works, like Ned Bouhalassa's *Move 1* creates a strange series of textural transformations: an incessant buzzing that seems caught in its own circularity that suddenly becomes trapped inside a metallic cross current, a sound field populated by a crowd of sampled species. This is a vast collection that reorders the image of sound emerging from screen-based sound and compositional processes around a series of variable durations that undulate and fluctuate; miniature pulsars marking out the limits of space. Available through MDS. NG

Double trouble or twice the fun?

A distinctive seminar to be held during the Adelaide Festival investigates the librettist-composer relationship in new Australian opera

A notable group of Australian opera makers will gather in Adelaide during the 1996 Festival to explore the librettist-composer relationship. A significant number of these artists will be speaking together, reflecting on their joint experiences: Alan John and Dennis Watkins *(The Eighth Wonder)*, Julianne Schultz and Andrew Schultz *(Black River)*, and Douglas Horton and David Chesworth *(Lacuna, The Two Executioners)*. Larry Sitsky will reflect on the many operas he created with the late Gwen Harwood. Richard Meale will speak about his working relationship with David Malouf *(Voss* and *Mer de Glace)*, and Richard Mills will present his own and Peter Goldsworthy's papers on the creation of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, to be premiered later this year in Melbourne.

Other new works will be anticipated by their creators. These include Judith Rodriguez and Moya Henderson's *Lindy*, Amanda Stewart and Colin Bright's *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*, and Gillian Rubinstein and Ian McDonald's *Ash Wednesday*.

Conductor Roland Peelman, director Barrie Kosky, singer Lyndon Terracini, Australian Opera dramaturg Anthony Ernst, IHOS Opera's Constantine Koukias, librettists Tom Shapcott and Andrew Taylor, composer-librettists Martin Friedl and Brian Howard, composer-producer Richard Vella, music theatre composers Cathie O'Sullivan and John Shortis will bring into focus the varying forces that influence the librettist-composer relationship. Lunch-time speakers are Douglas Horton, artistic director of Melbourne's Chamber Made Opera Company, reviewing the state of the art, and Michael Halliwell on the challenges and pitfalls of literary adaptations—still a major source of operatic creation.

The librettist-composer relationship has had a long, rich and problematic history. The high drama of these creative associations is not likely to pass—the collaboration of artists from very different spheres of experience and training is more often than not likely to be difficult, even volatile. This has been as much a symptom of the creation of opera in Australia as elsewhere.

Many new works are being created in Australia. Creative relationships are being put to the test. Many questions are being raised about collaboration, dramaturgy, pre-requisite experience, commissioning procedures, the status of each of the partners in decision-making at various stages, and the influence on the words and music of the other artists who realise the finished opera.

While this seminar is primarily for practising and emerging writers and composers of operas, it will be fascinating for others thinking of entering this challenging realm and for artists and producers already engaged in opera and music theatre.

The seminar is an initiative of the Performing Arts and Literature Boards of the Australia Council who thought it timely to offer composers, librettists and others the opportunity in a public seminar, during the 1996 Adelaide Festival, to explore the nature of a significant creative partnership through analysis, anecdote and example.

Artists will distil their opera and music theatre experiences and demonstrate the issues with audio and video excerpts from recent and forthcoming works. A plenary session will discuss possible recommendations to the field about the state of the librettist-composer relationship and the specific needs that should be addressed. *RT*

words & music, the librettist-composer relationship, *a one day seminar, Saturday March 9, 9.00-6.00pm. Tickets at door: $20, $10 concession, includes light lunch, morning and afternoon teas. The Meeting Hall, Entrance Off Pirie St, to rear of Adelaide Town Hall.*

Registration forms for those wanting to book ahead are available from: Open City, ph/fax 02 332 4549 e-mail opcit@real.com.au

Book Review

John Clare/Gail Brennan
Bodgie Dada and The Cult Of Cool
UNSW Press 1995, $39.95

John Clare wrote jazz criticism for the *Sydney Morning Herald* under the pseudonym Gail Brennan—hence the bizarre twin authorship of this book. As might be expected, *Bodgie Dada* is an idiosyncratic profile of Australian jazz since 1945. It is a brazenly subjective account, based on the author's experiences, memories, and interviews with key participants over the decades. At the very least, Clare's book is full of remarkable incidents, keen reminiscences, and a gallery of oddball characters: required reading for the lover of Australian jazz, or even the mildly curious.

1940s eccentrics named The Bird, The Fowl and The Owl, dragging fish down George Street on a piece of string; 1950s bodgies; 1960s hippies playing free jazz surrounded by clockwork toys, floating ping-pong balls and chooks that may or may not be hidden inside the piano...there is no shortage of the absurd, the irrational and the downright fanciful. The stories and descriptions of these neo-dadaists represent the strength of the book; Clare succeeds in his aim to "recreate some of the atmosphere" of this period of Australian jazz. In particular the Kings Cross jazz scene of the 50s and 60s is marvellously evoked.

However, the anecdotal nature of *Bodgie Dada* is also its main weakness. The links between Dada, an avant-garde modernism of the early twentieth century, and succeeding phases of jazz from bebop to freeform, are implied by Clare more than they are argued. There is no sustained assertion of such a continuity; the idea gets buried under the weight of anecdotes. By the time we get to the 80s, the notion seems to have fizzled out altogether, and the end sections of the book, while exceptionally well-informed, are surprisingly sketchy.

It's a fascinating book overall, as if it really is written by two people. It has numerous admirable qualities: the explanations of jazz movements such as bebop and cool; the detailed descriptions of how Australian musicians reacted to these trends; discussion of jazz versus rock aesthetics; the emergence of 'world music' in jazz. These sections are all succinct and informative. Clare's passionate praise for several contemporary musicians, while evangelical at times, bespeaks his generosity as a critic.

But then there's the down side of the equation: is it the Clare in Brennan or the Brennan in Clare? Parts of the book are decidedly parochial, and of little interest to those outside Kings Cross or, at one point, Glebe. *Bodgie Dada...* has little to say of jazz outside Sydney: perhaps Clare should have settled for an insider's guide to Kings Cross jazz from the 50s onwards. As well, the subjective nature of Clare's style becomes overbearing at times, lurching into solipsism. A section on the 70s, with Clare as performer, is markedly less interesting than the account of El Rocco in the 60s. There are also assorted diatribes and point-scoring scattered throughout the book which should have been edited.

An extraordinary book in many ways, certainly worthwhile for the richness of its descriptions, and as Clare points out in another context, even those who don't agree with him will now have something to react against. *Bodgie Dada and the Cult Of Cool* is very like the free form jazz which the author champions: unpredictable, haphazard, with fleeting moments of excitement—yet lacking in the more classical virtues of structure and rigour. JP

Rare pleasures

Anthony Kennard details the program and his vision for the Ballarat Opera Festival

Anthony Kennard is a vigorous champion of rarely performed but significant operas and of young Australian talent. The Ballarat Opera Festival looks set to make its mark with Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame (1902)*, Villa Lobos' *Magdalena (1948)*, a program of the 'unknown Cole Porter', a set of choral works, a recital by Eileen Hannan, and a fringe performance of Mozart's *Cosi Fan Tutti* by the young Opera Renaissance company. The festival plays from March 29 to April 7.

Clever programming that includes the Easter weekend means that each of the major works can be seen on one day and another performance of each can be added to the festival's schedule if ticket sales require. Kennard says, "We thought if we can get people to Ballarat, we can give them lots of things to enjoy".

