

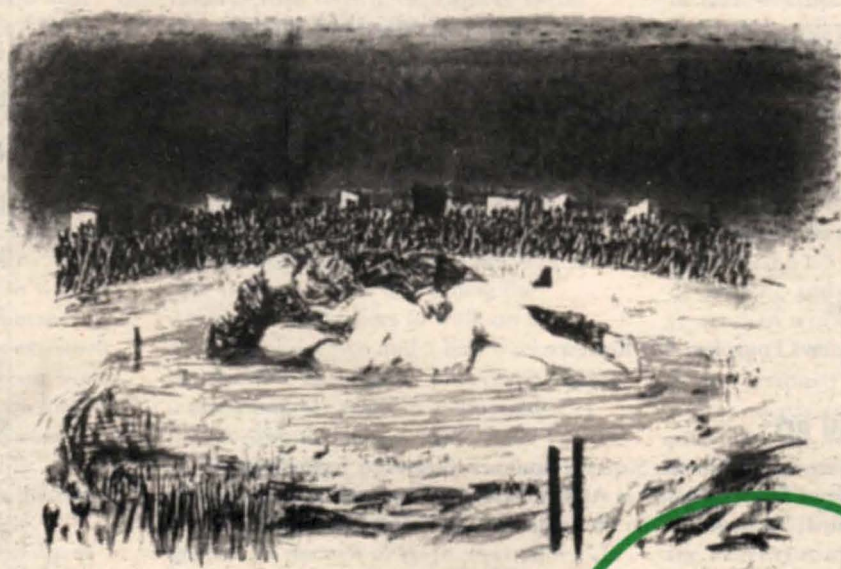
# RealTime

free

Performance and the national arts April–May 1996



**HER ABSENCE  
FILLED  
THE WORLD**



12

Censorship

Adelaide Festival

OnScreen



*RealTime* 12 focuses on the 1996 Adelaide Festival and on the growing and complexly intertwined censorship and political correctness debates. *RealTime* was live, in print and on the web at the Adelaide Festival, the first we hope of many such experiences. However, for all the joy, the pressure on often under-developed new Australian works was depressing. Sarah Miller who saw new works at both the Adelaide and Perth Festivals argues that it's time we did something about this. She's not alone. Our standing at our own festivals is seriously weakened by works that need more time, more support and more exposure before they stand next to polished, mature works on the international festival circuit.

While you can find our Adelaide Festival report in one grab in the first half of this issue, let me guide you to the censorship debate. Colin Hood's exposé of the complexities and hypocrisies of the current film censorship regulations and procedures appears in *OnScreen* (p. 21) along with Peter Greenaway's observations about screen violence in an interview by Noel Purdon (p. 19). Elsewhere, Tracey Parry describes the alarm provoked by performer Alister Grant using Nazi iconography at *cLUB bENT* (p. 16). Barbara Bolt queries the gap between the disturbing content of Bill Henson's photographs and the rarefied language of the exhibition catalogue essay (p. 42). Shelley Kay grapples with Gregg Araki's *The Doom Generation* (p. 27). Virginia Baxter details Annie Sprinkle's performance at the Adelaide Festival for all those who haven't seen it but would like to comment (p. 9).

Our thanks to all of you who welcomed *OnScreen* so enthusiastically after its first appearance in *RT#11* and to those readers and artists—local and overseas—who let us know that *RealTime* became a vital and integral part of their Adelaide Festival experience.

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# Another opening, another showdown

A cautionary tale from Sarah Miller

Australia's Federal Coalition Government elected on March 2 has promised, among other things, to establish a "Major" Festival's Fund. The "major" is no doubt, to distinguish it from the Festivals Australia program established by the previous Government to support regional festivals. The proposed fund is valued at \$1.5 million over three years and it is this figure as much as anything else that unwittingly points to a major problem in the way Governments of either political persuasion address and fund artists and arts activities in this country.

To approach it from another perspective, if we look at the major differences between the international touring work brought into Australia over the past three months, whether for the Festival of Sydney, Festival of Perth or the Adelaide Festival, two things are blindingly evident. The first is the sheer amount of resources (money, material and last, but certainly not least, time) that precedes the presentation of any international performance or theatrical event in this country. The second is the concomitant lack of resources (time, money and materials) that go into supporting even the best funded Australian projects and companies, except perhaps the Australian Opera and Ballet.

This is so obvious as to be a truism but more than ever before, it highlights the fact that Australian artists and companies achieve what they achieve despite all the obstacles thrown in their respective paths and that the ability to develop aesthetically ambitious and intellectually rigorous work in a sustained way in this country is still out of reach.

Emerging from a month long immersion into the Festivals of Perth and Adelaide, this is the clearest sense that I have. The point was brought home to me, again, during the Perth Festival but driven home by the extraordinary sophistication and rigour of a number of performance events at the Adelaide Festival—in particular, Hotel Pro Forma's *Operation: Orfeo*, DV8's *Enter Achilles* and La Fura Del Baus' *MTM*. Each of these productions displayed extraordinary technological and conceptual sophistication and precision, intellectual rigour and virtuosic performance skills.

Nonetheless, fascinated and excited as I was by much of the work I saw, I was also depressed and at times embittered by the recognition that each of the aforementioned companies, among others, works in a climate which fosters sustained development. *Gaudeamus* by the Maly Theatre of St Petersburg has been developed and worked over six years; La Fura del Baus apparently only produce a new work every two years; The Vis à Vis company, whilst not yet in receipt of infrastructure funding, received the equivalent of US \$1 million in government support towards the production of *Central Park* (seen in Sydney and Perth). Australian born Lloyd Newson of DV 8 has stated very clearly and publicly that given the condition of Australian arts funding, this country is incapable of supporting the development of even a part of one of his performance projects.

Nevertheless, despite the brilliance and idiosyncrasy of the aforementioned productions, the ideas and forms are not unfamiliar to us from the work of a few resident Australian artists and companies. The difference lies not in greater talent or ability but in time, resources and not just financial but intellectual support. So it's perhaps appropriate to look at the two major new commissions produced for the 1996 Festival of Perth to illustrate just what it might take to really support the

development of artists and the arts in this country.

*Eironos* (Another Place) was created by Canada's Foundation Jean-Pierre Perreault working "in collaboration" with the Chrissie Parrott Dance Company. Perreault is renowned as a choreographer/scenographer of great visual sophistication and choreographic rigour and the work certainly demonstrated a determined aesthetic, high production values and virtuosity in performance.

It was an extremely successful and well

collaboration between the Kunwinku people of western Arnhem Land, Stalker Stilt Company and Aboriginal choreographer Michael Leslie. This project was floated by Michael Leslie some three years ago after he saw Stalker in performance. Their long and spindly shapes reminded him of the Mimi: *tall thin spirits, predecessors to humans, who dwell in the escarpment of western Arnhem Land. At night they blow light through the rock face and climb out to sing, dance, paint rock art and make love. They taught the early*

and movement with little substance or structure. It was a great starting point.

Again, I am less concerned with the details of what worked and what didn't than in what will happen to *Mimi* in the future. It is an ambitious, special and indeed essential initiative and the possibility remains for the work to be further developed and performed not only in Australia but internationally. Experience teaches however, that artists and companies typically get one bite of the cherry. If something doesn't "work" on its first



*Eironos* (Another Place)

Michael Slobodian

received production. Personally, I found it clichéd and derivative (busy, grey city, alienation, people don't communicate—we cling to our urban certainties and if we're not careful a big atom bomb will come along and blow us all up). Beyond which I was particularly offended (being a 'politically correct' kind of girl) by the fact that whilst the blokes all wore sensible shoes and clothing to perform in, the women all performed in frocks and high heels. Needless to say at the end of the season not one of the women performing had escaped injury whilst the blokes were injury free. That's the trouble with political correctness; it's so easy to be distracted by inconsequential...

The point is not, however, whether I liked or disliked the production, rather to note that Perreault, as a visiting choreographer is obviously far too wily to risk putting on a new work with new dancers in a festival context. His extremely successful solution was to transplant work rehearsed over several months with his own dancers into an antipodean warehouse context. The six weeks rehearsal in Australia took place *in situ*, with lighting and sets, at Boans Warehouse. The rehearsal time in Perth was almost utterly given over to inscribing the nuance of the choreography onto the Australian dancers. Some additional choreography was created in Australia. However, basically, the Australian dancers were rehearsed into the work and to give credit where credit is due, the calibre of the dancing was high. Australian expenditure on the project was around \$350,000—big money for this country—yet even this amount does not reflect the 'real' costs of this work in terms of the pre-production period in Canada.

The second major commission was *Mimi* by the Marrugeku Company, a

*humans law and duty or alternately teased them or taunted them or trapped them in the spirit world.*

In the program, the Festival of Perth stated that the project had been in development for three years, thus generating a certain confusion with both critics and audiences. Certainly the 'idea' had been around for that time. Both Michael Leslie and Stalker have undertaken research trips to Arnhem Land to spend time with the Kunwinku people to ensure that their understanding and representation of their particular spiritual practices and beliefs was neither exploitative nor misrepresentative.

In development terms on the other hand, the Marrugeku Company, which was formed specially to undertake this project, had six weeks rehearsal with much of that time being occupied in teaching the Aboriginal performers to walk on stilts. That left about two and a half weeks to realise *Mimi* as a theatre project, an almost insurmountable problem compounded by the site specific nature of the work. The company had one pre-production week to rehearse in the breathtakingly beautiful Boya Quarry, an extraordinary rockface, in the hills to the east of Perth. Beyond which, the pressure to produce an 'authentically' Aboriginal work given the complex relationship between traditional and urban Aboriginal and non Aboriginal belief systems and values, created enormous stress for the company.

The performance outcome was perhaps predictable. The site, the images (aural and visual), the evocation of the Mimi spirits and their relationship to the land were beautifully evoked. The first fifteen minutes were extraordinary, then the sheer need to "make a show" took over and the work disintegrated into a kaleidoscope of images

outing, then it is unlikely to be supported in the future. What might be the outcome had the company worked on this project for a year? What might develop were the company to keep working for ten years? Is it only in Australia that we assume the ability to resolve complex cultural and art form issues in six weeks?

Given the constraints on the arts funding dollar in this country it remains to be seen whether Australian artists and companies will ever get the time and resources they not only deserve but need if their work is to emerge from its embryonic beginnings and transform itself into the developed and sophisticated productions that we love to be excited by when they visit our shores.

With this in mind, what can an additional \$1.5 million "to assist in developing and premiering new Australian works for inclusion in 'major' festivals ..." dispersed over a three year period seriously hope to achieve? You get what you pay for after all. Who's providing the advice to Government? Perhaps someone in government should take a look at the real costs involved in producing art of "excellence" as well as the benefits to the broader community given the success of the 1996 Adelaide festival. It's not just box office returns. I doubt that the accommodation, catering and travel industries are complaining. Maybe it really "is time": time for a serious and considered overhaul of our arts and cultural policies; time to redistribute (restructure) arts funding—not in terms of historical precedent but creative development and merit—and certainly time to start addressing the real needs of the arts and cultural industries. What could be more economically rational after all?



# The transformed city

Keith Gallasch at the 1996 Adelaide Festival

It's pleasantly surreal to come home to a city I left ten years ago, a city I lived in and loved for forty years, a city now made ugly by bad architecture and inadequate town planning and made brutal by dereliction of social concern (Hindley Street), to find that city embraced by an artistic director of the Adelaide Festival, giving it coherence and a sense of community. Hills Hoists and pegs are inscribed across the city, a suburb has become a gallery, relatives who've never been to a festival venture out because they like Barrie Kosky (he presents the weather on the Channel 9 News, he writes forthrightly in *The Advertiser*), and Red Square with its towering shipping containers cradles all the post-show energy so often dissipated in earlier festivals.

The 1996 Adelaide Festival was the best I've been to, and I've been to most of them, from the beginning. The quality of the works, the thematic integrity of the programming, the sense of communality developed between audiences and performers, the debates driven by the works, all indicated energy, purpose and ideas.

*RealTime* became part of the Festival's energy, appearing in print four times and updating on the web, responding briskly and briefly to festival performances, events and issues. In this issue, writers Richard Murphet, Zsuzsanna Soboslay, Linda Marie Walker, Eleanor Brickhill and Di Weekes summarize their responses to the festival and we reproduce a selection of the original contrasting responses.

Kosky's festival was vast, there was simply no way we could cover all of it, let alone cover the Adelaide Fringe given our limited resources. Even so, it was easy to sense and hear about the excitement and density of arts experience on offer in the East End of Rundle Street with its astonishing range of cafes, restaurants and new (and to be developed) performance venues and galleries. There's talk now of holding the Fringe annually, something encouraged by the East End traders and something surely welcome to those Fringe players who found battling each other and the Kosky Festival for audiences just too much.

Festival and Fringe were two very different events, with Kosky taking on contemporary performance in its many manifestations and the Fringe beginning to show signs of change. While cabaret and comedy work still dominate and theatre works play second fiddle, the emergence of indigenous Australian performance and visual arts as a key Fringe component proved timely and challenging. The free-market urge of Fringe festivals might have looked democratic in years gone by, but freefall into a huge, amorphous program is experienced as less than democratic by audiences and certainly some performers.

Here are three progress reports I lapped in the heat(wave) of the festival moment after talkative nights at Red Square, and up to three performances or events a festival day. If ever a festival was made for *RealTime*, this was it.

Tuesday, March 5

*Gaudeamus*, The Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg. More shaved heads, more boots, more astonishingly multi-skilled performers, more ecstasy, more of the radical otherness that a good festival poses. Already it's Saturday night. Already, and it's only day two, you collide with festival familiars, eyes unfocused, steps uncertain, not sure if they're up to the Maly Theatre because they haven't recovered from, fully

absorbed, quietly and alone reflected on Meg Stuart's *No Longer Ready Made*. It's still in our bodies, and we don't want to let it go. (A businessman flew in, went straight to Stuart, tense, tetchy, restless...within fifteen minutes the dis-ease flowed out of him as if absorbed into the dancer with the shaved head his face moving in an impossible blur atop a stable signalling body). Even dinner's not an issue, perhaps a stiff drink, but do you really want to talk

apocalyptic—children's play as life and death drive in a scarcity economy in *Nits*, the oscillating line between ecstatic (and questionable) mass life-force and individual pop-song love lament (made epic a la Nick Cave and Leonard Cohen) in Batsheva's *Anaphase*, the out of sync couples in Meg Stuart, obsessive-compulsive, dystrophied, (drug-)shuddering but compassionate, dancing with the floor against an unforgiving gravity and the mess of everyday detritus, half pain half pleasure; all of these performers in all of these companies pushing the physical limits of endurance—in Meg Stuart you can hear the pained breathing like music—in all of them, bodies are tossed and propelled by

strong tradition in Russian literature and at its most familiar and disturbing in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. The steeply raked stage is a snow field that immediately swallows men, yields water, brass instruments, balloons. A parade ground manual of military nonsense is transformed into the poetry of 'hoarfrost on the wire'. Young conscript bodies are crippled comically and painfully by formations and 'at attention' poses. Nothing fits, everything is other—the biggest gap is language, many of the conscripts coming from the outer reaches of the Soviet empire, without Russian, turned into clowns by linguistic trial and terror. There are Jews and Gypsies. A frustrated would-be liberal argues: "You Jews incite an anti-semitism that is utterly foreign in us". There are women whom the soldiers court and are astonished by in scenes of naive attraction, near rape, role reversal. A hair-washing scene resolves into a physical dance struggle with the soldier pulling at the woman's long, wet rolled hair, she resisting with great (neck) strength—almost violent and all the more disturbing for being only that. Romantic visions draw on Tchaikovsky's opera of doomed love and death by duel, *Eugene Onegin*: soldier and lover duet atop a flying grand piano.

The performance's surrealism is fatalistic at every level, despite its being magical, vigorously physical, astonishingly sung and played (the whole company transforms into an expert brass band briefly). It ends with a death, a body sprawled, a bloodied face looking up and out at the audience: responsibility has to be taken. (A sudden synchronicity: the only moment that demands to be taken literally in Image Aigue's *Nits*, when a small boy could be assumed to be dead at that play's end, if we are willing to see the consequences of the deprivations we've witnessed. His body is almost in the identical downstage position as the dead man's in *Gaudeamus*).