Eileen Hannan will present "a very personal recital of lieder and arias that mean a lot to her. She's moving back to Australia part-time and she wants to perform especially in country areas and offer young singers master classes. In her recital she wants to introduce each of the items herself. So it'll be very intimate. She is one of those great performers. There are a handful of performances that are seared into my memory and Eileen takes pride of place for her *The Turn of the Screw*. It's a performance I can bring to mind in minute detail".

As with the inclusion of Brazilian Villa-Lobos' *Magdalena*, a curious but rich cross between opera and the musical, the presence of Cole Porter on the program "has raised a few eyebrows. As far as I'm concerned Cole Porter was definitely the master craftsman and one of the great songwriters of all time. You immediately think of *opera comique*. Rossini would have probably written for Broadway a couple of centuries later. There's a lot for opera to learn from Porter.

"*Perfectly Porter* was showcased early last year at Melbourne's The Gasworks. It was put together by Brenda Clarke after a visit to the Cole Porter archives. She came up with a lot of material which hasn't seen the light of day, either at all or for a long time, including songs from *Fifty Million Frenchmen*. Funnily enough Evans Haile, the conductor who's here to do *Magdelana*—he revived that after 40 years—actually did a recording of *Fifty Million Frenchmen*. After this very big Broadway show with 75 performers closed, it didn't survive the Depression and disappeared. But all the material turned up at the Thames Whitmark office in New York in the 60s, stamped to suggest that it had been in Australia in the years in between. Somebody out here, we don't know who, had been thinking of doing it.

"The songs in *Perfectly Porter* aren't familiar and reveal new aspects of Cole Porter. They're mainly numbers that have been dropped from shows because they didn't fit in or they were suppressed because they were thought to be a bit too risqué. When you hear some of the lyrics, you can understand why.

"*Magdalena* is another Broadway work and is already creating a great deal of interest. This is only its second stage performance. When it closed on Broadway in 1949 there'd been a very lengthy strike in the recording studios, so it was never recorded and the score was never published. We're actually working with handwritten scores. The reviewers stumbled over themselves trying to find superlatives even though they couldn't actually figure out what it was. They didn't know whether to call it a musical or an opera.

"It was actually written for the Los Angeles and San Francisco Light Opera Companies. They did a season in each of those cities and then they did Broadway for about three months. Although it's very Latin, the music is very operatic. In 1987 Evans Haile was looking for something to do for the Villa Lobos Centenary and tracked down *Magdalena* for a concert performance of it in New Haven, I think, and then repeated it at The Lincoln Centre. That got rave reviews. CBS then recorded it. At last it was on record and now on CD—as an import. Evans Haile is conducting this performance and David Chisholm, a young director is taking on his first big show. It's a real hybrid with operatic music in a musical format with dancing—but not Broadway dancing."

Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* is a very different work, one that Kennard describes as cerebral, a miracle play in which an impoverished juggler is taken into a monastery, after trying to earn a crust by singing dirty ditties for the locals. He deplores his lack of the skills the monks display in writing and painting, but in an act of adoration juggles before a statue of the virgin and child. He has a seizure and as he's dying, the statue opens its arms and celestial voices start up offstage. Kennard observes, "Of course, the director has to handle this very carefully. Antonio Preto is directing, another young director. This is the whole point of the festival, to give the next generation a go.

"It's being conducted by a young conductor, Jennifer Turner. While the rest of the world has Simone Young, we, for the moment, have Jennifer Turner. She's very talented. Michael Terry is singing the juggler. This is Michael's first huge role. He has at least half the opera all to himself. And at the moment, of course, he's also learning how to juggle.

"*Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* dropped out of the repertoire completely in the early 50s. The music is sublime, an adjective which I suppose you could use for a miracle work."

Kennard's support for young talent extends to Australian opera: "From 1997 we're going to introduce an Australian work each year. I'm looking to commission a new work for next year".

Opera fans tempted to the Adelaide Festival by the once in a lifetime opportunity to see the South Australian Opera perform Gershwin's *Blue Monday* and Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, will doubtless be tempted east to Ballarat to see even more fascinating works well outside the largely repetitious cycle of familiar greats trotted out by the AO and VSO. Ballarat once before glimmered as a significant alternative to the big companies and now looks set to provide a continuous beacon for committed opera and music theatre fans with a popular, intensive, live-in festival. *KG*

For the thinking dancer

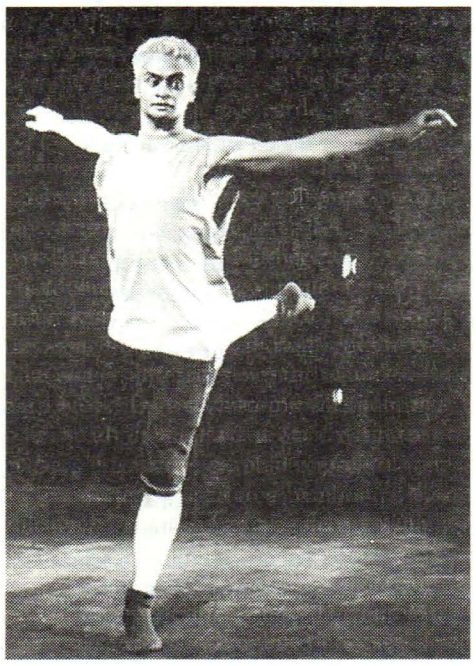
Rachel Fensham and Sarah Miller reflect on Week 3 of *Dancers are space eaters* at Perth's PICA

In the context of 'theatre', dance and movement-based performance have typically been understood, and often practiced, as anti-intellectual and under-theorised. Similarly, dancers have been seen as bodies without minds, having a sort of animal vitality, having a certain commodity value in the market place, but incapable of intellectual rigour or analytical discussion and oblivious to the shifts in interrogative thought in other art forms which may or may not have implications for their own practice.

Hence *Dancers are space eaters: directions in independent dance,* a three week program which sought to create a context in which information could be shared, 'intelligence gathered', the theatrical deployed and the hierarchy between dance and other body-centred practices examined. Week 1 presented the touring program, *4 on the Floor* curated by The Performance Space, Sydney. Week 2 comprised four movement workshops focussing on differing approaches to performance. Week 3 consisted of forums, performances, papers and screenings, bringing together self-producing artists from Perth, Melbourne and Sydney.

Generally speaking, what the final week demonstrated was the vitality of so-called 'independent' artists—a much debated and closely interrogated term—whose practice would seem to offer not only new physical but also new intellectual challenges; and to suggest just how far the term 'dance' might be stretched to encompass myriad practices and concerns.

Beginning this final week was the forum, *Don't Stop at Movement, Part One.* Tony Osborne reflected on definitions of independent dance, government policies and funding priorities—don't stop at movement; don't stop movement. Nikki Heywood spoke to the issues of performing inside a body that is aging, decaying, that recognises its own mortality. Chris Ryan's extraordinary



Setefano Tele in *Untitled Solo for Male Dancer*
Stephen Smith

video, *Get over it; get on with it; get fucked* and accompanying paper addressed many issues pertaining to performance, sexuality and gender, censorship and life with intelligence, poignancy and compassion.

Following this were Jon Burtt's witty choreography performed by Setefano Tele, which moved from self parody to an hilarious (embodied) commentary on the naff earnestness of much contact and release based dance; the muscular grace of Richard Talonga's *That Woman;* Sue Peacock's choreography for live performance and video; and Chris Ryan and Dean Walsh demonstrating, as is their wont, *Theatrical Abuse and Other Cheap Tricks.*

Another session devoted to performance encompassed the sparse postmodernism of Shelley Lasica and Sandra Parker, Rakini's classical Indian dance—mutating into a cross cultural hybrid—and the elasticity of Olivia Miller's *Wax.*

In her paper, *Smart Moves & Dumb Shifts,* Jane Goodall invited dancers to stop going somewhere and just flounder. The body is understood, she says, as a series of networks renegotiating movement as a process of intelligence gathering, dance that moves away from species specificity to that of the hybrid.

Lullaby by Alice Cummins is a lament of return sharpened by protuberant bones and the welcoming of internal movements of yearning, a body that showed its familiarity to stillness and yielded to the pulse of its need for location.

Bizircus performed *Where There's Smoke :* fire caressing arms, fire in motion, wheeling in darkness, juggling fire and spinning flames, smoke and the intoxicating smell of kerosene. The body became monstrous, spawning three headed hydras, with a woman, a human torch on top, spinning a flaming hoola hoop against her naked midriff.

In *Jean/Lucretia* by Nikki Heywood, the silhouette of gnarled branches preceded the performer's entry into the shadowy space, anticipating the knotting of the grandmother's body. A limb is twisted, the trunk bends and in the crushing defeat a gardener's soul is broken. Heywood's bitter sweet singing of *The Rape of Lucretia* became an elegy for the thwarted growth and neglect of an ordinary woman.

In *We'd,* performed by Chris Ryan and Dean Walsh, a virtuous woman enacted her sad parody of drag, naked in white heels or sheathed in solemn dress but begging for attention. Her whoring was underscored by the litany of voices from the labels offered in silence from a seated and blindfolded performer. He lifted cards from the table to complete words, all of which began with 're'—'reinterpret' or perhaps 'reindeer'. The one removed the other bodily from the space.

The program note for *Tricia ... case study* by Bill Handley read, "After 18 years of confinement within a concrete enclosure, Tricia the elephant had to learn how to walk again". This work is a dancer's parable with disintegrating wheelchair. His patient observation of the dynamics of flex, boot, ball, broken frame and wheel revealed a tender love of the banal, and the awkward angle of the head and the little rhythms of the feet touched a nerve.

Tony Osborne arrived gruesomely with stockinged head only to become a glittering cabaret entertainer who told racist and sexist jokes that caught out the unwary while others squirmed. His interventions with the audience's displeasure were unexpected and provocative.

In *Closet:* Paul Schembri's attention to a channel of light marked the closet in the space. The stretch of the leg and gentle pull and reverberation of the arm against the body were container and refuge but also exit and escape.

Don't Stop at Movement, Part 2 exhilaratingly broke through the isolation of dancers and encouraged them to reflect beyond their experience in order to talk about wider issues in performance. Shelley Lasica reflected, "My memory erupts through the holes in my body" so that for her, dancing is a template. Jim Hughes, wondering where movement comes from, said, "Don't stop at movement; don't start at movement". Alice Cummins spoke of working in ways that feel related, responsible and relevant. "My body is familiar to me. Is my body familiar to you?" Jon Burtt, on the rebound from the vertical structures of dance companies, questioned the silent space of the dancer in which one person making the work does all the talking and the person doing all the work does all the steps.

The final forum rather stuck on the politics of the audience, the breaking down of barriers between different groups of dancers, and the necessity for more talk. And why weren't there any members of the existing dance companies there, the students or graduating students of the dance institutions, or the more general public? But then in any city in Australia, a crowd of thirty on a Sunday afternoon after a glut of fine performances, debating the future of dance would be a good wrap up.

Dancers are space eaters, *Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, November 22-26, 1995, curated by Sarah Miller.*

The space takes care of me

In her occasional series on dance studio practices Rachel Fensham interviews Perth's Alice Cummins

Alice Cummins, a Perth independent dancer, has a studio in the heart of Northbridge, Perth, from which she teaches and develops performance projects. Not only a teaching space, it nurtures a creative community of other artists and city people. Last year she began studying with Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen at the School for Body-Mind Centering in the U.S.

RF When did you first begin to work in this space?

AC Five years ago. I was doing a project which could support me financially and I had already given a series of workshops attended by about 80 women. The studio enabled me to continue my practice and the community classes so they run together, or in parallel. It is a privilege to have a studio and I always have to finance it with other teaching.

RF Describe the studio.

AC It is both light and airy, connected not only to the city and the railway line but to an older and mixed Perth skyline. And the old man opposite always has flowers on his window sill.

It's near good public transport, and some people cycle from inner city areas. It is fantastic to have close access to PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts), for me personally, and increasingly, for my students. It is near the cafes and drinks on the hotel balcony after Friday night's class is a time of rich sharing.

RF Because of the spillover into other networks the class doesn't seem to end.

AC Another artist Tony Osborne, my partner, shares the studio, and we sometimes feel we are creating a community. Young students I have taught over the years in other places come here and then go on to do work for Artrage and PICA. They set up a lively dialogue with me and the diverse people they meet in the studio.

Now people are starting to work together independently of me, and my long absence this year encouraged one group to hire the space and meet on a weekly basis. I think of it as "naming oneself as an artist". I am not a little proud that this space which I helped to discover has encouraged people.

RF What about your classes ?

AC I try to offer three a week. On Monday evening alignment and locomotion followed by a separate session of contact improvisation. And on Fridays improvisation and performance. I borrowed the structure of this class from Al Wunder and Lynden Nichols in Melbourne. Positive feedback allows people to discover their own movement by working from their strength. If they are confident with vocal work they can move into other things later. One visual artist came who was terrified but she had the desire to move. Each student has a private session, in which we can focus on what I have been seeing or what they choose to work on. All I needed to say to her was "your desire equals your fear" and she has never looked back. She teaches painting at the TAFE and has also been a street performer and done performance pieces. She says her body was really missing in her work and I am sure movement will influence her painting.

RF What other activities happen in the studio?

AC I have been able to use the studio for projects, such as an Art in Working Life project and the *Big Foot Dance Project* with Ran Dan Club. In 1994 we brought Llewelyn Wishart from Melbourne to give Body-Mind Centering workshops. During *Space Eaters* Chris Ryan and I taught here and while I was overseas, Independent New Choreographers hired the space for six weeks. This not only helped me to keep the studio, but it can also be liberating for emerging choreographers to work in a non-institutional space which offers other ways of seeing.

Two years ago I taught a summer intensive which was very popular. People love to be able to use their bodies every day and they also enable me to develop as a teacher. I have also offered women-only classes and I would like to teach a 'Dancing with Women over 40' course like Deborah Hay in the States. It becomes a question of how many personal resources I have left after other projects.

I don't want to teach from a place of exhaustion, I want to teach from a place of fullness. The rewards are much greater. If I drag my body through the teaching practice, then I teach 'the exhausted body', even if as a dancer I can camouflage it.

RF Most people probably never acknowledge they are teaching strain and effort.

AC Instead of playfulness, openness. Strangely, this recent performance work I did has an enormous amount of tension, but I could do it because my personal philosophy is to not teach from a stressed place. It allows more humour to come through. I can attribute that to lots of things, such as my family growing up or that I don't teach here every day, just to make a living.

From the day I took this studio, it seems the different parts of my work have been inclusive of one another. My performance work informs my workshops and vice versa.

RF So has your art-making changed?