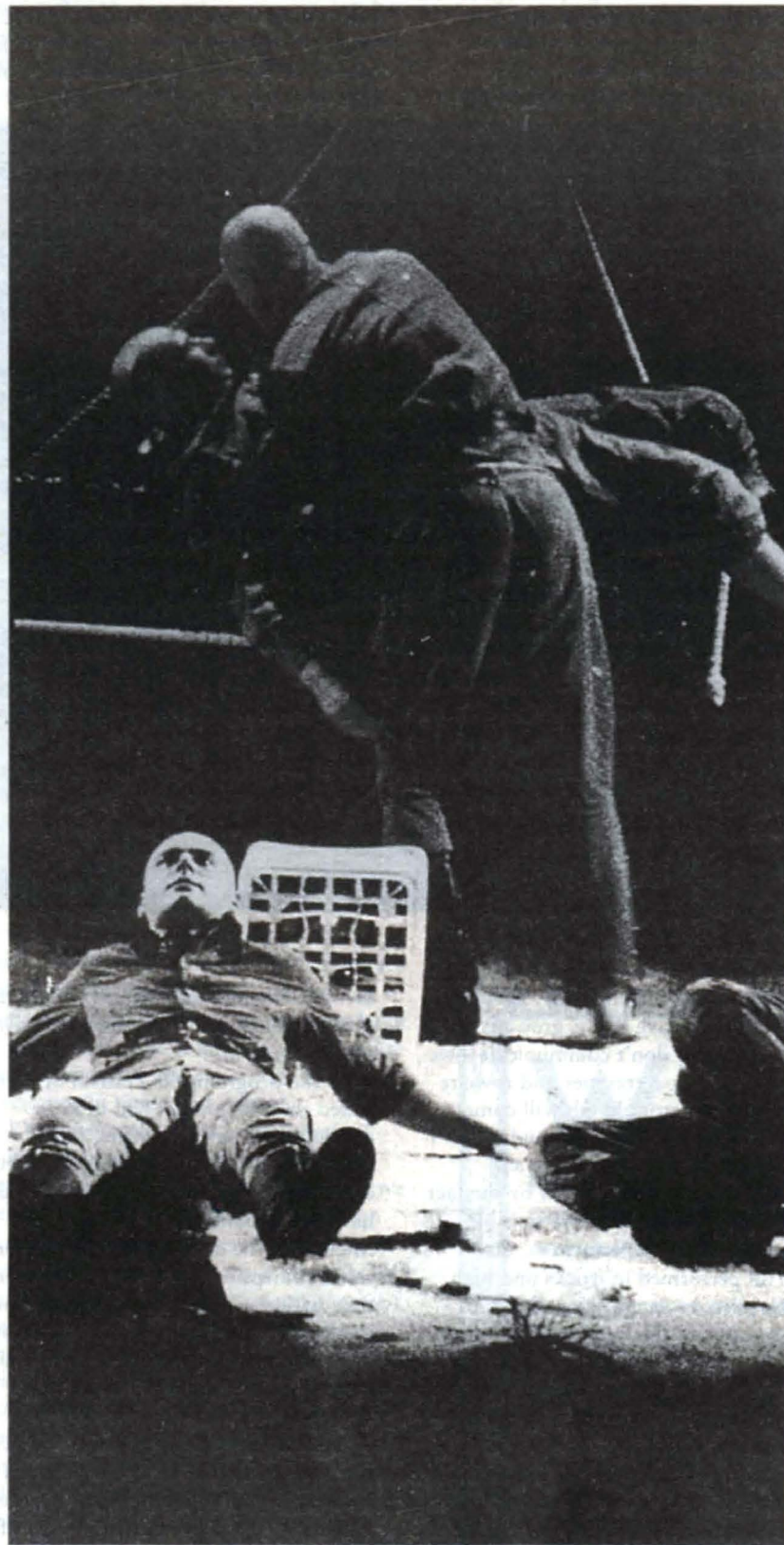
*Gaudeamus* is a passionate work of jolly manic depression, small hopes go unrealised, love is thwarted, a life is lost. The forces that control these lives are distant, therefore seemingly surreal, fateful, uncontradictable. Innocence becomes potentially evil but never consciously so. The old humanist dogma that 'these people's suffering is appalling but their resilience, their humour, blah, blah, blah', is not going to get you through this evening unless you ignore what it's about. There are moments of ecstasy and transcendence but these are undercut by a pervasive fatalism. However, the seed of individual responsibility is sown, a crack in the amorphous facade of totalitarianism.

*Gaudeamus* can be hard work, the volume of performance sometimes outweighing the material, the recurrent rhythms tiring and the surtitles competing with the intensely visual action for your attention—but better to have surtitles instead of that old nonsense of 'we don't need the text because the work is about the human condition and we all know it'. This is not any old human condition, this is about new state of mind held in dark check by an old empire.

Tuesday, March 12

The 1996 Adelaide Festival is just passing mid-point. A whole new set of performances are arriving just as the first set are enjoying the interrogations they warrant and provoke.

Questions about ecstasy as transcendent and as reductive, as spiritual, as totalitarian. The focus is about to be shared with the visual arts as Artists' Week starts up and many of the questions already raised are not about to go away—as narrativity opens out to more possibilities, as audience involvement and engagement are tested visually (*Orfeo*),



The Maly Theatre of St Petersburg *Gaudeamus*

now? A drink? ...but you don't want to drift off in the middle of the next show; it's too easy to drift away in works where the pulse is ecstatic, the mood reverie.

Already there's a festival totality, flaming Hills Hoists, alien but familiar beacons, pegs attached to everything, pegs illuminated, peg brooches, pegs projected. I almost expected the clothes washing scene in Maly's *Gaudeamus*—one of its several haunting, sometimes comic courtships—to use pegs but the clothes were slapped on to their line (a lowered lighting bar) with a brute sexual passion. I suddenly recall (prompted too by revelling in the perpetual child rough and tumble of Image Aigue's *Nits*) swinging in wild circles on the Hills Hoist before we were too big to do it any damage. The totality of images of the everyday is turned surreal, even

interior forces, external spirits, mutual tensions and hostilities.

This is the body culture of the late twentieth century, of 'get fit', of AIDS, implants, new dreams of immortality, TV news slaughter and dismemberment, of frantic highly articulated dance and serene meditative whirling. In this festival we watch—our body empathy pushed and interrogated as we sit in theatre seats. I stood for the Whirling Dervishes, I got giddy, but I couldn't sit.

The Maly Theatre's *Gaudeamus* is not a conventional play, it's built from improvisations on a Russian novel about the torments of military conscription, and it's a big performance work, tightly choreographed, musical and magical, rooted in the social and the political but slipping recurrently into the surreal—a



viscerally (La Fura dels Baus) and sexually (Annie Sprinkle).

The Australian performance commissions (save the powerful *Excavation* and the rapidly maturing and sensual *The Black Sequin Dress*) are vulnerable, barely formed, intellectually and emotionally undernourished. *The Ethereal Eye*, despite passages of fine Synergy-played composition (Jonathan Mills) and Margie Medlin's transforming lighting, is first and last a dance work, the promise of synthesis and hybridity reduced to wrap around musique concrete, wrap around percussion, wrap around projections, musicians tucked up the back out of harm's way, designer Mary Moore's great sense of danger and challenge held in check. This is history held in check, rendered abstract, quaintly neoclassical, framed in a litany of all too familiar modernist dance techniques. Red Shed's *Station 2: Eye of the Other*, overburdens itself with issues to the point of becoming television soap, doesn't know how to deploy its technologies and takes too long setting up its narrative before getting to its promising premise of relative subjectivities using scenes repeated like nightmare variations (at their best in the cinematic episodes with Dennis Moore's cab driver). Magpie/State Theatre Company's *Solstice* confirms the difficulty of transforming a reflective poem-novel into a semi-rock concert setting in which Adelaide remains an abstraction shorn of social, political, even musical reality. It's the exact other side of the *Eye of Another*. There is talent and skill in all these works, but presenting world premieres in an international festival setting is punishing.

These doubts aside, the festival is alive with a furious energy and curiosity. The recurrently inventive use of film, video and sound as integral components of many works, the multiple skills of Australian and overseas performers, the persistence and deepening of debate over Kosky's chosen themes, the communality of artists and audiences at venues and at Red Square make this an enquiring, epic and yet intimate festival.

#### Friday, March 15

In the final, escalating stages of the 1996 Adelaide Festival, the eye is opened (wider), space re-written, the body scrutinised ever more closely. This festival drives curiosity, to look (at art in) other people's houses, at lives (Bernhard, McClaren, Sprinkle) and, always, bodies—acting, dancing, dangerous (Fura dels Baus, Betontanc, DV8), playing (Bang on a Can), masturbating and open-legged to a camera wielding audience—(Annie Sprinkle).

It's also the stage at which a dialectic of reflection and debate is at its most strangely potent. In the Red Square bar someone says to me, "I didn't like the Maly at the time, but the images stay with me and stay with me and now I think the work is important for me ... but I wouldn't want to go through it again in real time". Others find themselves seduced by Maly and by the Slovenian dance company Betontanc but, like Richard Murphet in *RealTime Adelaide Festival#3* worry at the place of female artists in their works. Betontanc's wild, risky, naturalistic, sexy physicality in *Know Your Enemy*, the second of their shows, is predicated on male competition for the female body. These women are physically and emotionally strong and sometimes determine the narrative, but it is male threat which keeps you (and clearly the women) constantly nervous. While the threat of violence governs this work, the 'reality' of it against a woman in Betontanc's first, less naturalistic, physically percussive show (the pummelled set is wired for sound) is deeply disturbing. Even some passionate lovers of DV8

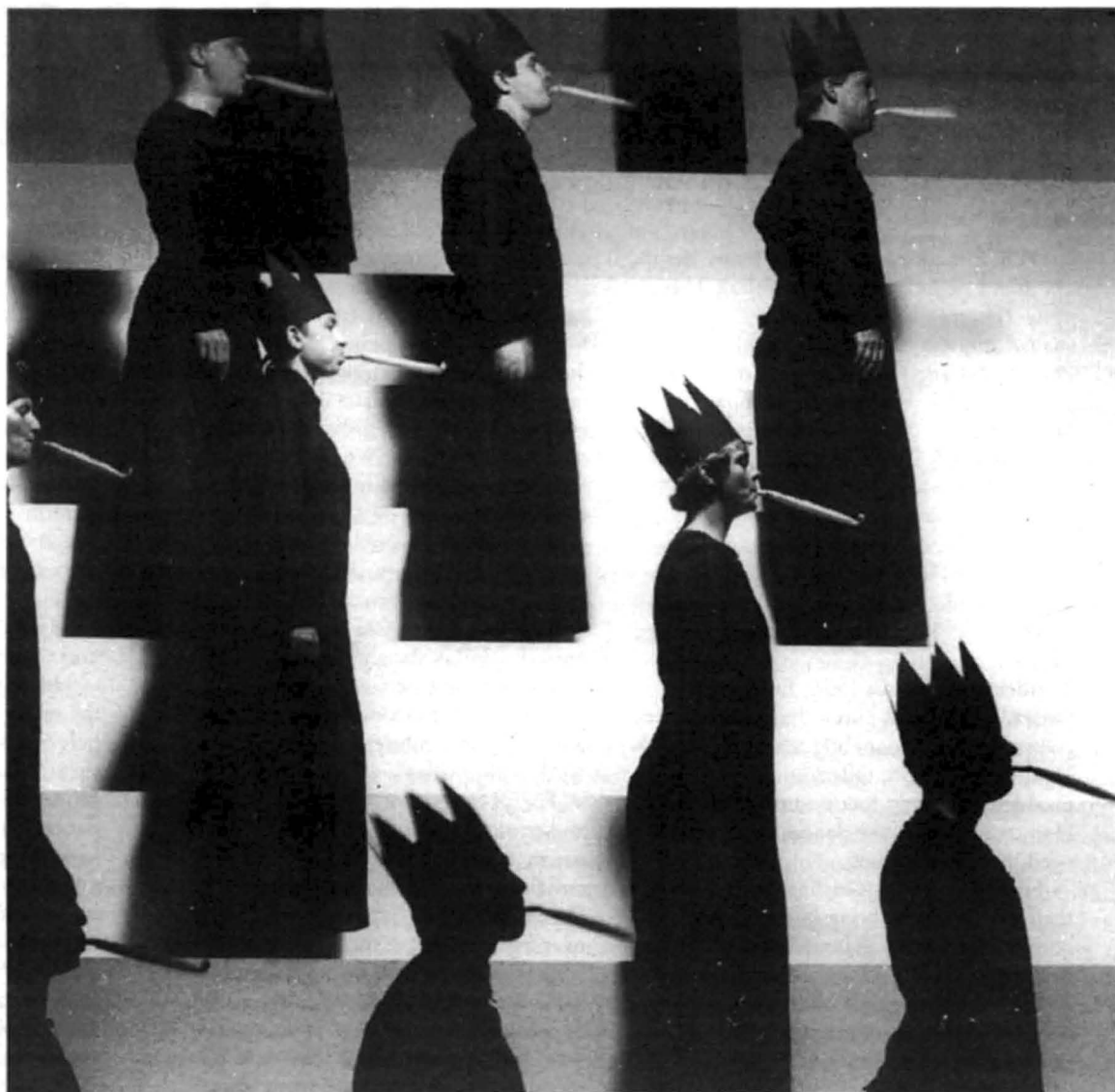
thought the narrow bandwidth of masculinity represented in *Enter Achilles* dated. The mix of admiration for and interrogation of these companies is one of the dynamics of the festival.

Annie Sprinkle has provoked predictable and valuable debate, but one of the angriest arguments encountered has been over the visual arts *Compost* exhibition of art works in private suburban homes. The objections include: the works have been inappropriately installed, the artists' intentions ignored; owners of the homes are being laughed at and exploited; the works have not been commissioned to respond to these very specific sites; too many paintings, not enough sculptures and installations representative of current trends. Curator David O'Halloran responds: the event is an innovative extension of standard curatorial practice (homes not galleries); that purchased art works 'disappear' into private homes (no artist control over where the works are hung); and that the works take on different connotations in their new contexts. As you'll see in Linda Marie Walker and Virginia Baxter's separate accounts of *Compost*, the event can be amusing, intriguing and insightful.

Similar questions of intent and appropriacy have been raised about the Whirling Dervishes (what were we really watching?) and the absence of genuine crosscultural discussion—forums focussed essentially on forms and not their contents. Our relationship with the 'other' haunts us in this festival and I mean haunts. You only have to step back for a moment from the physical and visual seductiveness of this festival to see what a dark image of the world has been realised—the pain in Meg Stuart, the fear of scarcity in Image Aigue's *Nits*, the fatalistic cultural traps and despair in Maly Theatre, the sexual irresolution in Betontanc's driven world: the idealised near naked heterosexual couple in harmony, each lifting the other democratically and with great strength, hovering as if in a dream, must descend into a world of murderous jealousy and infidelities (*Know Your Enemy*).

Molecular Theatre's *Facade Firm*, sometimes short on finesse and visually cramped in *The Space*, ironically and darkly conveys a portrait of individual oppression, the writer with his feather pen perpetually denied the very act of writing, reduced to reaching for the page, or scrawling, or jabbing at his own mirror image. The appeal of early century Witkiewicz's near surreal vision to the contemporary Japanese artist up against social and economic pressures is evident. For the audience, the fourth wall is recurrently filled in with red screens and time becomes an appalling ticking away of opportunity, oppression made beautiful with kabuki-influenced screen-play and, finally, the fourth wall is gift-wrapped.

Loss and oppression are made beautiful again in Hotel ProForma's *Orfeo*, the ultimate sensual example of this dynamic and the Festival's best work. Again denial is at work—as with *Facade Firm*, the audience is compelled utterly into the time frame of the work. For a very long time you peer into the dark at dimly lit figures.



Hotel Pro Forma Operation Orfeo

You can only listen. You learn to look with your ears and you begin to hear the pattern and groupings of voices shift across the space. Once you have learned and relished that, then you are given light and you look at a staircase framed and reframed by light and the movement of identically clothed and crowned courtly singers...and a lone dancer descending, ascending, descending into the underworld, sometimes appearing to float, sometimes dragged.

Perspective is everything in *Orfeo*, a world closed, opened, flattened, beautiful, a frightening chasm, a stairway to heaven, and finally, one that reaches out to take you—a barely voiced sigh sobs with pleasure and alarm through the theatre. This is not Gluck's *Orfeo*, it resonates with that work but its vision is a darker less redemptive contemporary one. *Orfeo* is the Festival's most complete synthesis of the architectural and the euphoric. Once again though, this is no easy ecstasy. To sustain the pleasures of *Orfeo* read Ib Michael's disturbing and richly imagistic libretto (in the printed program) again and again. Like the sound and music compositions by John Cage and Bo Holten, the design and the lighting, it creates an otherworldly sense of right now and an alien then.

Within a few days from its conclusion, it's clear that Barrie Kosky has created the festival he envisioned and set a benchmark for future Australian arts festivals. Some have argued that there is a paucity of truly great works in the festival (equivalents, say, to the Frankfurt Ballet in the otherwise lacklustre 1994 festival), however *Orfeo* at least should put that concern aside and so should the thematic intensity of the festival, the power of art form collisions and collaborations, the willingness to look pain in the face, the achievements of *Excavation* and *The Black Sequin Dress*, the inspiration drunk by many, many artists from Meg Stuart, the Maly Theatre and Handspring's *Woyzeck on the High veld* and *Faustus in Africa*, and the constant debate over shows and issues.

We are taking home a theatre of images in our minds and bodies, ecstatic and pained movement, images like the magnet and the spanner in the sky charcoaled on film and into us as *Woyzeck*'s grimly

apocalyptic vision possesses him, or the valley of the soul is entered via film in Jenny Kemp's *The Black Sequin Dress* and via sound, a breathing that becomes ours in Elizabeth Drake's sound design. This a reminder of how significant a role 'return to sound' has played in this festival, from *The Listening Room* in the Rotunda, to Art Zoyd and Pierre Henry and *The Ethereal Eye* and *Excavation* and in the boldest of the festival's considerable musical pleasures, the Bang on a Can All Stars, a rich, engaging embrace of the sonics of contemporary music a generation on, it seems, from the adventure initiated by the Kronos Quartet.

#### Coda. Saturday, March 30

After our final trip to the printer in Adelaide, I catch IRAA's *The Blue Hour* and, drawn back by the power of the combination of puppetry and animation in *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, see Handspring's *Faustus in Africa*. This is a bigger, more ambitious work than *Woyzeck* but shares with it director William Kentridge's charcoal animations (see cover photo) conjuring locations and alarming states of mind, turning old print advertisements surreal (a voracious typewriter swallows, amongst other things, an elephant and spits out the tusks) as the European fantasy of empire turns into a nasty reality. Handspring provide the closest thing to traditional theatre in the festival with their rich texts and the acting demands placed on the brilliant puppeteers, but like much of the festival it's a theatre of expanded means and vision. Back in Sydney, an exhibition of Kentridge's charcoal works, many of them from *Faustus in Africa* and remarkable animated films (on video) has just opened at the Annandale Galleries.