AC My life as an artist in Perth has sometimes been extremely lonely. But I know that other artists, different artists, make your life less lonely. The last five years for me have been filled with great professional friendships, with writers, visual artists, photographers, composers. I have worked with them, taught for them, we've set up a dialogue and we discuss our work, and it provides a richer dimension to my creative processes. It has also satisfied the intellectual curiosity I have about dancing, which I haven't had from the dance world.

Looking at being looked at dancing

Graeme Watson explains to Eleanor Brickill the ideas and processes behind *The Antwatchers* for the One Extra Dance Company

GW I've often thought about the notion of surveillance and how it establishes criteria for 'normal' behaviour. Anything breaking from normality is questioned, maybe disciplined or punished. Surveillance can be used as a protective device but there's also a predatory aspect, and there's the pleasure in looking as well. We enjoy watching a baby grow, protecting that child as it develops. A child's curiosity might lead to unacceptable behaviour followed by a chastising, but you could be chastising them over a lot of nonsense.

EB You're talking about a kind of behavioural web or shell whereby somebody's power to watch another person might limit their experience too severely?

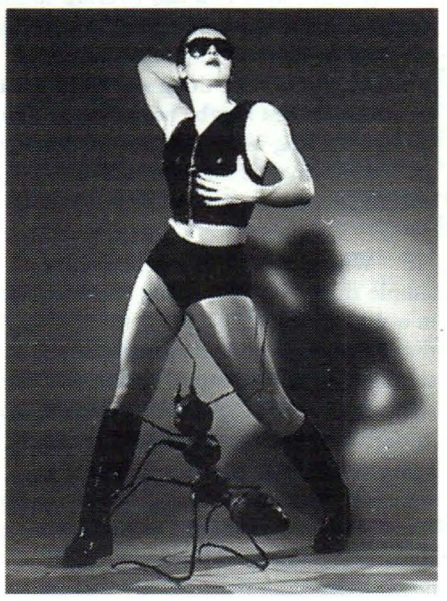
GW That surveillance disconnects us from our senses and they become as if fossilised. We can't fully explore them and our behaviour alters. Sometimes I feel when I'm trying to make dance, that the dancing body itself has become fossilised.

EB Is it only an issue of the sense of sight?

GW The most difficult sense for the dancers in *Antwatchers* to work with was smell as a form of surveillance and protection and territoriality. It carries such huge memories of both good and bad behaviour. As they explored ideas of self-surveillance through smell, it started to look the same as self-surveillance with the eyes.

EB Connecting the senses?

GW In public spaces, there's a certain privacy in, say, walking down the street in a crowd. As an individual you don't feel totally revealed. But now there are cameras up on the buildings and people accept that intrusion.



Felice Burns *The Ant Watchers* Sally Tsoutas

EB But it can be very personal even in a crowd: passing a busker, say, who's playing something with a rhythm that you can't avoid walking to. You think the busker's watching you do it, because inviting that response is one thing that buskers occasionally do. Suddenly it's intrusive. A camera on a wall isn't like that.

GW A camera can "steal" your image because you're not aware of it. But if a busker does it, that's like kleptomania. Surveillance has become insidious in our lives. Dance itself has become increasingly market driven: surveillance of the type of material you create. If it fits within the prescribed image then you're fine. If you depart from it, challenge the criteria set up, you feel like the right for your body to have an imagination is being questioned, that it's suspect, or perverse.

So we're basing the work very deliberately on the idea of morphing movement. How do you establish something that's public, and then how do you discreetly morph it so that the surveillance system can't identify it any more?

EB You mean that change from one thing to another is not able to be tracked?

GW Yes, you can't track a human image morphing into being an ant because attached to that human image are all these behavioural criteria. And an ant doesn't behave like a human being.

EB The paradigm's changed?

GW Yes, but rather than using video-image-making, I've turned back to the body and its extraordinarily rich imagination. In one exercise we looked at the idea of shifting scale, how an ant moves through space, its speed, its definition of time. We define the ant by our sense of time. If you were to bring it up to human scale, it would be four times the size of a cheetah and be able to travel at the speed of a cheetah. The dancers tried to morph their human movement into ant time.

Also, if you look at ant motion, really you're just looking at the top of it. To examine it you might have to get down to the ant's level, still maintaining the visual scale. However, if you bring in some technology like a magnifying glass you can see more detail and so forth, but in doing that you start to separate that individual from the larger picture. You might see someone behaving in a particular way, and surveillance says, well look, this is not normal, or this doesn't meet the criteria, but that's looking at an individual out of context. You have to understand that the video frame is very selective. It only shows you part of the picture.

One thing that we are trying to do is to turn that surveillance onto the process of making dance itself. I'm trying not to go into a storytelling narrative process; I'm letting the body establish its own feeling, do its own thinking.

EB But even then, the body has already been created in the image of the watcher.

GW Here's a question I was asked yesterday: "Do you want it to be dancey or pedestrian?" Another comment was: "You know that section there? Well, we're only improvising". You just have to hear the words "We're only improvising" to know that fixed material is seen as much more important.

So this week, I created a little eight pulse phrase. I made it very "Graeme Watson", my idea of how I approach space and movement. I said to the dancers, "This is the public version. Now, you escape from it." One dancer's response suggested to me that she was feeling torment. Then there was a vomiting motif. When I looked at another dancer I felt like I was intruding. In breaking the phrase down, they were making a comment about my categorisation of myself: "You've set this so I have to move in a particular way. Now I have to break it down and make it invisible, re-assess it.". In this process, they seem to have developed an extraordinary sense of the internal, as though that is the area of the body that feels most protected from surveillance.

The One Extra Company, Antwatchers *with dancers Felice Burns, Lisa Ffrench, Rachel Roberts, Alison Dredge, Taryn Drummond, Charlotte Moar. Choreography and direction by Graeme Watson, music by Antony Partos, set by Eamon D'Arcy, lighting by Rory Dempster, costumes by Jacques Tong. Live music by Ju Ju Space Jazz and DJ Zeitgeist. St George's Hall, Newtown, from Thursday March 7.*

RF What about your own practice in the studio? The private part of your work?

AC I have done a lot of solo work or small works with just two people—either a writer or a visual artist. I have an ability to be very generous but I also need this very private, reflective or deep meditation. Once I am in the studio, the space itself takes care of me. On the rare occasions when the work is not easy or the practice is difficult or a huge fatigue comes which you hadn't expected or it is an emotional time, I give over to those feelings or move through them. I have developed a strong discipline in the gentlest meaning of that word. And it gives me immense pleasure.

It is about me coming here for three hours every morning to focus and to have a deep and slow preparation for moving. I don't speak to anyone, people ask if they can ring me but I would never have a phone. Rarely does anyone knock on the door. I might do my yoga or write. It continually and quietly gives me space to imagine or to restore my imagination. I know that if I go to the studio, the ideas will come.

It is as if my body holds all my ideas, if I can just be there and listen, then they will arise. I am learning to be very astute and it is almost as if you can feel an idea emerging and to not push it. Just have the pen and paper close. That has given me an amazing sense of assurance and trust. It is always the practice. And it won't happen at home or in a coffee shop, it will happen in here. Here I am allowed to not think about my domestic life or the turmoil of anything else. Here is like a sacred space.