Back in Sydney, the Australian Ballet rises to the great demands of William Forsythe's *In the middle, somewhat elevated*, comparing well with the Frankfurt Ballet version at the 1994 Adelaide Festival; and Gravity Feed's *In the House of Skin* at The Performance Space is a miracle of Australian performance deserving its place in future festivals. The festival rolls on.



# The space between

Zsuzsanna Soboslay reflects on Adelaide Festival dance and performance

DV8, *Enter Achilles* (U.K.); Jenny Kemp, *The Black Sequin Dress* (Australia); The Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg, *Claustrophobia* (Russia); Molecular Theatre, *Facade Firm* (Japan); Ethereal Eye (Australia); Batsheva Dance Company's *Mabul* (Israel); Company Hildegarde, *Inje* (Australia/Bulgaria); Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods, *No-One Is Watching* (U.S.).

At edges such as death (illness, vulnerability, humiliation), one can cross a state from life as we know it to what we don't know. The crossing itself can feel like dying...

Adelaide Festival, 1996. Enter Meg Stuart, who knows about dying: her dance pieces are a long dangling that won't break. Held within a grid, tailed, snuffled, prodded, faltering, focussed on restriction... Hamstrung, bald, she dances pockets of need, building nothing.

Enter The Burley Griffins, who suffer for their dream of Canberra as they try to construct a city by channelling into the overworld.

Enter Jenny Kemp's black-sequined woman who slips in a cocktail bar and di(v)es into her underworld.

And then, Enter Achilles: a spectacular DV8 dance piece by Lloyd Newson about the "labyrinth of male rituals", set in the ideal location for head (butting), ear (holding), shoulder (shoving), chest (puffing), bellies (sleeking), thighs (crunching, mocking, smooching), knees (jiving), ankles (flicking), soles (crushing). A pub, of course: the terror of collusion in industry, of post down-the-mine camaraderie. But where's the heel?

The Greek Achilles could eat a haired horse without indigestion—invulnerable, apart from his heel, where his mother, dipping him in the great river Styx for protection, had to hold him. This is a story of loyalty and betrayal, of a man coming to the revenge of his mate—yet it is still a story of war and action within war. The violable point, which connects him with his mother, is the warrior's undoing but is also the very sign of his humanity and ungodliness.

*Enter Achilles* is a sculpted work of

incredible and ferocious physical skill. It also exemplifies every reason you might have ever stayed away from the pub. Vomit, brawn, competitiveness, the demeaning of women, hyperbolic Superman fantasies—and just plain showing off. These guys are heroes with great asses, as much as objects of repulsion. We have to watch from the sides of the football field, and cheer on.

The dancers execute everything so well, from punch-ups to push-ups, from piss-ups and pissing in pints to a red-hot rope act and fucking an orgasm-painted plastic doll until the doll is slaughtered and the men shed crocodile tears.

Where is the dealing with failure, the going through failure to find the unknown on the other side?

For all its extraordinary physical skill and truthful observation of certain male rituals, this piece and its world of men remains safe. The audience loves it. "Just like real life," they say, when the finale is over and they begin their personal replays.

Have they turned, or only mirrored the heel? Nothing is displaced in the realm. Superman's moments are affectionately satirised but nonetheless survive as a means of protecting male culture from being pierced. Split-stage episodes [jobs on a building-site rig highstage whilst a man fucks a rubber dolly lowstage; pub brawlies soccerrooing lowstage synchronised with Superman spinning a jig highstage] are theatrically effective, but the split does not go deep enough: the staging exemplifies how far men will go to cope and protect each other from being pierced, and changing something of what shows itself to the world.

So many pieces in this Festival reflect a masculine and/or mechanical re-production of cultures that thrive on a given order and don't want to change. *Facade Firm*, by Molecular Theatre, is a bizarre and relentless piece about Japanese cultural conformism, with men in suits and women pretending to be men in suits re-arranging view-frames, by order of The Firm. In a Kafkaesque way, The Firm is both an incorporation, and a prescription for behaviour, of what above all costs must be

maintained.

The Maly Theatre of St Petersburg demonstrates in *Claustrophobia* how closely bound are autocracy/oligarchy, conformity and misogyny across Russian history. It is a madhouse of meals becoming a murder, music leaping through windows. Tubas examine a dead body which begins to sing. Does it matter to be alive? Does it matter that I ever had a soul? I hear your heartbeat march through the curl of a marching band. Keep marching...

This is brutal entrapment. Ruched curtains ascend and descend on something that has always been. Men magically sliding up walls with desire; a rake grows from watering, but love itself does not grow. There is only either Pavlova, Pushkin, or vodka [fights over, after, or between all three].

Maly's physical work is excellent: all the great skills of Russian method and madness (athleticism, stylistic power that captures the music and undertows of language) are here. This is music-theatre, dance-theatre, theatre-theatre where boundaries and borders, truth and lies become the same dance. But where are the attempts to show how things might be otherwise? Maly is a young company, Russia's avant-garde: it is bleak of them not to explore the hope for another possible world.

Whilst *Claustrophobia* shows a pointed understanding of entrapment, Hildegarde of Melbourne (not Bingen) replicates it unwittingly. In *Inje*, a gaggle of village girls splash and lust and practice hysteria whilst a single male figure holds their attentions to ransom with knife cuts, slashes, whips and bribes. Though inviting us to partake of a sensory world of water, mud, blood, of clogged feet dancing, arguing where they are going, who do they belong to? The piece's relentless tempo and shrill pickings of language are drowned by overactivity and uncertain focus, leaving the "hero" a thug and his women so ground into their cultural roles that their habits, actions, responses remain pre-ordained.

The difference with Jenny Kemp's work for example is that the work is crafted with a respect for stillness and the curl and pungency of words, and, whilst remaining within a heterosexually preclusive definition of female-as-object of the gaze, *The Black Sequin Dress* yet struggles with this and attempts to give voice to the falterings of doubt amidst the quotidian struggle to continue. The ways men miss the point here are poignant, sympathetic, but very clear.

A different eye is exercised in *The Ethereal Eye*, a multi-levelled collaboration which aims at dancing and sounding an aetheric vision whilst giving strange cues on the physical plane. The Burley Griffins' struggle is itself remote and removed (as unfortunately are the musical instruments!), and the dancers' bodies aloof. This is intentional; yet, whilst looking for aether's "moving and rising, forming, changing", one also sees a certain uniform erectness of neck and pointing of arms which perhaps impedes the energy flow. I enjoy moments when Byron Perry's body interrogates the dance, instinctively bringing a sudden muscle into a turn, a whipping fraction of speed through arm or knee. There is also a crucial central segment where one by one the dancers, each describe a circle until another dancer joins, as if shared inspiration multiplies and divides and releases another and another shape that cuts and queries the first. Here lie the possibilities of meeting, of construction (architecture is, after all, not just an idea) both within the performance itself and in relation to its subject.

The idea—as stated in the program—of a focus on spatial rather than political or biographical plane worries me. As Meg Stuart realises, space is political—although certainly it would not appear to be so to Batsheva Dance Company's artistic director Ohad Nahin, whose glib forum statement—immediately dismissed by himself as a joke, a fabrication—about saving his autistic brother by dancing for him as a child, shows words well-oiled, like his dance, but dubious. Within a few days, the structure, shape and timbre of his *Mabul* are lost to me beyond the starring hamster and a few smooth turns.

Time and space are marked in different ways by all these works: punctured and lamented in, bogged and bugled in, slipped into and pondered in, oiled and glossed through, spun over and around.

So many maps of so many routes...the body's presence often missing. Theatre and dance's bodies ask difficult questions of the relationships between past and contemporary, cultural and emotional histories which are difficult to leave aside in the complex acts of watching. What enters? What exits? What has been the space between?

Zsuzsanna Soboslay is a writer, director, performer and bodywork therapist working in Sydney, Melbourne and Wollongong.

## Soundtracking

Keith Gallasch revisits a childhood cinema to revisit a silent classic

Murnau's silent film classic still amazes, with its abrupt, brisk editing, its vertiginous camera angling, its melodramatic drive and complex villain. In the late 60s I watched a poor 16mm print at the WEA in the heyday of Adelaide's intense film festival culture under the direction of Eric Williams. Now here I am at the Thebarton Theatre where I once danced to The Clash, sang along with Elvis Costello, and was changed by Pina Bausch's dance hall reverie *Kontaktoff*. But before that, the Thebarton Town Hall was one of the circuit of cinemas-my movie crazy family would attend in the 50s twice, sometimes three times a week (and I'd go to the Saturday matinees as well)—Woodville, Hindmarsh, Kilkenny, Croydon, the Port, Semaphore, Alberton, in theatres called Ozone, Odeon or Odeon Star; picture palaces of the old style or smooth late deco. This re-visit seems appropriate in a festival with themes embracing the city and architecture.

For some reason my movie memory at Thebarton fixes on that strange western

*Ride, Vacquero* (1953) with Anthony Quinn as the baddy, his dirty feet filling the screen, Howard Keel as the man who can't be a hero and Robert Taylor at his campest, an ageing angel of death in blackest gunslinger black, the hired gun in decline who at last flirts with his conscience. As with *Nosferatu* it's the villain who grabs you and into whom you read as much as you desire and as much as you are repelled by. Art Zoyd's live (much of it pre-programmed presumably) through-composed response to *Nosferatu* is in the tradition of popular French techno music—heavily synthesised and sometimes fretless bass-driven, its themes rooted in ostinatos-as-motifs, a minimalist insistence that is sometimes powerful.

On the other hand, there is a wearying literalness—sound effects, sweet themes for the heroine, conventional bursts of music for moments of horror, slow builds for suspense. These merely underline what is already at work in the film and while well within the tradition of composition for

film, seem less inventive than such a film demands. At times the effect is enervating—the shift between a pulsing insistence (sometimes percussively ham-fisted) working contrapuntally and a dull literalism. The audience response is enthusiastic. I suspect many of them hadn't seen the film before and clearly many of them like the music's popular synthesizer drive (certainly superior to the fate of the revived *Metropolis*). One viewer said immediately after the screening, "Why did they bother to play it live? They might as well have whacked it on the sound track. It was all so pre-meditated—no sense of spontaneous interpretation, of improvising with their material to what they were seeing". Art Zoyd, though, are not to be underrated—the best moments came with cello, violin, some rare work with voice and when they didn't seem to be simply



running with or pushing along or pumping up the narrative.

Art Zoyd (France), *Nosferatu*, Thebarton Theatre.



# Imperfect present continuous

Linda Marie Walker looks at the Adelaide Festival's visual arts programme.

I'm not keen on the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia, hung in the elegant new wing. And this surprises me. In the recent past I might have thought 'yes'. There's a bureaucratic feel to much of the work, making it seem sad, and sort of reluctant. A decided known quality, which is limp, rather than languid. When did this happen, and how irritating this turn of events seems, how amazing even. Still, as always, there are pieces of work that resonate. For me these were Bronwyn Platten's, Craigie Andrae's, and Shane Breynard's.



Constanze Zikos *Soft Flag/Bedsprad*

I know Platten's (the paper boat and the wall plate) from her solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre (Adelaide) late last year. There its context was defined with much care, being delicate and intense, and its fragile airiness survives here.

Andrae's fly came in for extensive public derision (letters to the paper, calls to talkback). When I visited, fly was a square shallow perspex box on the wall with a thin layer of dead black flies (almost unrecognisable) along the bottom, and stains of blood, like smudged letters, all over the front and back, and shadowed onto the wall behind. Here, captured, they had dashed themselves/starved to death.

Breynard's set of pale almost monochrome photographs and concave blank screens are smooth, resolute: declaring/persuading nothing: "a sort of ergonomics for the eye" (catalogue). There, together, as space, to be approached, engaged. And even though cramped, and very still in the 'noise', they left an afterimage.

Nearby was Anne Graham's *Off the Rails*, along the concourse of the Adelaide Railway Station. This was an impressive venue. Commuters coming and going, the casino directly above. At night the row of tents glowed, their kerosene lamps orange beacons, and their exact symmetry wave-like. A film was being shown in one tent. People stood around, or sat and watched, ate soup, had a glass of wine. Several of us leaned against the railing of a high walkway, looking down, content to be mere spectators.

At the Experimental Art Foundation, nearby too, artists-in-residence Wendy Kirkup and Pat Naldi continued their collaborative investigations of street surveillance, begun in 1993 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. There was a gallery installation (*Cross-Winds*), a video in the bookshop (*Search*), and a TV broadcast. Each part of the project offered a way of linking perspectives: public became private, map became sound, walking became ritual.

The gallery was dissected by lines. From a centre point these radiated outward, heading toward locations, their co-ordinates given on the wall. A cartographer has measured the metres from the gallery to the Adelaide University for instance. So this was a plan, over-sung by melodious and meditative female voices. The stark installation was replete with breath, with wind: with fragments from opera. And although the body is watched via technology, invaded by law, the gift of sound was touching, that is, the body goes

about its own mapping, regardless. A walk to any of the given sites would be unique, an unrepeatable text. The video, taken by police cameras, shows this walking body, as it passes. "We are no longer unregarded as we walk up Rundle Mall in search of clothes or cigarettes or coffee." (Richard Grayson, catalogue)

*Compost* was in the suburb of Norwood, close to the city-centre but dispersed enough to need a car or bike to see it all in one go. It was the most complex and time-consuming of the Festival's visual arts program, sometimes taking people up

to six hours. Here the audience negotiated private and public territories, as well as questions of intent and expectation regarding domestic decisions and governed desires. Time and distance was more demanding than the work, and the curators must have known this.

*Compost* could be about 'passage'. As it was not only an exhibition. There was a Lecture Program, usually known

as Artists' Week, a set of workshops (by Geoff Lowe, and by Christopher Snee), and a performance by Doppio Teatro.

It is often difficult to be in the suburbs. And easy too, to take one's time, to re-scale one's hopes, and failure (here) sometimes indicates a type of already accepted (and re-played) knowledge. *Compost* was an experiment. Next time it will be different, of course.

*Compost*, the exhibition, points to an ongoing discussion amongst visual artists and audiences concerning spatial meanings. David O'Halloran, the principle curator



Maria Kozic *Bitches* (2 of 5 figures)

(with John Barbour and Paul Hewson), summarises this: "In local terms *Compost* was built from two specific histories—the first being the story of a small series of exhibitions initiated by John Barbour in 1991 and entitled *Critical City*—the second the history of the development of Artists' Week itself as an indigenous cultural event. Barbour's *Critical City* project consisted of a series of exhibitions and installations of work by both local and interstate artists—these were primarily staged on an individual basis in the artists' own houses and studios." (Visual Art Program, Adelaide Festival)

It was reported that Robyn Archer (Director of the next two Adelaide Festivals) said at the *Compost* plenary session: "I long for something more than razor-blades and elephants...I want out of visual art the same measure of thrills as the performing arts deliver—and that includes the speakers." (*Advertiser*, 16.3.96) Well, long live the difference. She went on: "Can anyone here tell me of one exhibition they saw which changed their lives?"

*Compost* was a terrific exhibition, subtle, funny, awkward. Fifteen houses,

fifteen artists, and numerous art works. An opportunity to see inside people's homes, to look at their things, to spot the art amongst furniture, objects etc; an excuse to stare at the whip over the door knob, and the little blurry print next to Suzy Treister's painting *Study*, across from the Maria Kozic cut-out women, *Bitch*. The precise lighting, sound, smell in which to view the artwork was as fascinating as any 'performance' I have seen. The Anna Platten painting, *Puppets*, at Gertrude Street, in bright natural light was so dramatic, luminous, that it was easy to isolate bits and pieces, as if the light allowed this. And then later, at Scott Street, in a renovated church, another Platten, *Hulahoop*, in soft light, beneath high coloured-glass windows. The painting somehow a 'fit' with the windows. The painting a 'window' too. And both opaque. And someone was making a sandwich, someone else reading to two children.

The placement of the Howard Arkley painting, *Ultra Klean*, of the kitchen in the kitchen at Beulah Road was acute, not just for the painting, but for the kitchen. The soft parts of the painting demonstrating how one sees the actual kitchen. Things in and out of focus. The curve of the real chair, echoing the painted one. The householder said the kitchen used to have lino on the floor just like Arkley's. The kitchen and the painting remained apart, yet entertained each other.

*Compost* beat seeing art in the gallery (momentarily), it enlivened, re-organised, readings to such an extent that another logic began to play. Something complementary, and exquisite even, a logic that isn't binary. Suddenly, one was through the front door, curious, is that 'it', a Stephen Bram, sure, looking like it had always been there. Same with the Zikos spread/hanging. A huge covering, over the bed, in a small room. And one noticed the

buttons and the glittering silver underside. And in the dining-room another couple of Bram's. The minder pointed them out. This is weirdly wonderful for a regular gallery goer, and welcome too, in a small way, the presence of an instructor with their stories of other visitors. Like the argument about the two parallel wooden bars by Tony Schwensen at Alexandra Street not crossing, and this meaning (therefore) 'nothing'. And how the minder was enchanted by them, as they were like a Japanese garden (and I agreed), "except for the metal stands" ...

And now and then a bit of gossip: apparently one of the Bram paintings was hung upside down. And one of the householders made a piece of art, "just last night" inspired by the Bram drawings, which he'd mistaken for installation diagrams for the artwork yet to arrive, and hung it close to Regina Walter's greased fluoro, *Ware*.