From Cuba, director, choreographer and dancer Rosario Cardenas visits the Adelaide Fringe Festival (March 4-10), Sydney (Enmore Theatre, March 15-16) and Wollongong (Illawara Performing Arts Centre, March 29) with the Danza Combinatoria dance troupe. Cardenas' approach entails the application of combinatorial analytical mathematics to movement, improvisation, socio-cultural interaction and elements of Afro-Cuban dance. Works range from fully-staged vivid folkloric-influenced dance to dramatic gallery performance works.

The book of the dance of the book

Richard James Allen's *The Air Dolphin Brigade,* "the central elusive piece of evidence in the crime at the heart of *Thursday's Fictions*", Tasdance's latest work, has been published by Paper Bark Press (Australia) and Shoestring Press (UK) in association with Tasdance. The book is part of the larger text *Thursday's Fictions.* The production, direction and choreography of *Thursday's Fictions* were by Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen. Paper Bark Press, PO Box 59, Brooklyn NSW 2083.

Expanding sound vision

Nick Franklin, Tony Barrell, Eurydice Arone, Matthew Leonard and Brent Clough talk with Keith Gallasch about what makes *Radio Eye* distinctive

KG Why the name Radio Eye*—a documentary impulse as in film?*

BC It came from the Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov's *kino eye*. He'd also thought about radio. The idea of a kind of radio eye seemed pretty interesting because it's like getting multiple perspectives on the real world—a radio perspective.

KG Sometimes when a Radio Eye *program conjures up images for the listener, you're reminded how film-dependent we have become.*

BC Yes, 'though it isn't really about having radio that's like cinema.

KG You've got a very diverse team of producers contributing programs. Is there a sense of common purpose?

NF Roughly. The work varies from fairly traditional social documentaries to encompassing things that are coming out of cultural studies. Also we get in quite a lot of material from overseas which also comes in different forms.

KG Is there a palpable difference between those American and English practices and the Radio Eye *or Australian practice that you represent? Is there, for example, more space in yours?*

NF I think so. We're less constrained by time. I know we've tried to conform to the half-hour format but often we'll make a program that's 45 minutes long, or longer, and give producers the elbow room not to cut things quite so quickly or narrate things so determinedly. I remember when we first got involved with the Sound Print people in the US who engineered the co-production called *Crossing Boundaries,* Moira Rankin would say, "What sort of producers have you got?" I mentioned a few names and she said, "Are they good writers?" I thought she meant writing a script in the sense of organising your thoughts and how the program might be assembled. But she actually meant writing for narration. Maybe that's traditional there or because they've been encouraging people to do more personal works.

BC Euridice's work is probably closest to that.

EA I'm more willing to put myself into my work. I used to make short films and I used to do it there as well, so it's part of my style. I do feel that we expect our subjects to expose themselves and become involved and be truthful in some ways. For that reason I sometimes feel obligated to put myself in and it helps to draw out my subject.

ML I work extremely hard to remove myself as far from the object as possible. But I do make biased pieces like one about the Port Hedland Detention Centre. My actual placement in the work is more in terms of the juxtaposition of different elements.

KG The tone might be relatively detached?

ML Yes, sort of pseudo journalistic. On that issue of differences, I think we do have more of an interest here in Australia in allowing sound to tell part of the story, and letting sounds operate to fulfil both a narrative function at times or as devices or atmosphere or to set a scene. It's the same with music.

KG Sometimes the line between Radio Eye *and* The Listening Room *is not clear.*

BC I think we're more discursive than *The Listening Room* and we're more interested in the material world. We're a documentary unit.

NF Often you'll find stuff that's quite detailed and documentary in *The Listening Room,* detailed in that it almost takes the microphone under the skin. Although we might try to do that conceptually we're not doing it physically so much. We use sound as a sort of context that has foreground meaning but isn't actually the subject. It's harder for us to do what *The Listening Room* does in the AM mono format.

BC We're not purely illustrative, though.

NF No, I don't mean that. Sound has its own meaning and sometimes it should take over and allow a whole sequence to develop. We're really talking about documentaries and features that fill the gap between what *Background Briefing* does in a documentary and what *The Listening Room* does in a more acoustic way. But that gap can be very big.

Up until a couple of years ago, there was a feeling that features and documentaries were disappearing. In a way they were. Budgets were being cut year after year and we felt very marginalised. The arrival of Brian Johns wanting more cultural material across the networks, followed up with Peter Loxton, the head of radio, wanting greater distinction between the networks but also wanting that cultural material across the networks, gives us a lot of hope. In a field that looked to be in danger of extinction, we can see lots of places for our work from JJJ to metros and regionals.

We don't have any extra staff to do it. We're working in a department that twenty years ago would have had four times as many people and a quarter of a million dollar budget probably. So there's no room for us to suddenly churn out vast amounts of material.

KG Does it mean that your programs might appear in other slots in the week?

BC Yes, we try looking for those cracks and getting a crowbar and...

NF Already Tony is working with David Jessup, an Aboriginal broadcaster, on a program about David's own family through four generations. The earliest of those generations were the stolen ones—taken away and never saw their parents again. That program is not just going on Radio National. It's also going on metros and regionals and each network put in some money. It's fairly rare for the ABC to do that so we see it as a sign of hope.

TB *The Reunion* made by Robyn Ravlich is also going to be broadcast on local radio stations. The idea that listeners have somehow turned their back on everything but talk-back or music is a sort of pre-emptive buckle. To justify having cut the budget you say people don't want documentaries anyway. I don't think that's true.

EA There are still things that can be documented on radio that can't be done on television or film, believe it or not, like my *Personal Board* or *Living Off The Earnings*.

ML I think in quite a few of the programs we deal with a proposition and then explore it in a creative fashion, and again that's much better handled in terms of sound.

BC There's more room to be performative too. You can overlap sound, music, voice in quite remarkable ways, far more multi-layered ways than you can with television. One thing we've started to explore a bit but maybe haven't done quite enough is using more performers, making more performative incursions into documentary.

NF Within the unit there are fairly simple things we're looking at which are in a way a revival of an old form. One that Matthew's co-ordinating initially is a slimmed down version of something like Alastair Cook's *Letter from America,* not in that form but as a radio essay which again is like the *Crossing Boundaries* concept where other broadcasters around the world are putting in pieces at three to five minutes long, radio essays and not much more than that.

TB Matthew and Brent have been pushing for a long time to have a sort of soap box corner somewhere on the radio.

ML And fictional forms. Bernard Cohen wrote a short story for us as one of the first ones we did.

KG Is there a strong feeling of being part of an international radio community?

ML Only because there are so few organisations still doing it.

NF The CBC's just about to have 30 per cent cuts. The BBC suffered cuts under Thatcherism, and at the ABC over the years we've had the same thing. So you think if you're sharing the form and exchanging ideas you're helping keep the idea alive.

ML For a start it's economic, if you're exchanging programs then you're commissioning four and ending up with 12.

TB But our programs will be international because soon you'll be able to download radio programs via the internet. You can already download lots of information about other people's programs. You understand this when you suddenly get an e-mail from someone who lives in Germany who wants to know what you're doing. It would never have happened in the days we were narrowcasting. We'll be broadcasting in a totally different way.

BC With *Crossing Boundaries* and a lot of the co-productions we've done, we do end up with a very circumscribed number of countries that we deal with and unfortunately it's the old Commonwealth and north. But it's not even the language thing. We don't deal with our region because they can't afford to make the same sort of programs. The argument has to be that they can make shorter pieces and we can then start to negotiate with producers in the region.

ML Because the other broadcasters are not really dealing with the Pacific or Asia, that's something we're going to take on.

KG You recently broadcast some short experimental pieces by a Melbourne group called Howlings in the Head. *Do you see this as part of your responsibility, to look out for work like this and nurture it?*

NF What happens in radio, and it's partly bureaucratic, is that certain forms and processes ossify and that Drama (without wanting to be critical of ABC radio drama) has defined a certain area for itself. But by definition it has to exclude other more experimental and perhaps less "professional" areas. We think it's possible to re-present this kind of work within another context without it sounding like "a training exercise" but actually like what it is, an innovation expanding a new generation of radio-makers.

BC We're conscious that there's room for voice in a radiophonic context.

ML The attraction for me was that Howling in the Head were using voices that were different from what we hear on Radio National. They're not performers, not actors, they're writers. They're all under 25 and they're attempting to do something different and I think there's room to take those kinds of risks. We're a large employer of freelancers. That's the kind of commitment that Nick has really stood by. *Radio Eye* is one of the few places where freelancers can come and actually make a feature program, and be given half decent money and the resources to do it.

KG Is there an ideal listener, a model listener?

NF The ideal listener is probably 20 years younger than me. There's this idea that Radio National only has older listeners which is to some extent supported by ratings, but not entirely.

BC Nothing wrong with older listeners.

NF No, we love 'em all.

BC Unless they're reactionary old bastards.

KG I'm amazed at how many people I meet who say they do listen.

BC Part of the problem has been that radio has been bi-polarised. In our culture it's either hard core current affairs or it's radio art. The middle ground is new territory for a lot of people.

NF Whereas in the old days a feature was the bread and butter of radio really. The talk, the feature, the prepared program, the live concert, the play and the comedy program, that was it.

BC When you think about it, a lot of our things are quite old fashioned, simple things like a radio essay, someone sitting down and doing an opinion piece, like Alistair Cook.

NF He's amazingly popular, not because he's old and he's been doing it for years but because people like the form.

NF That gets back to what Eurydice did with *Personal Board*. You couldn't do that on TV, it's too cold. Radio is warmer.

KG Besides that's how the group in Personal Board *were talking to each other, wasn't it, by phone, not actually meeting each other in the flesh.*

EA Exactly.

BC *Personal Board* was a sound-based work. We do a lot of things on sound when you start to tally them up, sound and music. A lot of our work is about listening and about the culture of sound.

Our previews of forthcoming Radio Eye *and* The Listening Room *works will recommence in* RealTime 12.

Sounds like...? Culture

Nigel Helyer previews Sound Culture 1996, San Francisco

Some ten years ago, I sat through 72 hours of high pressure sound-works and performance-poetry; *Annihilate the Word before it Annihilates You* blasted from the man-locomotive and professional stutterer Jas Duke. The ABC Radio producer moaned loudly about the acoustics, but in the black bunker of The Performance Space... Just shut-up and put your earphones back on!

My mission? To write an article for *Performance Magazine* UK who gracefully sent me a copy of the publication but politely forgot about the cheque. Those were the days!

The *SoundWorks* festival became the necessary context for the development of the *SoundCulture* concept—and I use *concept* advisedly as *SoundCulture* is essentially a set of ideas and practices rather than a bureaucracy or organisation (it certainly isn't a budget-line).

The front office of The Performance Space, which boasts a bass line of heavy diesel and a chorus of tyre shriek, was the ideal setting for think-tanks and brain-stormings that revolved around the lietmotivs of impossible sound objects and invisible sonorous cities—of sonic maps of Pacific colonisation and other vast but intangible projects.

In pragmatic terms *SoundCulture* defined itself as concerned with non-musical forms of sound production and located its operations within the Pacific Region (after days of discussion about Zone and Rim...). We considered that the USA, Europe (and Melbourne) had in the first instance habitually subsumed all categories of 'sound-art' within avant-garde music and on the second count were over-provided with cultural junkets.

SoundCulture has been characterised by an anarchic (but by no means chaotic) organisational structure, with a strong emphasis on co-production and collaborative partnerships. The original Sydney event in 1991 was co-produced by The Performance Space, The University of Technology, Sydney and *The Listening Room* of ABC Radio—mounting a massive 47 events within a two week period covering the full spectrum from talkfest to interactive broadcasts to sound installations and (yes) even a bit of computer music.

The Sydney event also spawned an International SoundCulture Commission with representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the USA—a group which in its erratic physical meetings and ghostly e-mail conferences (somehow) manages to usher the *SoundCulture* event around the Pacific more or less intact, and which is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that each festival develops themes appropriate to the local cultural and historical context (a bit like the I.O.C. without the cash).

That no central agenda marks the character of each manifestation has ensured that the festivals in Sydney 1991 and Tokyo 1993 (and the imminent *SoundCulture 96* in San Francisco) have not only striven to present a wide variety of conceptual approaches to sound art, but have evolved divergent organisational and production methodologies; think globally, act locally...

And so to our sister city...If you think our cultural funding bodies are in a mess, just look east (to the West Coast) where the National Endowment for the Arts is waiting for a coup de grace and there really isn't any free lunch (or anything else for that matter).

The lack of fairy godmothers has resulted in a complex co-production between 29 institutions throughout the Bay area (if you want the whole list check the website below) with the core work and planning for the festival revolving around The LAB (SF), Mills College Center for Contemporary Music (Oakland), New Langton Arts (SF), San Francisco Art Institute (SF), Secession Gallery (SF), 23 5 Inc.(SF), and Xerox PARC (Palo Alto).

The festival will run from April 3-13, 1996 with events which will include performances, exhibitions, symposia, radio transmissions, experimental and indigenous music, new media arts and an audiotheque, not to mention an audio hit-team from Australia including Julaine Stephenson, Frances Dyson, Douglas Kahn, Tony MacGregor, Virginia Madsen and Nigel Helyer.

It may come as a surprise that *SoundCulture* is the only festival of its kind to be held in the United States; no other art or music festival is specifically focused on the sonic arts with this kind of scope and format. As such, *SoundCulture* presents an opportunity to expose experimental sound work well beyond the normal Eurocentric cultural boundaries, and to demonstrate links, cross-currents, and diversity in the sonic arts of the Pacific Region.

It's nice there in spring, and apart from the biggest record store in the world and City Lights bookshop you might sample:

@ The LAB—an installation/performance by Ron Kuivila (New York) and a series of robot-ensemble performances by Chico MacMurtrie (San Francisco).

@ The Secession Gallery—a performance of Canadian composer Don Wherry's *Harbor Symphony*, which will be played on the horns of ships moored in San Francisco Bay.

@ Mills College—Marina Rosenfeld (Los Angeles) with her Sheer Frost Orchestra, a group of twenty-one women playing electric guitars with nail polish bottles.

@ The San Francisco Art Institute—*Silent Forest*—a sound installation by Nigel Helyer (Australia) which takes the use of defoliants in Vietnam as a metaphor for the effects of colonial culture.

@ Pacific Film Archives—events that look at the historical and present uses of sound in film, including a presentation of sound works by filmmakers.

@ Public Art Works—will present a performance by Kathy Kennedy (Canada) in which the movements of a choir are directed via a small radio transmitter and lots of boom boxes.

Check the SoundCulture *web-site: http://www.Ins.com/sc96.html*

The ephemeral archive

Peter Anderson tunes in to 4ZZZ FM at Brisbane's IMA

How do you document the history of a radio station? This was the problem faced by Brisbane community radio station 4ZZZ FM last year, as they moved towards their 20th anniversary. The solution was an exhibition in December at the Institute of Modern Art, which also just happened to be celebrating 20 years of activity—1975 to 1995.