Accumulating, gradually, during this journey/passage was the stuff of 'home', of being human, of being strange in the place of strangers. Like the moment one realises the enormity of the doll collection. An impossible moment because on the floor were a dozen or more small grey concrete elephants (Christopher Snee, *We are all elephants*). A collection too. They looked so sweet and precious, not consumed, which one might have thought, but made distinct and sparsely by their modest number.

Across the intersection, the vicar's study, with hundreds of blades attached to the walls and shelves, and razors too of all ages, and Steve Wigg photographed in



Howard Arkley *Ultra Klean*

Alan Cruickshank

various male guises (Steve Wigg, *Shaving rituals*). The books were tempting, a little look into one of those slim volumes, with the risk of being cut.

Helen Fuller's glowing raincoat and work-lights hovering low over small painted boards, in the shed at Moulden Street contrasted with the chromed rubbish bin in the lounge. All the shed-work comes to 'this': the care for rubbish. A certain pride.

Back at Alexandra Street are the nine *Post Office Paintings* by Stephen Bush. They are about rubbish, huge narratives about the smallness of 'post' office, of the office of posting. About what is left, afterwards, stacked one against the other.

*Compost* had a generative and generous joy, and engaged at ordinary and vulnerable levels. It took its name seriously, as composition, combination: the forming of something humid and dense.

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# Seeing round corners

Richard Murphet surveys the performance grid at the Adelaide Festival.

Molecular Theatre, *Facade Firm*; Jenny Kemp, *The Black Sequin Dress*; Meg Stuart/Damaged Goods, *No One Is Watching*; The Maly Theatre Company *Claustrophobia*; Handspring Puppet Company, *Woyzeck On The Highveld*

*If the world were perfectly flat, there would be no motive for going anywhere; we would have no conception of absence, apparently. It is the irrigous uncertainties of the ground that introduce us to the adventure of taking calculating steps, of engaging with in-between spaces; and this adventure translates itself into stress and breath patterns.*

Paul Carter, *The Lie of The Land*

Whilst Adelaide Festival-goers were trekking their bumpy paths across the grid of the city, back in Melbourne over a hundred thousand people spent Sunday watching the Formula One cars going nowhere, giving the illusion of speed as they tore around the 'perfectly flat' course, lying atop the compacted earth, in a linear pattern of endless self-negation. It is tempting to test one event out through the metaphor of the other. After all, Adelaide had been robbed of the Grand Prix and here was Jeff shoving it in their faces as they celebrated a very different form of cultural expression. Very different—and yet in some ways the nature of a festival of the arts has some similarities to the race. Shows roll out of the pits, tanked up, adrenalin pumping, full of sound and fury. Certainly for the theatre crews, those unsung champions, it must have seemed at times like nothing more than an undiluted test of mechanical expertise—shows merging into one another, lost in the haze of lighting plots and tech runs and bumps in and out. Hats off to them all, they deserve the champagne. And then there is the factor of competition. Who won the race? It was after all the ultimate focus of the original festivals at Epidauros. In a Festival as diverse as this one, however, there is room for anyone to have their aesthetic and politics reinforced or challenged or overturned. Kosky may have murmured about overriding themes such as ecstasy or utopia but in actuality he backed his own

omnivorous appetite and gathered a range of delicacies across the disciplines and from countries, groups and spaces large and small, East, West and 'in-between'.

Within the diversity, the message that kept returning to me from show to show was one of disjunction, a world out of joint and the inhabiting bodies and psyches twisting and distorting, slipping down its crevices, trapped inside trying to break out or stepping carefully on its surface, aware of the breaking tension that exists between the flat territorialised society and what Paul Carter calls 'the folding and unfolding' of our 'porous, spongy, rough, irregular' earth. Rather than reduce the complex terrain of the festival to one flattened overview, I shall focus this one admittedly subjective perspective on a small but representative sample.

In Molecular Theatre's *Facade Firm*, the flat canvas of denatured, colonised space is stretched tight, to the breaking point. Grey-suited ambi-sexual figures move 24 red squares around in a constant tease of configuration, like workers on a predetermined production line. The uncertainties of art are flattened into the formal regularities of facade, and the untidiness of artistic production is regulated in the verbal text into a series of contract clauses between the customer and the Portrait Painting Firm employed. *Facade Firm* reminded me of a piece of Philip Glass music. All idiosyncrasies, all semblance of plot or melodic line are eschewed in favour of endless shifts in perspective. Paradoxically, the result of this focus on the facade is to heighten awareness of 'in-between spaces'. In one sequence the extended human figure is viewed unfolding in the gaps between the ordered line of canvases. Fitted together like jigsaw pieces, the canvases block all view to the recesses behind. Remove one and the ground is porous, the possibilities for irregularity emerge.

The Woman figure stands, at the beginning of *Black Sequin Dress*, still, outside her brick home, seemingly stable, but sensing she is on the edge. "Her arm goes down, her knees bend and she keels over, she faints off the edge of the earth, she falls out of the dead landscape." There ensues a seemingly endless series of meditations upon that fall and all that it may mean. Meditations folded layer upon layer, text interlaced with visual image, the elements of the landscape carefully orchestrated, with Elizabeth Drake's score providing the dynamic of 'irrigous uncertainty'. Against the ground of Jacqui Everitt's formal, slightly surreal nightclub, the psyche (decentered through four actresses) slips through the spaces in-between and 'adventures' underground. The image of journey and of death is present in the ever-arriving train. Figures of myth and fantasy are encountered in the jungle of the soul. The psyche gulps air again and again

on the slippery surface of the 'real' club of the night, only to plummet once more. Bit by bit with extraordinary delicacy and determination she makes it up and out of the nightmare through her own acts of seeing, through the support of her fellows and through what Mandelstam calls 'the impulses, intentions and amplitudes of oscillation'. Now she knows that the ground on which she stands is not stable.

"The inside was the outside, she remembered. The bricks the forest the walls the sky, entering and leaving."

Damaged Goods' *No One Is Watching* traverses the level plane of the stage as if it has all the treacherous uncertainty of untouched terrain. The unadorned folds of flesh of the large woman sitting immobile throughout the performance are emblematic of the unevenness of this wild country of the disturbed psyche. The tiniest everyday gestures repeated become the obsessive ingredients of a diseased state that gradually and always inevitably spreads throughout the entire group, distorting the bodies into movement patterns as transfixing as they are 'unbeautiful'. And there is an inexorability to the rhythm. If the group is ever able to find some sense of physical unity (and this is always in pain or obsession and usually without any individual recognising the others) there is always one individual who breaks the pattern, who becomes preoccupied with another state of being. This is 'the adventure of stress and breath patterns' made visible. We watch as the psyche, the society, the civilisation is seized and convulses. Attempts are made by one or occasionally two figures to connect with another, to express an emotion which has something to do with tenderness. Unfortunately, at the time, the intended receiver is not watching, possessed by a force that has little to do with love.

In the face of our terror with the raw surfaces of the uncivilised earth we build houses, civilisations, political systems as defences. "Our homes are tumuli erected over the slaughtered body of the giant ground" (Carter). And then we trap ourselves in them. Agoraphobia leads to claustrophobia. The young Russians in Maly's *Claustrophobia* are trapped in a huge crumbling room beyond repair. They may sense the horizon of their wide land, but if they are to get there they have to drag with them an enormous amount of baggage, the legacies of their country's



Handspring Puppet Company

great and infamous attempts at social organisation. They do this before us, enacting, embodying, singing, arguing, floating up into the flies, breaking out through the walls, only to return again to continue the fight. A generation using theatre to sort out where they've been, where they are and where they may be going. *Claustrophobia* was as multifarious as this sounds—demanding, problematic, confusing, funny, rich in reference, ubiquitous in genre and form, deeply moving. The room is filled with ghosts to be exorcised, mainly ghosts of untrammelled male totalitarian power. It was one of the stress patterns of the piece that it found so little opportunity for the women within the group to make a positive contribution to the unfolding action. This is a disjointed world falling tragically apart before our eyes. The ultimate result of our disjunction with the land is that we forget the very spirit that we have tamed. "To found the colony, to inaugurate linear history and its puppet-theatre of marching soldiers and treadmills, was to embrace an environmental amnesia." (Carter)

In Handspring's puppet version of Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck*, the effects of social disjunction are observed in the individuals who are victims of it—the tiny figures of the puppet characters. Everyone in this army village seems lost, amnesiac. Only Woyzeck hears the sound of the crushed spirit of the land, rising up from beneath the cleared ground, writing itself in the stars. The only one at home in this 'puppet-theatre of marching soldiers' is the flesh and blood master of ceremonies who at least knows he's in a theatre. He is Political Man, who welcomes us, charms us, seems to sympathise and then proceeds to undermine our trust and dupe those poor puppets into his deadly circus tricks. This figure is an addition by Handspring and together with William Kentridges video graphics imaging Woyzeck's distorted psyche, he brings into the evil twentieth century this tragedy of the disjointed soul.

## A vision exhumed

Keith Gallasch reports on Michael Kantor's *Excavation* of political and theatre history

Australian culture is not strong on apocalyptic visions. Our moderation is born of a benign fatalism with its mythologies of defeated explorers (*Voss* is an interesting attempt to add European vision to an Australian lack), victory in defeat (the Anzac legend), perpetual youthful sporting challenges to the old world where the apocalyptic vision is possible, signalling fears of the end of greatness or dreams of transcendence. We're not in either space yet. To see an account of Karl Kraus' nightmare vision of a dark apocalypse just down the road from The Jolly Miller where we'd sometimes go to drown our sorrows in beer after yet another West Torrens defeat, not far from the brickworks and the pugholes that sometimes burned in their depths,

apocalyptically, through 50s summers to the olfactory tune of Westend brewery hops, was an unnerving experience. Perhaps after this festival of ecstasy and apocalypse we'll never be the same.

I'm not sure how much Karl Kraus has got to do with director Michael Kantor's vision. Not a lot more than a broad framework I suspect, but *Excavation* is in the spirit of Kraus' least dialectical thinking and prophetic anxieties, the 'sledgehammer Kraus' a fellow audience member observed, didactic with a blunt instrument. The production offers vision as visual with relatively few words, a pity for Kraus 'the language obsessive'. But there are many compensations, the chief of which is an astonishing sense of detail, precision and commitment in movement,

costuming, acting and in the marshalling of a big cast of students training to be professional performers.

There is almost too much to relish in this mammoth 'puppet play' which two Beckettian figures create in a wasteland of the future (tons of dirt, a bunker), literally winding up the bunker stage into shuddering life, replete with Brechtian curtain, and a cast of angels, generals, judges, war cripples popping up out of the floor (shades of the Maly Theatre's *Claustrophobia*). These spell out the history of a war, Kraus' vision of World War I as if it just kept going right on into a totalitarian state. This transition requires the characters to leave their stage and venture into the future of massed callisthenics, eugenics (as brutal, bloody castrations) and art as pure bland ideology. The performance is for the Lord, a mechanical figure from the future who, with his minions, dresses as if to ward off radiation. This is about as contemporary as the work gets. The vision, Kraus' and Kantor's, seems doggedly historical, even quaint, as foreign an

apocalypse as ever. But it's a rare opportunity to see an interpretation exquisite in detail though not in overview of a text that would (if ever fully tackled) take days to perform. You get to feel some of its magnitude, aided in no small way by Kidney Art Ensemble's quite contemporary original, live music. Kraus, living in Vienna, a city 'paved with culture', thought life had got to the point of parodying art. It's a pity Kantor didn't take this opportunity to use Kraus to see where we're going now, what we're acting out. Still, *Excavation* was one of the highlights of the festival, another glowering fin de siècle vision.

*Excavation, The Last Days of Mankind, Centre for the Performing Arts and Mene Mene Theatre, director Michael Kantor; choreographer, Xiao Xiong Zhang; movement, Jenn Havelberg; designer, Dan Potra; lighting, Jason Hammer; sound design, Paul Couley; music, Kidney Art Ensemble; translation, Anthony Ernst. Vision Warehouse, Hindmarsh.*



# Into the underworld

Virginia Baxter on the boundaries at the Adelaide Festival

*For me the Adelaide Festival provided a synaesthetic experience—images and places merging, music and film, words and movements, sound and light. Performances brush against one another and synaesthesia reaches perfection in Hotel Pro Forma's Orfeo, a performance so sublime that dark becomes light, music becomes touch, and movement sound. On the way to the underworld, I followed my own circuitous paths, including this one: Annie Sprinkle, Post Porn Modernist, Royalty Theatre; Compost, 15 private homes in Norwood.*

Annie Sprinkle is running a little late but finally greets us at 8.25 in flower print flanellette nightie and headset radio microphone. She completes the stage picture—carnival bedroom, lingerie and sex tools glued to the bed head shooting gallery. Carnie music. Dressing table draped with wigs and boas, a big mirror. Slide one. Annie begins the story of that part of her life she has made public. Her transformation from shy, boring and friendless Ellen to loveable prostitute and porn star Annie.

11 a.m. Composting in 37 degree heat, we jump at the offer of a ride from curator David O'Halloran escorting the jetlagged and dehydrated New York artist Dan Graham round the houses. At Beulah Road, Regina Walter's greasy pole sculpture *Ware* buzzes in the corner of the kitchen. Time collapses as the radio reports two stabbings in Adelaide overnight. Did you see, says Dan, the woman at the table was reading a copy of *Killer Women*.

Annie doesn't tell us much about how her transformation occurred. It just did, as we will see later in photos of other converts. (Meet secretary Sue-Ann. Slide change. Now meet Sa-man-tha!) A gasp from the audience at the transformation of a middle aged professional woman to *Hustler* pinup. Annie outlines her career path. I can never concentrate on pie

charts. Was it the height of the Empire State (minus the spire) she fellated and several pint or litres of sperm she swallowed, a teaspoon at a time? I do remember the little groan from the audience as Annie stepped too close to the line. Small business people in the audience noted that soiled panties sell at \$150 and up. She does a nice parody of the porn flick and then poses spread-legged for some touchingly shy amateur photographers in the audience. ("Don't worry if there's no film in the camera").

Portrush Road. Helen Fuller enters the exclusion zone of her dead father's shed, reclaims his ghostly raincoat and shines a light through it. Here it hangs in the corner of another man's garage. The nameplate from his office hangs above the door.

Annie has encountered, she thinks, about a hundred horrible people in her life. And a little trouble with the law. The pain of these encounters she exorcises by taking out a piece of four by two with a dozen dildoes glued to it and proceeds to suck and wildly stroke to a soundtrack of sirens and screams. Again, I can't help thinking of those disembodied clown faces with mouths spurting ping pong balls. Annie chokes and splutters her way to the mirror, dabs her eyes. Drama dispensed with, we return to the more interesting story—real life with pictures. It's like William Yang without the sedate remove of the professional photographer. The Adelaide Festival audience (a mix of middle-aged couples, leather girls and backpackers) is led through a sideshow of fist fucking, amputee sex, penis piercing and golden showers (I just got it—Sprinkle!).

Which way to the art? Nelson Street. A woman is sewing at a table with a Maria Kozic cardboard cutout *Bitch* pouting from the corner. On the way out, we hear that the little girl who lives here rearranges her dolls each day for the audience.

Like seeing Karen Finley in Sydney last

year, Annie Sprinkle feels a bit late coming. We've been reading about her since the 80s when Linda Montano ordained her disciple and Richard Shechner and the NYU Performance Studies Department began their anthropology of the everyday. But in a festival light on other feminist work, Post Porn Modernist seems out of place. Annie's sing-song voice makes it seem that nothing much of what she's telling us touches her any more. Except maybe her new persona Anya, but that's another story.

Campbell Street. It's not the art I'm interested in, says Dan Armstrong. I'm interested in the way people are living.

Something is missing. Annie tells us *why* she went about transforming herself (love and attention, money and because she didn't really know what else she wanted to do) but *how*? And more recently, after dealing with the deaths of a string of lovers from AIDS and a breast lump scare and gum disease, she put on weight, grew her body hair, cut off her fingernails and changed her life. But *where* did Anya come from? And *why* would anyone want to look like a *Hustler* pin-up?

At the rectory, Stephen Wigg has taken over the study (*Shaving Rituals*). We've been a bit naughty here, says David O'Halloran. The one installation in which the artist has been given his head. Razor blades arranged along the picture rail, among the books. I sit down for a minute in the rector's chair.

Doing her bit for the Festival theme, Annie lights candles and incense and greases up for her ritual orgasm as the audience shakes plastic rattles to assist in calling up sexual energy. Ecstasy over, ushers collect the rattles in plastic garbage bags.

Howard Arkley's *Ultra Kleen* hangs above a circular table covered by a frangipani tablecloth. I stand in the pantry with the air conditioner. The owner of the house doesn't want to change the tablecloth. It looks too good. Meanwhile, Howard Arkley has turned up at one of the houses and asked to use the phone. He is refused.

As Annie Sprinkle hands her Aphrodite Award to a 'real' Adelaide sex worker, she pays homage to the life she has escaped and now parades for an audience who would

more usually avoid looking at it. Her recent conversion to lesbian tantric sex goddess has found her a new feminist audience. Her manager has been running workshops with Adelaide women for some time now. And Anya has relinquished masochism for nature. A new docuporn industry emerges in movies like *Sacred Sex* (made by Australian Cynthia Connop). Pre-orgasm Annie lights a candle for a house by the sea.

As we enter each house, I feel like a trespasser. Inside, I try not to look too long at things which are not officially on display. I'm anxious not to disturb the peace. For some reason I remember hearing about a group of kids who performed a series of break-ins in Canberra houses a few years ago. They didn't steal anything but simply rearranged certain objects in their own patterns, opened books at particular pages and left. The curators of *Compost* have performed a similarly benign break and enter.