Sounds Like a Jilted Generation began as a project with quite substantial ambitions, but as the process of actually getting hold of archival material turned from being a good idea into a difficult reality, the exhibition's ambitions seemed to shrink a little. Exhibition coordinator, Jane Doyle, was faced with a number of problems, not the least of which was the ephemeral nature of radio. In addition, 4ZZZ's archives had not been particularly well maintained over the years, and a significant amount of material had either been lost, thrown out, or simply never kept—how do you know what is worth keeping anyway?

In many respects, 4ZZZ is a bit like the rest of Brisbane youth culture's collective memory—odd bits and pieces here and there, but overall, archival amnesia seems to be the dominant mode. Back in 1986 the IMA did put together a project which examined the previous decade of music and youth culture activity: *Know Your Product,* curated by Ross Harley. However, even with the tighter focus on 4ZZZ, *Sounds Like A Jilted Generation* did not manage to pull 20 years of material together quite so coherently as this earlier effort.

Of course, the idea that a public radio station and all its related activities somehow will come together as a coherent object is open to question. How do you reconcile notions such as the on-air sound, with fundraising events, and the politics of running a collective for two decades? Could all of this ever be clearly represented in an exhibition format?

4ZZZ began broadcasting on the FM band back in December 1975, and was the first FM station in Brisbane. Its license requirements meant that it had a community and educational focus, but right from the start music played a dominant role, and still does. In the local context, it was 4ZZZ that opened up the market for album rock, which by the mid-80s had become the staple of commercial FM, but it is important to remember that first time around much of this 'classic rock' stuff wasn't charting in the Top 40. By the end of the 70s, 4ZZZ, like many of the public radio stations around the country, had shifted into more hard-core territory, via punk, and in the following decade took on the patchwork of other sub-cultural sounds that all seem to be missed by mainstream radio. So how do you represent these shifts, and, perhaps more importantly, how do you make sense of them for the current young and fragmented audience? How do you reinvest music and the environment it comes from with its initial politics, give it back its freshness, replace nostalgia with history?

In the end, *Sounds Like a Jilted Generation* really didn't set itself up as a moment of historical analysis, preferring more open-ended approaches. In the IMA exhibition it was not sound but vision that dominated: posters and flyers, old press clippings, copies of the station's newsletter, *Radio Times*, and a fairly small selection of photographs. Much of this material went undated, and there wasn't any overt attempt to construct either narrative or thematic links across the exhibits. In many respects, it was a presentation of raw data, with viewers left to perform their own analyses.

The publication accompanying the exhibition provides a dossier of articles and other graphic material, with a couple of useful introductory essays by curator Jane Doyle and one-time station coordinator Linda Caroli. Caroli's contribution is particularly interesting in its examination of 4ZZZ's activities and the space of the city: the way radio constructs a particular idea of place and community. As an adjunct to this essay, Caroli has produced a city map, a 'heritage trail', for 'looking at things that aren't there any more'—a set of ZZZ sites across the inner-city. Like 4ZZZ's archives, there is a constant repetition of 'closed' or 'demolished' places, lost and half-forgotten histories, people who have 'gone south'. Perhaps it is this constant sense of loss that has made Brisbane culture often seem so transient, modern, and ephemeral as a radio broadcast: Yes, in stereo, but with a relatively weak signal.

Shorts

Za Dusa—for the soul. Shopfront Theatre for Young People presents a return season of this popular bilingual (Macedonian/English) play on the theme of HIV/AIDS. March 6-10 at 88 Carlton Parade, Carlton. NSW And if you'd like to get involved with **Shopfront** get along to their Open Day 10am to 5pm Saturday February 10 where enrolments for 1996 will be accepted all day. Call 02 588 3948

Playbox is committed to developing Australian artists and encouraging young people to develop an appreciation of the performing arts which explains **Playbox Education Program 1996** including weekend workshops for students who can't attend during the week. For a brochure with all details and booking form call Christine Lucas-Pannam or Margaret Steven on 03 9685 5165

Then again, you could brush up on your negative theory at Melbourne's Centre for Contemporary Photography at their **Weekend Workshops with Les Walkling.** March 16 & 17 in which you will investigate the theory and practice of making precisely controlled and highly refined black and white negatives. For enrolment details call CCP 03 9417 1549.

Catch **Alison's Wonderland** 6-9pm Sundays in February at the **Woollahra Hotel**, Sydney. Alison O'Carroll violin, Andrew Robson sax, Alister Spence piano, Adam Armstrong bass, Toby Hall drums, Fabian Hevia percussion.

What with all those insomniacs haunting late night bookshops, it's a wonder art galleries have taken so long to skip the tedium of 5 o'clock closing. Hats off to **Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts** who will from February 15 open exhibitions from 11am to 8pm Tuesday to Sunday. There's a bar, too.
In the old days when Myers were the chief sponsor, the Festival of Perth's lunchtime forums used to be held upstairs in lay-by land. Now you can get your head around contentious arts topics at the more convivial **PICA Cafe and Bar** culminating at 1pm on March 8 in a nose-to-nose confrontation between local arts editors Ron Banks and Alison Farmer with Festival director David Blenkinsop and PICA's Sarah Miller.

Arts on Air is the name of a new arts program to be broadcast by Sydney community radio station **2SER FM 107.3** from March 16. Saturday mornings from 10-12 with an emphasis on performance, screen-based media, experimental cinema, installation and site-specific work, contemporary music and sound. Call 02 330 3000 fax 02 330 3099.

Filmed in the leadup to the International Guitar Festival held in Darwin recently **Dance of Nature:The Music of Ross Edwards** uses a combination of dance, images of flora and fauna and special effects to reveal the natural influences in Edwards' music - birdsong, insect vibrations and the rhythmic patterns of nature. **Masterpiece SBS TV 8.30 pm (8.00pm) February 26.**

The Performance Space (Sydney) has decided to get serious about performers who unaccountably miss out on the public recognition they deserve. Hence the announcement of **The Perfies** (No prizes for the name. What about the Mikes, the Nicks or the Sarahs?). The judges are already 'perfing' around, sniffing out the work of a huge variety of Sydney's contemporary performance artists from Opera House to Casula Powerhouse. The inaugural Perfies will be presented on one glittering evening in December.

The ever adaptable **Bondi Pavilion** (Sydney) having just played host to a successful Sydney Fringe Festival and Flickerfest now opens its doors to the 17th annual **South American Festival from Sunday February 18** 12 noon to 8.30pm. Latin American dance, music, food, costume and instrument making, children under 12 free, all others $12, $10. Call 02 303325

Prodigious dance writer and Village Voice dance critic **Deborah Jowitt** will be running a **Dance Critics Workshop in** Melbourne in July. Workshop includes lectures, videos, discussions of cultural and historical aspects of particular dance styles plus three movement workshops. Applications close February 16. Registration $500. Call 03 9682 7113 (a Green Mill project)

Trekkies take note: A Group of People (catchy!) are presenting **A Spaced Oddity** at the Brisbane Strikers Club, Bowen Hills Queensland Friday and Saturday nights from February 2. Written by Ron Kelly and Sandra Farman.