*We very much hope that the privacy of the residents who have so generously offered their houses will be respected—in order that they too will be able to enjoy the experience. The form of the exhibition makes it impossible to respect the conventional boundaries separating private and public. This transgression of boundaries will operate as a conflict for viewers (and residents) between the desire to uncover something of another's life and the risk of voyeurism. We ask you to be sensitive to your surrounds and to the demands of courtesy.*

David O'Halloran

A man in my row goes up at the interval for *Tits On the Head* in which Annie offers for \$15 a hit to pose for polaroids. ("Come on up, folks. We need the money".) He goes up to the stage, drapes a feather boa around his neck and sits in the red chair as Annie plops her breasts on his head. As he sits down he turns and asks for the private pleasure of touching her. For an instant she stops, then she says OK. Annie tilts her head sideways. Grins. His smile slides from his face as he leaves the stage. He returns to his seat with the polaroid and I try not to let him see me looking at the photograph as it slowly fixes.

## Not so ecstatic...but addictive

Di Weekes reflects on Scriabin, pianists and extra-musical affairs in the Adelaide Festival music program

The brief: Scriabin series. The intention here: to 'pull it all together'. OK, so I attended the four concerts and heard the *Piano Concerto* and the *Poem of Ecstasy* (Adelaide Youth Orchestra with Jonathan Shin'ar), *Prometheus* (A.S.O. with Geoffrey Madge), five of the ten piano sonatas (Shin'ar) and finally *The Divine Poem* (A.S.O.). But this was the biennial Adelaide Festival, and along the way I was also enlightened by various other keyboard specialists (Rodney Smith, Michael Kieran Harvey, Stephen McIntyre, Geoffrey Lancaster), exposed to other major 20th century orchestral works (Messiaen, Gubaidulina, Hartmann, Xenakis), seduced by song (Olaf Baer, Rossini *Sins of Old Age* and *Operation Orfeo*), confronted by theatre (*The Black Sequin Dress* and Maly's *Claustrophobia*) and spellbound by Pierre Henry's musique concrete (*Berlin, Symphony of a City*). On reflection, Scriabin was hardly the highlight; nor was he ever entirely out of place.

Of course, in a sense he might almost be described as the father of multimedia (Wagner notwithstanding), since his notion of a new arts-synthesis included music, language, visual effects and even aromas, all bathed (drowned, perhaps?) in theosophy. These extra-musical intentions were certainly conveyed in the performance of *Prometheus* (the Fifth Symphony) in which a valiant attempt was made to realise his concept of keyboard-generated lighting. Colour was of prime importance, apparently, in underscoring his 'new' harmonic concepts, and one could go on at length about whether or not this was appropriate, successful, edifying, or just plain pretentious. After all,

what about Messiaen's 'colours'? Are any extra-musical affairs ever really important? Are they always confessed? What was interesting was the fact that the *The Divine Poem* (or Third Symphony) came over as an early, faded, almost stale work, by the end of which I felt almost nauseous from an excess of melodic rising sixths.

*Claustrophobia* had nothing on this. By comparison, *Prometheus* had been almost unnerving: taut, expressive, and finely chiselled in spite of its pseudo-philosophic 'purpose'. The famous 'synthetic' chord (C-F#-Bb-E-A-D) sounded fresh, tense, enigmatic, its resolutions hovering between the realms of tone and texture, surprising at every turn. Overtones of modern jazz, and 'miracle' fourth chords.

In the old edition of Grove's we read that 'neither the indulgent mysticism of (Scriabin's) ideas nor the harmonic richness of his style could have endeared him to the generation of the 1930s'. Sixty years on, audiences of the 90s (comfortably acquainted with *The Celestine Prophecy*) happily read program notes which include an excerpt from his daughter's "Astrological Study on the Natal Chart of Alexander Scriabin" and quotations from his own notebooks which might just as easily have appeared in association with Hotel Pro Forma's *Operation Orfeo*:

*deep eternity and unending space are constellations around divine ecstasy illuminating it*

or Pierre Henry's *Son/Rè*:

*The world of time and space is the process*

*of my creativity...Nothing exists, nothing is created, nothing is really accomplished: all is play. And this play is the highest of real realities.*

Clearly there is more to Scriabin than meets the ear.

In fact it's tempting to trace the sub-plot which emerges when one remembers that apart from his megalomania, mysticism and musical ideology (best expressed in his later works through an intensely idiomatic use of chromatic harmony), Scriabin was also a brilliant pianist with an "almost uncanny skill in novel pedal effects" (Grove's again). This is blatantly evident from his piano works, many of which are technically taxing to the point of physical discomfort. One wonders how Scriabin the performer might have reacted to the youthful interpretations of Jonathan Shin'ar, the virtuosity of Michael Kieran Harvey, the mastery of Rodney Smith, the maturity of Geoffrey Douglas Madge, the flamboyance of Stephen McIntyre, or the artistic assurance (arrogance?) of Geoffrey Lancaster...

For example one might well assume that, unlike the rest of the audience on this particular occasion, he would have roared with mirth at McIntyre's wicked impersonation of the old Rossini, and that he would have laughed out loud (as I did, until heavily frowned upon) at the ironic musical impertinence of the *Three Specimens for Solo Piano, de l'ancien regime, de mon temps, et de l'avenir*, all of which sounded exactly alike. He might have been less appreciative of Mr

Lancaster's late 20th century efforts to sound very early 19th century in an all Beethoven recital on an exquisite fortepiano, but then he might have felt a little threatened. The performance was, after all, generously doused with heavy pedalling, super-subtle articulation, free phrasing, and tempi which darned near broke the sound barrier. It might all have been a little too overwhelming for Alexander, a bit too God-like. But then again, C.P.E. Bach told us long ago that "the ear accepts more movement from the keyboard than from other instruments. Hence satisfactory and successful examples of the art of performance can be presented to all but those who bear a strong prejudice against keyboard instruments".

Pretty astute in 1753. Nothing's changed. Or has it?

Perhaps a lot more meets the eye these days than meets the ear, with the result that ideologies appear as *Imagologies*. This little treasure on media philosophy, published in 1994 by Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen, contains a few words (printed in small but beautiful type, white on black) which Scriabin himself might have penned, had he received the brief:

*The play of surfaces exposes depths as another surface. In the absence of depth, the hermeneutics of suspicion becomes impossible and second naivete unavoidable.*

Ecstasy, 1990s style? A potent drug. And from the same source, one final gem:

*An artist of philosophy? A salesman and politician, developer and visionary: what is called for in the field of philosophy is management by wondering around.*

Indeed, why not? Surely Scriabin would have agreed. Very addictive.



# Shaking complacency, banging on a can

Zsuzsanna Soboslay revels in the Bang on a Can Allstars concerts at the Adelaide Festival

*Ambient Bang*, March 9, Playhouse;  
*Virtuosity*, March 11, Adelaide Town  
Hall; *Louis Andriessen—Hout*, March 12,  
Elder Hall

There is music in my body.  
Sometimes I like to hear the familiar (as I garden, or drive: known cadences accompanying the routine of limbs, the rhythms of my topsoiled hands); more often (and particularly in live concerts) I like the prod to dormant spaces, rendering them a voice or an ear. I appreciate the reminder I am not simply what I think I am, but also an expansion into the next world (or a forgotten one). The brash, a baby's finger, a mystic circle, a scream of strings. A single interval, a texture, can do this. I am grateful for anything that can shake me out of complacent assumptions of what constitute the textures of my life.

Bang on a Can composer/co-founder Julia Wolfe says the group sets out to explore many bloodlines: rock bands, gamelans, Irish bands—the musics which regenerate. The three Bang concerts I attend certainly renew me. The group asks questions of their instruments such as: when is a cello a sax? a guitar reedy? an ensemble a raven's imprint in sand? The celeste in Andriessen's "Doublestop" is a sub-surface itch; when before have I heard an instrument echo the furry feeling just before a kiss?

Not all of the Allstars' Adelaide concerts are wild, but all invert the usual relationship of assumed high and low points in music making versus non-musical urbanity.

*Ambient Bang* played the oxymoron [Ambience? Bang?], the concert less to do with flowing mothers' milk than a teething into odd textures, flavours, densities. We slide from goat's hot hoof on rock [double-bass on ice] to other aspects of immediacy: urban pump and glitch; excess noise.

Shorter works by Gordon, Kats-Chernin, Smetanin, Wolfe explore slides and curls and emotional sessions in the garage (Mark Stewart on electric guitar), instruments swapping tones, becoming feline, wolverine, punctuating, shuffling, slashing space.

Michael Maguire's hot jam "Tristan, Doris, and Geraldo" is less a support frame for piano virtuosity (although it demands and receives plenty from Lisa Moore) than a reminder of what is usually left out of serious composition. It's a thickly-layered cake (how many layers can you take?) of a concerto utilising tape (Wagner, Doris on a bad Day, channel-switching, headaches, a bit of Beethoven romance), the instruments further layering the cake with nuts (and

bolts), fruits (and detritus) in textures that grate against, or multiply and compound their usual flavours. The result is a densely architectonic piece, measured (like a city) against its own heights and densities of material. A far more provocative essay on drawing architecture out of human experience than the virtually sycophantic Seidler exhibition (the Grollo tower proposal for Melbourne) in the Festival Theatre foyer.

There are overt virtuosités: Andriessen's "Hout", an elaborate canon on a semiquaver involving four instrumentalists too busy to turn their own pages. Circles close into a dense coiling, textures melting until the next articulation of difference. His "Doublestop", however, is a softer piece breaking shards of sound: glass breaks within glass, shivering the neurones.

Steve Martland's "Horses of Instruction", a bluegrass elation, is followed by a Kurt Cobain encore [which a neighbouring audience member, agog, called "the last days on earth"]; Ziporyn's arrangement of Pascoal's "Arapua" is a rocket-blast leaving the players with finger-burns.

Other pieces were virtuosités of restraint, of timbre, of conception. Philip Glass' "Two Pages"—his first using the now familiar "additive process" (and which he cautioned was always "the best way to clear the room")—was played without Glass's characteristic overblowing of volume. Even so, a few patrons leave the hall... Yet amongst the walkouts, fidgets, gossips, giggles, a harmonic overtone resonance begins to reflect back from the walls—a space to echo ghosts of earlier pieces, the body's own tired or impatient loops, the games of the listening mind. Patterns turn and change and fracture and turn again, confronting our desire for progression and denouement. The performance is a reflection on the architectures of desire, need, patience, absorption, reception—an examination of which is never passé.

The reality of each instrument is so thoroughly questioned that when the stage clears for a solo, as in Ziporyn's Balinese-inspired "Kebyar Maya", one suspects the soloist won't be alone. The title plays on cellist Beiser's name (Maya: "illusion"); to watch her play is indeed a questioning of reality, with 18 overdubbed levels of cello replicating and replacing the lovely hollow gongs of the gamelan, at the same time as asserting its stringed quality—the foreign and familiar teasing each other in textures and assumptions. How many hands play this? As in Balinese music, there are ghosts

and daemons dancing with her.

The highlight is near the piece's end, with Beiser playing the simplest line, leaving virtuosic parts to the overdub. The effect separates virtuosity from virtuoso, opening to the worlds hovering, squabbling, wondering and singing within the piece, rather than focussing on its wires and bones.

Similarly, in Ziporyn's shorter "Tsmindao Ghiberto" for clarinet, a passionate, embodied, plaintive work capturing the religious passion of Georgian chant, he solves the contradiction of chordal composition for a single-note instrument by overblowing to three tones, rasping and gasping and beating-out low-note double-tones. It's amazing what this man asks of the instruments he writes for.

Player manifestoes in the program describe a melding with the instrument—a mediumistic notion common to musicians; instruments dissolve as the tongue dissolves food, transforming it into a substance of the interior body. With what ears do we hear?

Steve Reich's "Four Organs" (a piece where RSI takes on a new complexion) attempting to render the composer and audience "equal in the process" via the progressive pulling out of a single chord, is mesmerising—he creates the kind of dreaming space for which one used to get a rap over the knuckles in primary school.

Martin Bresnick's two muscae povera ("virtuosity with the smallest of means") pull sense from beneath the skin. Based on a story by Kafka of a man so poor and thin he rides his empty coal bucket to the dealer to beg for coal, "The Bucket Rider"'s pure opening note (sax and double bass) becomes a thin plainchant, joined by piano, cello and guitar until they sadly accompany each other, holding hands in worn overcoats in the snow. I hear contrapuntal rhythms in cold gusts of air; offerings of hearts to each other. It changes the way I think about loneliness between people.

"Be just" is also based on a Kafka story, but this time on an instrument of torture (in *In The Penal Colony*) which imprints a broken commandment into a prisoner's skin by means of thousands of needles. (The prisoner, though ignorant of his sentence, may thus learn it bodily). There is a mad jolliness to this piece: Steven Schick plays the prison chains, falling onto the drum from different heights, with the fanaticism of the jailer. The piece has a latent theatricality which is as yet understated, and thus inscribes a sense of guilt for the unknown from within the bones.

During Writer's Week the physicist Paul Davies referred to a theorem from his book on time: you can propel objects forward in time, but never backwards (although time itself may well be slowing down). Michael Gordon's "Industry" for solo cello crosses eras, first establishing a lyrical acoustic line before a sudden transition to electronically-altered sound. Gordon's piece sensorially achieves what science seeks to prove: a leap into a different era (as precipitated by the industrial revolution) with sudden echoes (such as when machines are turned off for the day), opening a dreamspace, a nostalgia, before striking up again.

Amongst this virtuosity, Tom Johnson's hilarious "Failing"—a tribute to Andriessen, the group's patron of playing "right wrong notes"—unhinges the idea of perfection. Bassist Robert Black plays the double edge of accuracy and audacity, speaking about playing and speaking whilst playing a piece where he fails if he cheats or "fails to fail".

In a lunchtime forum with Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, harpist Marshall Maguire and pianist Geoffrey Douglas Madge, there erupted an argument over the politics of programming contemporary versus classical works: who wants to hear what, who wants to play what and write for what and whom, with concern for the audience who may be "unrehearsed" for the new. "Let them eat it," said Geoffrey Douglas. "And let orchestras which are resistant eat it too."

Michael Gordon issued a reminder that "Everything you haven't heard is contemporary", whether classical or modern. The greatest problem, as I see it, is—in the politics of funding—having to fight for their validity, one against the other.

A question from a schoolteacher on the floor: how do you "educate" people to listen to the works? I turn in my seat: it took leaving school for me to begin to know this realm of inner and multiple validities, personal authorities, without which I couldn't feel and accept these sculptures of such different densities, and without which I would keep living out the same structures and containers of living and sound.

Long live banging on cans—but hopefully in less and less isolation.

*The Allstars was born out of the Bang on a Can Festival initiated in 1987 as a 12-hour marathon new music event in Manhattan's Lower East Side. The event arrived "uptown" at the Lincoln Centre in 1994. See Nicholas Gebhardt's interview in RT#10.*

# The seeing ear, the hearing eye

Noel Purdon experiences Pierre Henry & Son/Ré at the Adelaide Festival

In the late 1920s, on the cusp of the advent of synchronised sound, filmmakers began to experiment with two forms and genres that reached their highest point with attempts to represent sound in the silent image by devices such as superimposition and rhythmic montage; and the development of a sub-genre of documentary: the city portrait. Moscow, Odessa, Nice, Berlin were fixed like time capsules of daily life. Dziga Vertov in Russia, Jean Vigo in France, Walther Ruttmann in Germany attempted to chronicle this emergence of the modernist city in images that were at once realistic depictions, lyrical experiences and experimental propaganda.

Pierre Henry has reconstructed the two most important features of this experiment, and brought them to convincing life by this his addition of concrete sound. The result is that I can never imagine either film without his carefully researched and mixed musique

concrete as soundtrack. When he learned that I had been able to attend only the performance of *Berlin*, he and his assistant Bernadette Mangin were kind enough to provide me with a CD of the music for Vertov's film and cue it up with my video copy of *Man With A Movie Camera*. The results were amazing, the principle difference being live participation during the Ruttmann, with Henry at his console like a studio mixer, and the speakers placed so cunningly around the auditorium that we were no longer in front of the film but within it.

Ruttmann's *Berlin*, caught on one of the Weimar republic's last days of late spring, assumes spine-tingling importance in Henry's hands. Co-scripting with the great cameraman Karl Freund, Ruttmann originally edited to music by the Marxist Edmund Meisel, rejoicing in the abstraction that had already characterised his painting. Along with many of the Weimar

intellectuals, he subsequently fell into the arms of the Third Reich, for whom he made some of its most gloating propaganda. One such film celebrated the 1940 victory over France, a period in which Henry must have been a young man. The retrospection gives a frightening edge to *Berlin*'s final burst of fireworks, which start to sound, after their image has left the screen, like bombs. Meanwhile the pulsating city has awoken around us, birdsong beating in its linden tree avenues, and closed in a glow of syncopated neon night life.

The suite for the Vertov is even more inventive, like a pre-classic piece of programme music by Couperin or Rameau. Eighteen movements respect Vertov's own punctuation, without attempting to provide a mere soundtrack. Henry has rather chosen to imitate the Russian's invention of the Cine-Eye and the pyrotechnics of his representation of

sound, as split screens, multiple superimpositions and a *mise-en-abyme* showing the process of shooting, editing and projection, by a commentary of his own. The film audience find their seats to the drone of a sitar, sliding up and down as friskily as the camera which bows before them. Crickets bring in the dawn; metronomes create counter-rhythms. The circularity of bike and car wheels, looms and film rolls is expressed by repeated sirens, clicks and ripping trumpet solos.