It had to happen. A musical about Neighbourhood Watch. Blue Light Disco? No, it's part of **La Boite**'s 1966 season. Words and music for **There Goes The Neighbourhood—The ballad of Scatty Dwee Bop** are by Melbourne writer Jenny Swain. Directed by Jennifer Flowers; it runs from March 9-30 with a post-performance talk for subscribers March 15. Call La Boite Brisbane 07 369 1622

You'll know all about the **Wadaiko Ichiro Drummers of Japan** coming to the Adelaide Festival Fringe Star Club from Feb 23 to March 17 but did you know that this large and very loud group will tour to **Canberra** Theatre Centre March 19-21, **Sydney's** Enmore Theatre March 22 and 23, **Newcastle** City Hall March 24 and **Melbourne** Forum March 26-April 14.

Don't miss Elizabeth Bell and Simone Patterson in **Showing the Boxes** (**Adelaide** February 20-March 2 at **Red Shed Gallery** 6pm). This fascinating work began with a solo performance (Permission to Look) at Sydney's First Draft last year, a wise and witty comment on the female body for an audience of life-drawers. In this version Elizabeth is joined by Simone Patterson and it looks like the two have gone beyond permission into some new territory - "love, nudity, innuendo and harp playing". Call Fringe Festival for details 1300 362 351

Two Planks and a Passion—a new theatre company in Sydney—has its launch party on February 17 from 9pm at Sydney Uni Boathouse (tickets $15) and stages its inaugural production, *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis at Glebe Town Hall from March 21. Call 02 818 3885

Melbourne's **La Mama**, 205 Faraday St Carlton, presents **In a Nutshell**—physical theatre exploring the moment of rupture between appropriate behaviour and the not-so—devised and performed by Four on the Floor: Rosina Gannon, Charlie Laidlaw, Georgia Power and Kim Wilson. Director Greg Dyson, musical director Chris Falk. Until February 18: Thurs & Sat 10pm, Wed, Fri & Sun 6.30pm $10, $6. Call 03 9347 6142

Sydney's Griffin Theatre has started a monthly program of Monday Studios focusing on new writing for theatre. The next one is March 25. **Jennifer Compton**'s work in progress, **The Big Picture**. Readings begin at 7.30pm at The Stables, Nimrod St Kings Cross. $5 at door or book 02 361 3817

What magical things does **Stephen Jones** do for artists and performers? Designs and/or installs individual and group shows/exhibitions. Develops custom electronic equipment for artworks involving electronics: video, sound, multimedia, etc. Exhibitions he has worked on include **Kaboom, Sound in Space,** and the Paik exhibits in the **Kaldor Projects** show, all at the **MCA,** 1995; video display for **Open City's** Shop and The Necessary Orgy, **Sydney Festival 1995.** Single works include Rebecca Cummins' To Fall Standing at **ArtSpace**, 1993. Custom equipment includes a video switcher for media artist Ross Harley, LCD controllers for the **Museum of Sydney's "Eora"** cabinet and various audio and video equipment for video production facilities. His own work includes setting up and running Heuristic Video and producing and editing all the early Severed Heads video (including the live stage work).Stephen can supply some exhibition equipment and create and develop prototype custom equipment. Rates negotiable. phone 02 281 7554. e-mail: sjones@pop.real.com.au

The Green Room Awards exhibition in The Vic Walk at the **Victorian Arts Centre** from **February 20 to March 28** highlights the achievements of actor **Patricia Kennedy**. The exhibition features photographs and other memorabilia documenting a career which spans 60 years in radio, television, film and theatre.

Canberra-based **Kailash Dance Company** launched its 1996 program at the National Gallery on February 1. One of the highlights is a collaboration between Padma Menon, master of Kuchipudi dance, and Meryl Tankard's ADT for the Adelaide Festival. Preview March 12 at the Bull-Ring, Wayville Showgrounds, till March 17.

The first instalment of the **Street Level** initiated project **Cyber Cultures** is on at The Performance Space (Cleveland St Sydney) from March 21. Interactive and film and video-based work from Patricia Piccinini, Martine Corompt, Maryella Hatfield, Elena Popa, Troy Innocent, Josephine Starrs and Leon Cmielewski.For info call Kathy Cleland or David Cranswick 02 314 5786

"A male culture decides that men with drinking problems are epic, women with drinking problems are domestic" (Queensland playwright, Hilary Beaton from **Playing With Time**). As well as a revealing some alarming statistics on the relationship between women writers and Australian theatre companies over the past decade, this valuable little book provides anecdotal evidence of writers' working lives. Available from **Playworks** $13.95 Enquiries 02-262-3174 Fax 02-262.6275

W/EDGE 1 is the first in a series of twice yearly publications from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, **University of Western Sydney.** The first edition contains work by Linda Marie Walker, Sabrina Achilles, Sharon Dyson, Kristen de Kline, Simon Enticknap, Ryn Vlachou, Eddie van Heldne, Carolyn van Langenberg, Michele Hopkins, lynda j hawryluk. Subsequent volumes will feature a range of experimental writing in the categories of poetry, fictocriticism, prose fiction, art photogrpahy, black & white graphics and articles. Enquiries W/Edge, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney PO Box 10 Kingswood NSW 2747

Smalls

Sport

Chris Mann, Stevie Wishart and Jim Denley from The Machine for Making Sense

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus on location in the new Europe

The biggest controversy in European sport today concerns the proposal to enlarge soccer goal posts. Based on a claim that due to improved nutrition the average Englishman has grown four inches in the last 100 years, the move is to make goal posts four inches higher and wider. There has been condemnation of the plan—but it is an excellent idea. The only trouble is, it doesn't go far enough.

A goalkeeper for the United States should rightly have to defend huge goal posts. But what if the opponent is Ethiopia? A land of poor nutrition should be compensated with a tiny goal to defend. What we need is adjustable goal posts. But it gets more complicated. An 18 year old up-and-comer for a developing nation, coming off the bench as a substitute, is likely to be one inch taller than the 35 year old veteran he replaces: the goal would be enlarged accordingly. A sliding scale would ensure that the posts are continually altered to fit the combined height of each team.

Why stop there? There's talk of a smaller ball: why not a digitally programmable ball, that can change size depending on the height of the player kicking it? And those nations used to running at high altitude should have to run further: their half of the pitch could be extended. With these constant changes to posts, ball and pitch, we will finally achieve that ideal condition: the level playing field.

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Golf: the first six lessons

Teeing off at the Vivienne Inch Summer Golf Clinic the other day, I fielded a question from a young high-flier on the growing popularity of golf among artists and arts bureaucrats. Golf, said I, is a game where you can get a bit of fresh air but most importantly, keep talking. Yachting's no good any more. You might meet the right people but you could also lose the end of your finger making some point while going about. Anyway, you can't hear yourself think out there. All that yelling and release is just a substitute for doing deals. Golfing allows you to get on with the real thing. The etiquette of the game demands restraint. The desire to wallop your opponent with a nine iron is kept constantly in check. It's also easier to use a mobile on a golf course than it is on a yacht in a hurricane. Importantly, power brokers, arts bureaucrats and artists are more likely to come alongside on the golf course. All that tacking rubbish is like bobbing and weaving in the boxing ring. The golf course is the closest thing we have to the level playing field. Despite the bunkers and the sand traps and the impossible holes, it's a numbers game where you can still look your opponent in the eye, face the same hazards and expose your handicap. No wonder the foyer of the Australia Council is full of golf buggies and the MTC has turned its green room into a mini golf course. Golf is the great leveller. How else do you think Richard Alston and Michael Lee look like coming up with pretty much the same arts policy?