As the hand-cranked camera speeds, slows or stops motion, Pierre Henry divides and extends the beat, stress and quantity of the scales, inverting melodies, using absolute silence, or unleashing an outburst of thrashing rock. Natural sounds are decomposed or decayed just as the film-maker interrogates the codes of his objects and locations. This is an exhilarating experience of seeing, hearing, feeling and thinking. Henry has said that the basis of his acoustic sculpture may be a sigh or a creaking door. What he has achieved here by his reconnaissance of Ruttmann and Vertov is the third term which music and film create at their most perfect: poetry.



# Arriving

Virginia Baxter's initial experiences of the Adelaide Festival

Angels Margarit, Room 1109 Hilton, Hilton Hotel

Batsheva Dance Company, *Anaphase*, Festival Theatre

5.00pm. Check into our hotel. No greeting to speak of. A black feltboard with the word "Welcome". Inside, I replace the hotel soap with the one I've brought from home. Turn on the television.

6.00pm. Check into Room 1109 at the Hilton International. On the way here the taxi driver tells us nothing has changed in Adelaide since we were here last. Standing behind our fourth wall, a line in the carpet at the threshold of the room, we're in the anywhere of hotel rooms. Curtains drawn, this could be any time. Any city. Angels Margarit lies face down on the bed. The television leaks static. Welcome.

8.00pm. Seated in a row watching 20 bodies from the Batsheva Dance Company dressed as males in suits and hats pulse a flailing wave along a line, the pulse echoes in the song we suddenly realise they're singing. Dust flies. The voices sing louder. The action is repeated. Like a blow ricocheting through a line. Two bodies contradict the pattern. One jumps backwards onto his chair, another falls to the floor. The movement is repeated until for me it transforms to film memories of bodies thrown into open graves, falling backwards in ecstasy or laughter then back to Martha Graham's contraction. Life and death. End of sequence. Welcome.

6.02pm Angels Margarit slides from her bed. She has already made her marks on the room, removed the cover from the bed and angled it to the wall. A few possession are strewn on the floor. Her shoes, Adelaide Festival postcards. She is here but definitely not at home.

8.15pm. The Batsheva dancers' hats all fly off in one movement. Coats next, shirts, shoes, revealing the bodies they will wear from now on (and the first of the Festival's many shaved heads) rag-strapped, stripped to essentials for crouching, back arching, bum thrusting, dance with driving percussion. This is a virtuosic company. They sing complex liturgical music, play percussion (at one point making the utmost of plastic water dispensers for an apocalyptic slow march). One of the dancers has a beautiful counter-tenor voice.

6.05pm. Angels Margarit switches the television to surveillance. Victoria Square. Pedestrians. A man leans against a tree. Segue to closed circuit. The hotel room. In-house movie. Lee Remick watches television in a hotel room.

8.30pm. A line of repeated movements breaks in two, three and four places, then reassembles. This is a very musical choreography but without the complexity of William Forsyth, the 1994 Festival hit. This is a more discursive and more obviously theatrical dance relying on a compacted energy. It oscillates between thundering apocalyptic sequences and sudden rushes of intimacy—a duet to a mournful Leonard Cohen style love song (sung by choreographer Ohan Naharin, a strong onstage presence in red dress); a solo dancer caught in projected film images. But always back to the grim massed march of time passing, sudden rushes of suited flailing bodies. All darkly lit to reveal the body in bits.

6.10pm. Angels spins across the floor in a pattern that might convey torment, boredom, frustration, anger or just aloneness. Her foot scores a line in the grey velvet carpet. She throws herself into a chair, hangs her head. She has that hotel room languor down to a fine art. This aloneness of hotel rooms is familiar. There is no expression on her face to read and thankfully, no drama.

8.45pm. *Anaphase*. A cute dance in big pants is starting to irritate me when the houselights go up. Sprung! The dancers move into the auditorium. They choose about 15 women and lead them to the stage. It's a mesmerising moment, the women in their pleated skirts shuffle dancing, caught in the light as dancers lift them into the air, fall beside them. The atmosphere is momentarily broken by laughter as dancers slide under the women's skirts. Flashback to yet another festival, Perth, when La La La Human Steps danced to the amplified heartbeat of a man in the front row. Who says nothing changes? Festivals change a city—especially this one.

To prove it. Angels Margarit in one simple movement changes everything. The generic hotel room is replaced by the immediate and real world of this city. Suddenly the site is specific. The sounds of air conditioners and water pipes are replaced by the sounds of voices and traffic outside the building, electric lamps fade in the soft 6.10 sunlight on the Adelaide Hills. Welcome home.

9.30pm. 90 minutes has passed. In the light the bodies finally reveal themselves in full. A standing ovation. An audience of hundreds fragments into twos and threes and fours. We shuffle dance around each other. So what did you think? Well, I thought it would be more coherent. Great dancers. One of the best things I've ever

seen. Those thighs! Definitely yoga. Too many theatrical tricks for my liking. Inconsistent. Virtuosic but I'm wondering why it didn't move me. Good in bits. What a great way to open a festival. What a great company. A hit. And from one of the women in the audience who made it to the stage. What was it like up there? You looked so tranquil. Well, they gave lots of instructions like, "I'm going to dance with you now. Put your arms on my shoulders. I'm going to lift you now."

6.15pm. Angels Margarit moves back to her bed, back to the beginning. The door opens and we are ushered out of Room 1109. 10 other people take our places. In the lift we break the silence. Can I ask you what you thought? Woman in coloured skirt: "Well, I wondered what she was doing playing some kind of poor Spanish girl stuck in the Hilton Hotel". Girl in pink satin: "Great! I'd like to come back in a week and see what's happened to her". Man in black: "I was absorbed in it, watchful and detached. That hotel room experience had definite resonances for me. And it made me nostalgic. The anonymity of that room contrasting with that very specific sense of the Adelaide hills glowing in the sunlight. Maybe it had something to do with the height of the view but I hadn't looked at the hills that way since I was a child. The performance opened out something for me". Woman in black: "Wonderful. Intimate and epic. I wonder why she didn't make more of the photographs and personal objects. Did you know Sophie Calle got herself a job as a hotel maid so she could take pictures of the way people inhabit hotel rooms. This reminded me of that, brought it home".

What a great way to open a festival. 15 minutes has passed.

## Take hold of the body...and keep looking at it

Linda Marie Walker reflects on Jenny Kemp's *Black Sequin Dress*

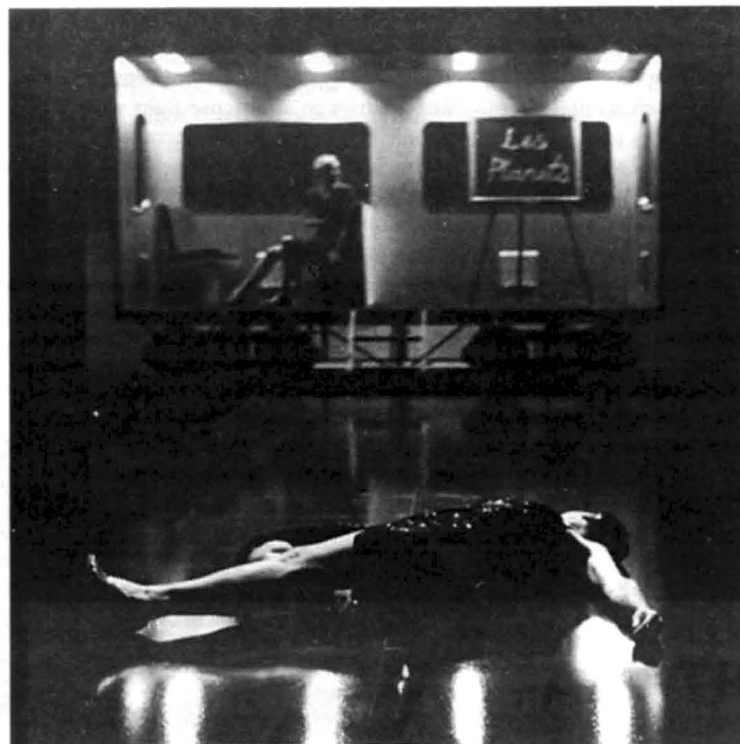
*The Black Sequin Dress* is like a painting come to life, or come to film, or, perhaps, become a dream as film (not a film as dream). A sort of uncinematic 'film' though. It's not possible to know what the single image might have been (once). Probably any moment when the whole cast is on stage. This perhaps is why there are tedious moments; a tiny lecture on points and lines for example, and on a single word, like 'pleasure' or 'fall'. Although I usually like such lists, it's their saying (somehow) that dispels them (the 'spell' of them, their 'spelling').

A woman from the brick suburbs, forty, exhausted, fed-up, dresses in a black sequin dress and goes to a night-club. She's not sure how to move, walking is a calculation: "one foot after the other". She has to talk her body into each step. She glances back, and falls to the shiny dance floor. This simple embarrassing collapse opens a crack in her (memory).

The woman is played by four women, the fall is taken over and over. She watches herself fall. While she stays at the club, converses, she is also elsewhere, going over the past and moving into the future. And elsewhere is made of very small things. The woman says: "reality is very small things".

The 'film' is a series of tableaux. Each designed and theatrical. And seemingly pushed and pulled between, and internal to, the peculiar inhabited times/tenses of frenzy and stillness. Repetition is used as a device, and is mostly elegant. The accumulative effect defines resonance.

The 1950s men, The Waiter and The Man, are clichés who undermine such an easy label. They do this through their willingness to hear and then talk, and through their response to something of or on or about the woman. As when the



*The Black Sequin Dress*

Jeff Busby

woman touches the body of The Man, while he plays a game of chance. This moves him, quietly. And when the woman asks him to help her find a dead body, he agrees, without understanding. He takes her at her word. He recognizes her, both as she sees herself and as he sees her.

It's best not to follow dreams truly, but to wait while they take-off somewhere unknown, yet resembling something, a forgotten surface say. This might be why I didn't want to literally see 'a skeleton' or 'the devil's horns' or 'a model of molecules'. I could not dream past them. The bodies, there, in all their 'workings', were more than enough, densely ghosted.

As well, there were slides and film, and lovely use of light. When the woman talks to The Man about the dead body you realise that she stands close to him, and she (not he) is before a red lit square, a little magic. And at the beginning as the woman walks to her fall, her shadow grows on the back wall. And there's a voice-over. And lit glass shelves with tumblers, which reminded me of a Rosslynd Piggot painting, or installation, or was that by someone else? And a train,

moving back and forward, a space in which to be awkward, alone.

And that is it: the body-awkward, wanting a fluid walk, casual stance, easy sit, quick wit: pleasure, not terror. The body's 'not at home', and too aware of that. The play tries to understand the perpetual 'lapse' that a self enters, that falling causes (or vice versa), a moment forever, a landscape. It reminds me of Blanchot's *The Madness Of The Day*, where he writes: "What work went on at the bottom of that earth! Who says it's cold. It's a bed of fire, it's a bramble bush, When I got up I could feel nothing. My sense of touch was floating six feet away from me; if anyone

entered my room, I would cry out, but the knife was serenely cutting me up. Yes, I could become a skeleton. At night my thinness would rise up before me to terrify me. As it came and went it insulted me, it tired me out; oh, I was certainly very tired."

And thinking of film, I take this opportunity to pay homage to Marguerite Duras, who died on Sunday. She would have recognized the woman and her fall. And know why it is necessary to look over and over at the same thing. In *The Malady Of Death* she wrote: "You take hold of the body and look at its different areas. You turn it round, keep turning it round. Look at it, keep looking at it."

The play/painting/film provides a plane upon which other dreams (mine) must drift. Otherwise the space, stretched and glacial, remains empty, and the woman helpless. And this is not so, she's full to the brim with what she's seen and heard, and what she hopes and desires.

Toward the end The Man says he'd go down into a deep valley with her, and he'd carry her all the way back up, and enjoy the "long slow journey". But you imagine, even as she hears this, that she's gone. The stage goes black and all that's left is the word EXIT, glowing on either side. And EXIT is always a writing/reading cue.

*The Black Sequin Dress*, writer & director, Jenny Kemp; composer, Elizabeth Drake; designer, Jacqueline Everitt; lighting, Ben Cobham; choreography, Jenny Kemp & Helen Herbertson; performers, Margaret Mills, Helen Herbertson, Natasha Herbert, Mary Sitarenos, Ian Scott, Greg Stone. Scott Theatre, Adelaide. Playbox, Melbourne, March. Canberra, April



# The raw and the complex

Eleanor Brickhill surveys dance at the Adelaide Festival

Batsheva Dance Company, *Mabul*; Angels Margarit, *Hilton 1109*; Betontanc, *Every Word a Gold Coin's Worth*; Meg Stuart and Damaged Goods, *No One is Watching*; DV8, *Enter Achilles*; Meryl Tankard's Australian Dance Theatre, *Rasa*.

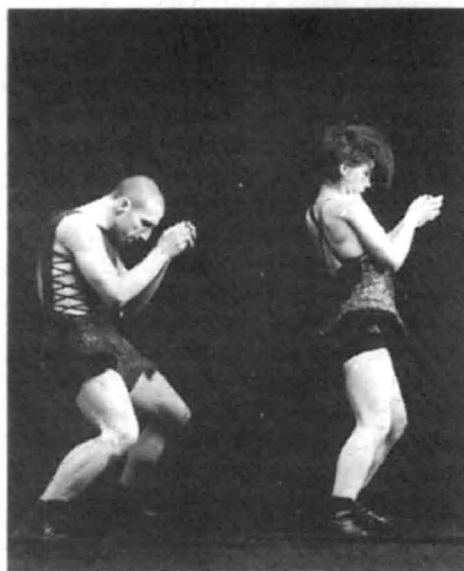
In Adfest-foyer-euphoria mode, one struggles with such educated commentary as "God, did you actually like that? I had real problems there". In the matter of likes and dislikes, it's unclear whether pleasure is derived from art or society, but buffeted by the social undertow, it occurred to me that it's the act of satisfying this urgent need to express an opinion which first shapes our perception and the consequent credibility of a work. All of which says a lot about the importance of foyer culture, and the meaning of lots of artists meeting to see who holds sway. It was delightful to find a confusing and properly post-modern diversity of responses in many theatre foyers.

There were evident themes: prying into the cracks of existence, dragging open old wounds, exposing humanity's sometimes fragile and secret interiors. We get to see hideous, possessed, sad, ugly, violent, obsessive things. If sometimes the violence and obsession is merely cultivated and glamorised, expressing an evolving international aesthetic empty of anything except a formal identification with itself, there are also moments of rich substance.

In Batsheva Dance Company's *Mabul*, I was grateful for its wide aesthetic spaces. There was no requirement to submit to the ubiquitous glamour of black frocks and Docs encapsulating the entire aesthetic basis of the work. These apparently negative virtues invited a different awareness; a kind of grainy textured relationship between the performers surfaced. The silence of the dancers' boots on the floor and the first murmurings of a solo voice engendered a kind of breathless waiting. Vocal material seemed chosen for its particular sexless intensity, the purity, restraint and passion of a single counter-tenor line. But the work was also full of contrasts and counterpoint: a motif of courtly containment and restraint out of which erupted the shrieking protests of women; the dancers' slightly stilted, overly-placed, hyper-extended gestures together with a different dissolute movement energy; a feeling of calm

contrasted with vocal and corporeal dishevelment. It had a raw, complex and articulate flavour.

I can't forget the famous hamster duet, where the rolling topography of the dancer's body provides dangerously shifting surfaces for a tiny clinging animal; a densely woven trio, the dancers barely break contact; the counter-tenor who continues to dance while we feel his distorted song, a harsh fight of diaphragm and throat for air, close to uncontrollable sobbing; the moving Nisi Dominus where dancers form a plaintive cantus firmus for the soloist's exhaustingly percussive rhythmic body slapping.



Batsheva Company, *Mabul*

Good ideas occasionally fall short of being persuasive. One such is *Hilton 1109* by Catalan dancer Angels Margarit, who invited a very select audience of ten at a time into her hotel room to watch what I interpreted as the confined ennui of a dancer on tour. A familiar flotsam collects on the floor: postcards, aspirin, maps, empty glasses, biro, the eternal debris rising to the surface of the lives of itinerant performers, confined, waiting and preparing, a condition as much mental as it is physical. Her movement was too contained in place and in time, going over and over itself, drawn out of, but also recreating, that very experience. I wondered how a dancer could ignore the messages in the loaded and codified vocabulary. Even in that intimate setting she became a character rather than herself, as if the language she

used protected her from the intimate scrutiny she had invited.

The Slovenian ensemble Betontanc's second program, *Every Word a Gold Coin's Worth* seemed anachronistic, made me ask questions about Slovenia to find out just what psychic space this stuff comes from. The work capitalises heavily, if unintentionally, on its subtext: six dancers ingeniously young, healthy, athletic and alluringly decked out in short red frocks, boots, and jeans for the boys, revealing a narrow identification and exploration of physicality. If the work springs from heartfelt awareness of violent social and political upheaval, an Australian vantage sees only story-board brutality in the several rape scenes, people treated as commodities, the struggle to survive in encroaching confinement, an overly dramatised woman-as-victim interpretation of childbirth. Meanwhile, the set, a high metal wall, is clung to, clambered over, leaned against, pounded on, played around, and used with ingenuity as a backdrop to all the action. Scene changes dissolved one into another with hardly a blink. But moving 'as if', the dancers did not seem concerned with developing richer meaning in their work, but with reducing human complexity to a level adequately served by soap opera.

Meg Stuart (via New Orleans, New York and continental Europe), with Damaged Goods' produced a meticulously developed study of internal emotional conflict with *No One is Watching*, touching on the allure of what is concealed in the depths of people, their relationships, and their secret lives. An old fat woman sits immobile on a chair as the audience enters. We see her back and the slack hanging folds of flesh. The audience chats over the top of this, and indeed, no-one watched except in brief exploratory glances waiting for another more palatable story to begin. A couple entered. Rather than having a sense of duet, it was like seeing one flailing organism, sustaining hideous internal rifts and injuries in an intense fight with itself. People started watching then.

Ingenuousness, loss of self, brutality and a fight for recognition were played out with an emotional texture of dense, immutable obsession. It is this texture which became the focus, as if human interaction consisted of chaotic undirected eruptions of desire, and taking the line of least resistance, no

holds barred, we bind with a suffocating struggle to the nearest human object.

With *Enter Achilles* Lloyd Newson and DV8 were engaged in just as concentrated a line of investigation, here the not-so-secret filth in the souls of men, and 'men' in this case were a culturally fashioned gender, assuaging their fear of 'female' characteristics like affection, loyalty, love and softness appearing in themselves and others, with violent abuse. The work spoke (yet again, but with pathos) of the need to become human first, 'men' second. While the theme might be overstated with such a non-negotiable view of contemporary male consciousness, there was serious entertainment value in watching the performers construct their gross stereotypes with immaculate humour, profound skill, attention to detail and riveting style. Everyone knew these blokes although, genuinely, I had to make an effort to remember the last time I'd met one.

But the complex construction of *Enter Achilles* sustained attention with the physical eloquence of the dancers' actions and interactions, the grand familiarity of the set as bar-room/dance floor/playground/proving-ground, and the strategic appearance of child-like fantasy images. In the night-club of our minds, a pop star hero sings *To Dream the Impossible Dream* and a man struggles to reach a mountain-top. It has a Dennis Potter-like surreal humour. Its absurdity is surprisingly touching.

The venue for Meryl Tankard's *Rasa* created its own strange ambience. The Bullring seemed windy and deserted at first, an isolated collection of earth-floored, dilapidated sheds. But the air under cover gradually thickened with the heavy perfume of smoking incense placed around the stage's perimeter and later the dust kicked up from the floor by the dancers deposited itself in a gritty film over the entire audience.

Tankard's treatment of the Indian Rasas risked accusations of facile dabbling in exotica, for this western interpretation may well have remained superficial without the guiding artistry of guest performer, Padma Menon. If Tankard's dancers showed great affinity for the physical renderings of the Kama Sutra, more subtle emotional expression remained lost to them. Only in the last few minutes, almost as an afterthought, we glimpsed an authentic moment in the dancers' philosophical encounter with this strange tradition. They all sat facing Padma, their teacher, imitating—as children in class might—her subtle gestures, finely graded shifts of aspect and attitude, and the small flickers of lips, eyelids and fingers.

## Exile, inside and out

Noelle Janaczewska visits Doppio Teatro's Adelaide Festival Artists' Week Installation

I enter Cann's Secondhand Furniture store, walk between piles of tables, chairs, beds, wardrobes, suitcases, plastic, wood, fabric, vinyl, china and metal, veer left and there's the installation. The chaos of the shop arranged, ordered and displayed; still unmistakably a part of the emporium, but something else as well.



Doppio Teatro, *Preludes to an Exile* P. Heydrich

A line of benches supports tall, triangular structures that are neither ships' sails, nor the giant limbs of industrial looms, but tilt at both with all their implicit narratives of passage, migrant dreamings and factory sweatshops in suburban backyards.

*Preludes to an Exile* is a performance installation that explores the worlds of family business, local enterprise, the rhythms and routines of work, various manifestations of exile and the negotiations women in particular make across the environments of paid labour and domestic responsibilities.

Tea-breaks, the relief of undressing at the end of a long shift, folding laundry, cutting clothes from rolls of coloured cotton—the relentless patterns of the small factory or workshop provide the dramatic and the rhythmic framework. But Doppio's portrait is no sentimental nostalgia, no echo



Doppio Teatro, *Preludes to an Exile* P. Heydrich

of John Howard's romantic championing of the small business. Instead this production exposes some of the mythologies of this 'lucky country'; asks us to consider the cultural and psychological cost of the migrant dream of 'a better life' that has carried so many people across so many seas and continents. Look how hard, and in what shit jobs, some of these first generation migrants have had to work!

And as I'm pondering all this, *Preludes to an Exile* shifts tone and texture. This is, after all, not a realist expose of backroom assembly lines, nor simply a tale of immigrant hardship and disappointment. These people have both dreams and dignity,

and amid the drone of machinery, memories, hopes, humour and fragments of stories that hint at whole histories of war and loss bubble to the surface in words, gesture and movement—just momentarily—before sinking back into the landscape of repetition. And in their wake, they leave tantalising glimpses, unanswered questions and a powerful mosaic of exile—not only exile from a homeland but also various states of internal and internalised exile—as one of the Writers' Week speakers suggested, perhaps the dominant paradigm of twentieth century life.

I found *Preludes to an Exile* resonant and thought provoking and Doppio Teatro's mix of community theatre and contemporary performance practices exciting, bold and intriguing—a theatre of real possibilities for our multi-cultural society.

*Preludes to an Exile*, director, Teresa Crea; visual artist/designer, James Coulter; composer/soundscape, Robert Petchell; choreographer, Leigh Warren; performers, Sasha Carruzzo, Barbara Mullin, Irene Tunis; Cann's Secondhand Furniture Store, Norwood.



# Intimate challenges

Keith Gallasch listens to Kronos, Larry Sitsky and Marshall Maguire in the Adelaide Festival's *Tensile Structures* series

Well away from the encoring crowds at the Festival Theatre and the buzzing mass of cultural curiosity at Red Square, the Elder Hall concerts offer tranquil respite. The mellow light falls through Victorian windows, the instruments are near, the performers address you as intimates. It's a full house for Kronos and they don't have much to say except to announce titles (no programs left). But their offerings are generous, culturally diverse and demanding. An avuncular Larry Sitsky leads you gently through a frightening litany of composers turned exile or drunken party hacks by Stalin—each piano piece a moment of musical insight and vision caught before destroyed, beautiful in the hall's amber light. Marshall Maguire chats amicably about the harp repertoire, the attempts in the 20th century to "banish the nymphs of the nineteenth" taking us from Berio's now familiar, then radical, departures to Donatini's remarkably distinctive, even alien waves of lyricism. These performers are seductive educators, compensating in the Sitsky and Maguire concerts for the unforgivable absence of proper program notes. (Elder Hall also featured the klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman. Sydney theatre director Ros Horin reported virtuoso playing and, more seduction, an apparently reserved audience breaking into willing song at the slightest of prompting from the genial Feidman.)

The Kronos concert was like a trip through any number of their CDs—introductions to the new and the unfamiliar. How many of the audience would have heard of the American Harry Partch, his musical system built on unusual instruments he himself designed, and the neo-medieval theatricality of his performances? His *Two Ancient Greek Scales* sounded oddly conventional adapted for string quartet, but the juxtaposition of a clear near romantic melody with the subsequent languid but still lyrical distortion of something similar, made you really enjoy working at keeping it all together before the notes slipped away.

P.Q. Phan is a Vietnamese composer living in the US. His *Tragedy at the Opera* transformed oriental opera techniques and formulae into another curious string quartet, evoking everything from Peking Opera falsetto to string orchestra renderings of opera themes. It was not unlike listening to the soundtrack of a movie you haven't seen, and as such was highly suggestive if tonally lacking something of the richness of the originals.

Ken Benshoof's elegaic *Song of Twenty Shadows* touched the audience mightily, hearing Debussy, Delius and, in the darker moments, Bartok merge into sad unity, a prayer without an Amen. It also made Taverner's *The Protecting Veil* sound like a much bolder experiment than usually acknowledged. The selection from John Adams' *Book of Alleged Dances*, accompanied by soundtrack, prompted foot-tapping with its sharp rhythms and a perpetual guessing game about what dance you were dancing in your seat—Appalachian jig, mid-west square dance, primitive tap-dance. These fictions, like something musical out of Calvino, concluded the concert with a reminder of how familiar much of this music now is but also at how far Kronos has taken their audience with them. It was not a young audience. Sadly, the encore was their popular arrangement of Hendrix' *Purple Haze*, now beginning to sound like "The Hot Club out of Hell". Some of the audience welcomed the encore, some groaned "Not again", fearful of losing the intimacy and challenge of this twilight concert.

Sitsky's "Russian Constructivism" featured even less familiar names. He told us that these were composers working

progressively on their own trajectories well outside the influence of Schoenberg, inspired by Scriabin but even then finding their own way, some prefiguring Messiaen and late modernism. You could also hear in them the kindred voices of Medtner, Rachmaninov and the Polish Godowsky, all virtuoso composer-pianists. In one cycle Sitsky admitted the requirement for constantly extended hands meant the pieces were almost unrehearsable. Polovinkin provided one of the earliest examples of prepared piano. Lourie, now enjoying a revived reputation, offered five short works, *SynteZ*, inspired by Italian Futurist Theatre. As Sitsky observed, if he hadn't told us when they were composed (1915), we might have thought the 70s or 80s. Being led into this 'black hole of musical history', as Sitsky called it, was sadly enlightening, another elegy. The second concert was held March 7. Sitsky challenges himself with this music but acquits himself with apparent ease.

Like Kronos, Marshall Maguire is the keen prompter of commissions both from Australia and overseas. Like Larry Sitsky he has a keen ear for musical history. This first of five concerts, like Kronos, moved us briskly across musical cultures. Solbiati's *Vezelay* an emotional, aesthetic and non literal response to a cathedral town, played with the surfaces and tensions of the strings, yielding koto-ish twangs and glides juxtaposed with more familiar rumblings and sweet tinklings apparently inspired by light hitting the cathedral columns. Michael Finnis's *Tchaikovsky V & XII* offered an accessible if heightened and theatrical lyricism, dance-like and a relatively conservative companion to Franco Donatoni's driving *Marches*, the most idiosyncratic work on the program. Modernist influences were clear in a number of the works—grand 19th Century harp flourishes interrupted, isolated pizzicato bursts, a-rhythmic harmonics—sounding a familiar repertoire which Donatoni avoided almost altogether, the Australian Gordon Kerry made almost lyrical and Elliot Carter made beautiful, partly by undercutting Modernist ruptures with consistent use of the sustain pedal. Australian-based Elena Kats-Chernin's *Chamber of Horrors* was a witty, engaging deployment of many of the familiar suspense mystery and horror film and theatre music devices into a totality that refuses utterly and eerily to resolve. Like Donatoni's, though in a lighter vein, it is music that flows, placing you in it, taking you along, sometimes unwillingly, with it.

The Sitsky and Maguire concerts are part of Barrie Kosky's *Tensile Structures* chamber music series. The architectural analogy wasn't at all clear in these two concerts and neither performer bothered to address the issue in any detail. Perhaps it went missing with the program notes. The connection between the Russian pianists and Constructivism is not easy to see either, except at the level of innovation and political repression. Certainly in the harp program, Donatoni, and to a lesser degree Carter, made remarkable play of a sense of near and far and in and out, Maguire touching on astonishingly low but lucid volume levels. The woman in black next to me reading a library-worn copy of R.D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience* looked up, taken out of her book back into Elder Hall and, with the rest of us, into the harp and somewhere else. Like the Sitsky program this harp series is a rare experience, one to treasure.

*Tensile Structures, Elder Hall: Kronos Quartet; Larry Sitsky, Russian Constructivism and the Solo Piano; Marshall Maguire, Five meetings with Harp, Elder Hall.*

# Dancing neurones

Maryanne Lynch at Molecular Theatre's *Facade Firm*, The Space, Adelaide Festival

*The customer must be satisfied. Misunderstandings are ruled out.*

0777. The meter begins to tick over the first of six countdowns. We stare at a grid of twenty four tangerine canvases at the stage's edge, a wall of textured impermutability. A male voice begins to count, then another—female—recites. The regulations of the S. I. Witkiewicz Portrait Painting Firm. We discover this with the third voice entry—English speaking, male, cultivated, recorded—in translation. Or is it?



Molecular Theatre, *Facade Firm*

*The firm reserves the right to paint without any witnesses if that is possible.*

Figures in grey suits and hats, po-faced. A rhythmic almost robotic sequence of removals and replacements of the canvases. The passage between the foreground grid and another identical one at the rear of the stage. But can it be identical given the passage between? The voices continue to interject, translate and recite the rules. Female Japanese live voices control the recorded male English speaker. We strain to hear the latter, sense moving in and out of hearing.

*Asking the firm for its opinion of a finished portrait is not permissible, nor is any discussion about a work in progress.*

Images appear: a figure walks from one side of the stage to the other, carrying an umbrella of handle and top only. She disappears and reappears as the canvases are placed on the grid beside her. Two men, white-gloved, respond with contorted movements to the attempts at inscription by two women. A funnel-faced figure tries again and again to bridge the gap between experience and expression. This is Surrealist terrain. This is a department store. This is the (non)-accidental meeting of an umbrella and a sewing machine table.

*Customers are obliged to appear punctually for the sittings, since waiting has a bad effect on the firm's mood and may have an adverse effect on the execution of the product.*

The sequence continues: more images jar and collide. The space between, around and beside the two grids doesn't allow straightforward transmission. Communication—from perception to idea—is constantly thwarted. We could almost be watching the crazy dance of neurones, tracing old paths of memory and habit, short circuiting. Or defying the 'laws' of causality and instead finding other paths. There is a search for meaning; that's clear. What is unclear is meaning itself.

*The basic novelty offered by the firm as compared to the usual practice is the customer's option of rejecting a portrait if it does not suit him either because of the*

*execution or because of the degree of likeness.*

The meter falls silent at the fifth countdown, still turning over. Stillness, and even now the suits continue to fill the interstices. Four figures carrying tangerine umbrellas tipped with tangerine pens make another attempt to write in a sequence of awkward pauses and ineffectual gestures. This is the moment when one lifter can throw artistic intent out the window. We are quiet but beginning to stir; uncomfortable with the unevenness.

And there are incidents: (a) a hat is lost; (b) a frame falls from a wall. (In this tightly choreographed piece of the Accidental, there is no room for the unexpected. The performers tense.)

*The firm urges a careful perusal of the rules.*

But are there rules? Yes and no. The audible counting recommences; the voices recite, the figures move back and forth, to and fro, the foremost grid is 'filled' again: this time with the underside of the canvases—a sculpted twist and knot of cloth. Folds, pleats and more texture. The meter ticks down to zero hour. Another 'lie'. 6 x 0777. *Facade Firm* takes exactly seventy-seven minutes to perform.

*Facade Firm, Molecular Theatre (Japan). Artistic director, Shigeyuki Toshima; lighting designer, Masaki Horonushi; general advisor and choreographer, Hironobu Oikawa.*

# Hypothetical exchange

Ohad Nahin (Batsheva Dance Company) and Meg Stuart (Damaged Goods)

ON *Sadness is living only once.*  
MS *Bleakness is living at all.*  
ON *There is joy in technical ability to transcend restriction.*  
MS *Focus on restriction, restriction engendering form.*  
ON *Playfulness with a hamster on a bald head, turnings of the body mimicking the motion of an animal over a landscape of skin.*  
MS *Bald, hamstrung, replaying the motions of things breaking, not breaking from under the skin.*  
ON *A single dancer occasionally puncturing a circle.*  
MS *Held within a grid, tailing, snuffling, prodding till they are broken.*  
ON *Building a phalanx of desire.*  
MS *Pockets of need building nothing.*  
ON *Teasing—body as percussion, balletic bongo.*  
MS *Slapped by fate—body screams at itself, propelled with a laughter that won't break.*  
ON *Laughing lines, personal history.*  
MS *Text faltering, receding from touch.*  
ON *The screaming of women bursting into a moment's hysteria, supported by the men dancing with them.*  
MS *Dancing, laughing, breaking...alone.*

*Dervishes: To dance is to be centered in God, otherwise you fall over.*

[In every dance, think of what propels the turn.]

Zsuzsanna Soboslay



# Energy as waste, desirous and deadly

Linda Marie Walker at the Slovenian dance company Betontanc's *Know Your Enemy*, Scott Theatre, Adelaide Festival



Betontanc

*Know Your Enemy* is performed within a strict confined space, a line really, with little depth. Mostly it occurs vertically, as if the body must press itself upwards not outwards, as if the longing that brought the characters over the wall, to this place, has instilled a muscular and mental habit that is now relentless. Here, where something else (better) was imagined (greener grass perhaps), they are caught again in the dreams of living that subsume the very (every) moment. And so, what lives is an energy, as waste, desirous, and deadly. Deadly, in body and soul.

Three women and four men, four rooms (one that isn't quite recognised by the others, that holds their fears even), a few pieces of furniture, lights, and a wall. And a picture on the wall. The image of before or after. Who knows. Either way, it's central, and already redundant.

The performers move/dance in a solid fluid way, which betrays a kind of fine timing. They mostly climb up the wall, over and through struts, and especially on and around each other

(each person a wall too). They literally climb-the-wall, in the sense of a creeping, on-off, madness. Madness which seems reasonable, which weaves a taut thread across beings, binding them together, and snapping them apart. It's this thread that is the 'enemy'. As the performance is 'about' nothing. A nothing which pulses between lethargy and athleticism. (The Theorist says: "The oscillation of which we have just spoken is not an oscillation among others, an oscillation between two poles. It oscillates between two types of oscillation ...") A strange economy of excess. An exhibition of the convoluted body, as it follows/forms thought's need to exorcise ghosts and shadows, and to make itself known.

Time, waiting, is filled-in with 'love'. The antics of courtship and seduction are displayed ritually, each move accented, defined. A competition, almost, of strength and resilience.

The music is melancholic, the choreography sits inside this mood, but actively, like a slow implosion. *Know Your Enemy* begins with a particular, romantic image, high, a couple quietly dancing, in the light, and ends with it. And between, the sadness of 'true' love and 'lost' love.

The tight limited/limiting overall style of this work, and its negotiation of flat planes which the body must press/spread against and climb, like beetles, clumsy yet liquid, harsh yet tender, is claustrophobic. Oppression comes from the back and front rather than from above.

This is an operatic struggle upon one word say, or a tiny mark, or a false hope. And it might be just a single night. A sliver of entangled gestures, a remembrance of deliberate and necessary exhaustion/expiation.

# To be another body, for me

Linda Marie Walker

Immediately, one's own body is called by the sound of the dancers in the dark taking their places. Such a small, ordinary, and necessary thing. But this is to be the entire 'work', this internal heat, to be the body for another, for oneself. To be another body for me, say. To watch, and watch as it acts alone, always, even when together, being duo. To watch *No longer ready made* is to watch an unfolding that is, no matter how intense (and wanted) the movement, is unfolding that goes on, relentlessly, as unfolding, not revelation. The physicality of unfolding though and its persistence in the body as a way, a method, is unbearably wishful, desirous, devastating. That is, the body wants to know something, wants to know how to go on, renew itself. Without end.

A man stands alone in a square of light, his head whipping violently side to side. Then his whole body shivering. As if convulsed, repulsed by a memory, a memory cutting loose perhaps, something I can't know. The other three dancers wait in the background, two women and a man. The single interfering logic, a logic in flux, is 'unreadiness', this is a logic of detail. The detail that can never be 'ready made', and is never 'no longer', but always present. That's the trouble, that's the image in the body, of a stillness that creeps out of the pores.

There are moments of extreme passion in this work, of the complete and known separateness of beings, as creatures. As when a couple battle each other. The man, his hands held behind his back, pushes and kicks, and blocks every move the woman makes, yet she will not succumb. The moves are precise. Each body knows just what the other will do, emotionally, I mean. It's the exhaustion of the body one hears. Then she's alone, with his coat on, going through the

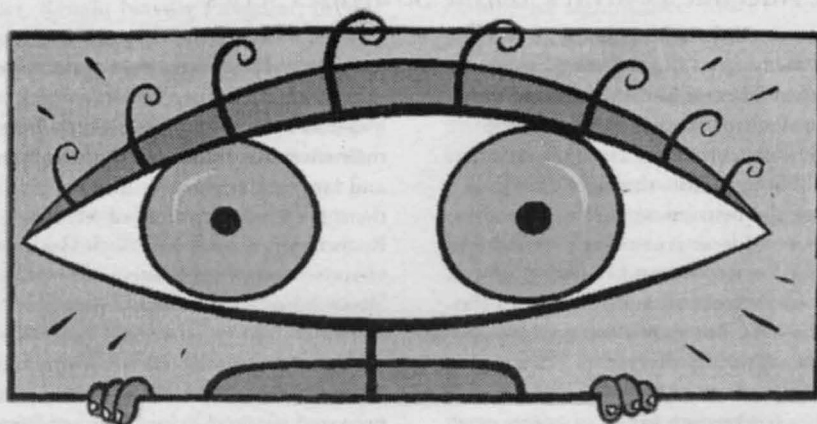
pockets transferring debris from one to the other, finding nothing much. But more desperate for that, emptying 'his' life onto the stage. Nothing at all soon, just her, with her clothes. What to do with a coat. How to be watched, to be in the presence of an 'audience', with 'nothing'. And to gradually expose oneself, until overexposed, until as awkward as a coat. Until just a thing to hang other things on.

*No longer ready made* is shaped by details, some so small and funny they are almost imperceptible. Sometimes so large it takes a while to see them. It's this attention to detail that keeps one watching, as 'work' happens everywhere at once (like on the street). In each life, details congregate, and wait, and return. In the end, one man walks slowly from the back of the stage to the front, over the debris, while the others throw themselves around him (in unison), he doesn't see them, they don't see him. Then, with nowhere to go, he falls into the arms of another man, who carries him for some time, in different ways. This is a moving segment, bleak and intimate. Soon he is alone again, shaking and shivering. He is his body. A space.

Somewhere here I've lost the sequence, I'm not sure if this is the last image, or this: the two men, each gently scratching on a 'door', a surface (the set is minimal, pragmatic and evocative). No urgency, but sound, the sound of a small part of the body (the finger nails) against a border, a kind of recovery, a starting point. And one's body is called—is remembered again—by the sound of bodies in 'places' unfolding.

*No longer ready made*, Meg Stuart/ *Damaged Goods*; dancers: Florence Augendre, David Hernandez, Benoit Lachambre, Meg Stuart, *The Space*, Adelaide Festival.

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# No dance we know

Richard Murphet experiences Meg Stuart's *No One is Watching* at the Adelaide Festival

There are several days after a grand mal seizure in which you remain within the terrifying aura of the convulsion. During this period it is impossible to distinguish between the inner world emanating from your traumatised temporal lobes and the outer world, from which you can feel an overwhelming energy of aggression and anarchy. I have had to stop driving a car three days after a fit because it is filled with a mixture of shouts I cannot quite decipher and an unbearably loud low-pitched hum. I look out the window and the actions not only of people but of traffic seem fragmented and lacking the comfort of cause and effect.

Meg Stuart and Damaged Goods' *No-One Is Watching* takes place in such an epileptic world. The psyche, the society, the civilisation has been seized and is convulsing. Attempts are made by one or occasionally two of the figures within to connect with another, to express an emotion which has something to do with tenderness. Unfortunately, at the time, the intended receiver is not watching, possessed by a force that has little to do with love.

I came to *No-One Is Watching* with

Vertov's film *Man With A Camera* and Pierre Henry's extraordinary musique concrete accompaniment fresh in mind. Like Stuart, Vertov fragmented his world—in his case, in camera and in editing. There feels (and almost is) a century difference between them, however. Vertov's fragmentation was his way of capturing the sheer energy of the early Soviet state. Stuart's fragmentation is the condition of a civilisation lying twitching on what Heiner Müller has called "these despoiled shores". Similarly, Vincent Malstaf's composition for *No-One Is Watching* is Pierre Henry forty years down the track—electronic, sampling, looping, nothing ever quite starting, nothing ever quite finishing, nothing distinct, epileptic.

This is what Jenny Kemp described in a forum as the landscape of the psyche. Bleak in its depiction, extraordinary to watch. The tiniest everyday gestures repeated reveal here not the inner resonances of Kemp's work but become the obsessive ingredients of a diseased state that gradually and always inevitably spreads throughout the entire group. And there is

an inexorability to the rhythm. If the group was ever able to find some sense of physical unity (and this was always in pain or obsession and usually without any individual recognising the others) there was always one individual who broke the pattern, who became preoccupied with another state of being. This is nothing new in movement choreography. But here the power lay in the fact that the very actions that the individual was setting up in contradistinction to the group so often became the seeds for the next wave of disease that spread throughout. There is it seems no way out and the entrapment here lies in the very form of group dance structure itself.

The dance for me was at its most powerful either in the fragments of states of being when no complete image was achieved or in the moments of suspension of action when the stage was filled with the memory of past events, or with the threat of what was to come—most of the company standing, sitting or lying, witnessing in the movement of one of them the seeds of their destruction. It was least



Meg Stuart / Damaged Goods

interesting when dance became representational and traded off the audience's empathy with what was being represented. It is always hard to watch madness being acted.

This is not dance as we used to know it. It is cruder, less abstract and more directly metaphoric than that. More power to it.

*No-One Is Watching*, Meg Stuart and Damaged Goods (U.S.), *The Space*.

## Terrible trouble

Linda Marie Walker becomes an 'extra' in the violent space of *La Fura dels Baus*

For all 'facts', all 'truths' are relative, everything depends on what is told and how it is told. (Festival brochure)

The Adelaide Royal Show pavilion is a great venue. The ferris wheel glowing white in the hot light. The doors of other pavilions open, and teams of people building elaborate temporary patios, ferneries, pools, and rockeries for a Gardening Show opening Thursday. This is a gently surreal entry and exit.

The trouble with a performance like this, is this: it 'is' trouble. Terrible trouble and trauma, that's its premise. And so is the imaged portrayal of that trouble, the impossibility of that. The audience is witness to, and subjected to, this feverish impossibility. And one becomes feverish.

This is trouble with a huge cardboard capital 'T'. Trouble light enough to carry, and solid enough to be contained.

*M.T.M.* is about, is a bout of, power and terror, and everyone horribly doing and being done to. It's probably about everything that humans do to one another in the name of 'cause', 'ideology', 'territory'. It is frenzy, frenzy from fever, and all that wasted energy, or, the extraordinary energy that waits in abeyance to be tapped by frenzy (and wasted anyway).

This frenzy is spectacle from go to woe, and moment to moment. And a litany/litany of voice. The screaming of abuse, the flood of polemics. And this is more than language as meaning. It's the tone and tension of order(s), beyond understanding. So, the end of the millennium, the end of our 'time',

apocalypse: a re-run of all that we imagine to fear: the tongue pulled out (finally), a bullet in the mouth. The 'idea' of living hell. This narrative is common, popular, incorporated. A given, even while being critiqued. What is left: the spectacle of spectacle. This we know too. And here it is big, fast, frank.

One is on the floor, in the crowd, as the actors are pulled, pushed, or carried past or over. And this quickly establishes a slightly wary relationship between a self which wants to, and does, forget itself and watch, and a self that has to watch itself, watch out for itself, move, so that the performance can move. And one is up against other bodies in a charged environment, with the techno-beat, the constant yelling, in other words loud conflicting pulses. We are the 'crowd scene'. We are their 'extras'. We are parted by them, at their mercy. One soon knows to watch the videographer as he watches his 'images'. To seriously attend to the videoing, to judge harshly what is shown (seen by your own eyes). And to watch behind

and sideways, to read, I suppose, multiple media simultaneously. The seamless construction of gross and accumulating lies is a highlight. The large screen playing sometimes three parallel films, is the site for both specific detail and the bigger picture. Here one 'sees' the body killed, the exact way of the killing. A 'B Grade' movie. And one sees too the male figure slowly drowning in static, static almost the metaphor for spectacle, as if spectacle now is breakdown.

*M.T.M.* is a violent use of space, of the cutting and breaking of space, into corners and lines and borders, and through layers and planes, vertical and horizontal. It forms and deforms continually ideas of platform and focus. The space itself is the violence, object of, and object for, rhetoric, and the practices of rhetorical intent, as if space sanctions or harbours or hides madnesses. The last word spoken in the show was "NO".

*La Fura dels Baus*, M.T.M., Ridley Pavilion, Wayville Showgrounds.

## RealTime/RealSpace ... the Festival of Perth

Katie Lavers is transported by two site works

It is a strange and baffling phenomenon that in some ways, a city that you have lived in for a while becomes almost invisible to you, more like a medium—like air or water—than an architectural and geographical entity.

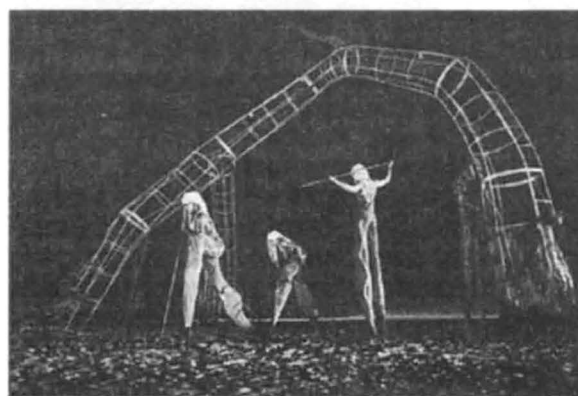
It takes some sort of jolt or the visit of a stranger to town who gives you the gift of re-seeing the town you live in. The Festival of Perth 1996 had two events that gave this gift of renewed sight wonderfully. *Vis-à-Vis*, the Dutch theatre group appearing at the Perth Festival for the second time, have this extraordinary ability to awaken you to the peculiar presence of Perth.

In 1994 they presented *Toppolino*, a quirky and quite wonderful work starring large numbers of Baby Fiats, in a strange deserted wasteland under one of Perth's busiest flyovers. The work was not only bizarre and amusing but also because of the site carefully chosen for the work, made you

re-examine the omni-presence of the car in Perth and the ways in which, city planning arguably predicated on acceptance of the car as our main and inevitable mode of transport, carves up the space of the city creating strange wastelands and no-go zones—unused and unusable by either cars or pedestrians.

Their new work *Central Park* performed at the 1996 Perth Festival was similarly powerful. The star of the show was undoubtedly the set built to represent the vastness of a high rise office block. A technical disaster on a hot Friday afternoon leaves five people stranded for the weekend on the roof of a skyscraper.

This set and situation were set atop the eighth floor of a multi-storey car park, in the city. The audience sat high in the centre of Perth in the middle of the CBD, surrounded by (real) skyscrapers and office blocks. At night the tiny squares of light from the office block windows and the actions of cleaners and



Marrugeko Company Mimi spirits

Kevin O'Brien

office workers doing overtime visible inside, mirror perfectly the squares of light from the windows of the set and the activities of the actors inside. The experience was powerfully affecting in a physical way and gave a new bodily awareness of the city of Perth.

The other work that had this quality of giving a new view of Perth was *MIMI* by the Marrugeku Company exploring the stories of the Mimi figures in Aboriginal dreaming. The production was performed in the Boya Quarry in the Hills above Perth. Never having been there before and in the absence of any signs except a notice that said "no vehicles except those belonging to cast or crew beyond this point" and being rather late for the performance, I found myself

running 2 kilometres along a dirt track with about thirty other people (also late for the performance) in the pitch black.

The dirt track was completely unlit and there were no buildings—the stars were absolutely breath-taking. Every so often, when there was a break in the bushes on the right it became apparent that we were running along a dirt track on the side of a hill and there, right down below us, were the lights of the city and the same buildings that we had viewed from such a different perspective at the *Vis-à-Vis* performance.

We eventually came out into a car park and were directed up a steep path into the quarry. A huge semi-circular area cut into the rock, the old quarry forms a wonderful amphitheatre with a rocky escarpment as the backdrop. Under the stars, the setting moon and the scent of the bushland, this extraordinary environment was a living presence and there could not have been a more perfect place for the dream images of the Mimi complemented by the unusual and extremely powerful costume designs.

These two performances were the highlight of the festival for me—the gift of a new RealTime/RealSpace experience of Perth.



# A rich queer family

Brett Adam reports on Melbourne's *Midsumma*

*Midsumma* is Melbourne's month long gay and lesbian cultural festival and it reflects a strong, diverse and proud image of its community. While it can be said that gay liberation, visibility and acceptance have grown considerably over the past 25 years, many of us still experience oppression, discrimination and violence on a number of levels in our daily lives. A festival such as *Midsumma* is an opportunity for Melbourne's queer community to celebrate their unique opportunity, both social and individual, and to see their lives and experiences acknowledged in a public forum.

The festival itself encompasses a variety of cultural events; exhibitions, performances, readings, forums, sporting events etc. But perhaps the most important if less obvious aspect of *Midsumma*, and one which harks back to the origins of Carnival and Saturnalia, is the fact that it allows for the temporary inversion of the social status quo and the transformation of space and body. Perhaps the most significant events in relation to this concept would have to be the

four large weekend events which occurred through the festival month.

The first of these was the opening Street Party held in Fitzroy's cafe and bookshop lined Brunswick Street. For seven hours the street was closed to traffic and played host to 50,000 gay men, lesbians and friends enjoying a variety of entertainment and performances. For one evening this usually busy thoroughfare became a relaxed, social environment where people wandered at will, stopping to chat with friends, eat and drink, or just party. Entertainment was provided by a number of Melbourne's gay and lesbian social and cultural groups, as well as sneak previews of Festival performances.

On the second weekend the annual Red Raw Dance Party, held by the ALSO Foundation took place in Port Melbourne. This event, one of a number of such parties held throughout the year, was a much more intense event. The dance party is a phenomenon which I think deserves much more study, especially in relation to queer

culture. The emphasis here is not so much on the transformation of space as of the queer body itself. Externally, bodies are shaved, waxed, plucked, pumped, adorned, made over and costumed in a variety of ways in public displays of identity and sexuality. Internally, a number of these same bodies undergo changes due to alcohol or other chemical means as well as total immersion in such an intense aural and visual environment. These alterations can enable the experience of liberation from daily reality.

Weekend number three was the site for two new *Midsumma* events, *Pride* and *Ride*. The first of these was the inaugural *Pride March*, a public assertion by 11,000 people of the existence and support of gay and lesbian identity. It is to become an annual event and this year overwhelmed even the organisers in terms of the numbers of people attending either as observers or participants. However it is not intended that *Pride* develop into the same sort of event as Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Rather it is seen as a simple yet powerful public expression of self-esteem.

The march was followed by *Ride* held at Luna Park adjacent to the gardens. The capacity crowd of 2,000 was reached early and those lucky enough to get tickets were treated to six hours of rides, drag spruikers

and entertainment. Again, the notion of temporary reclamation of public, and in this case specifically, 'family' space is crucial to the appreciation of *Midsumma*'s importance in the queer psyche. Gay men and women are quite often expelled from such environments for 'inappropriate' behaviour or made to feel unwelcome or alienated, so the effect of this almost exclusive repopulating of such space cannot be underestimated.

The grand finale was the annual *Midsumma Carnival* in Alexandra Gardens. This event attracted 120,000 people throughout the day. The carnival draws on highlights of the previous month as well as special guests and performers. Dog shows, drag competitions, rides and displays compete for the crowds' attention. The lawns along the Yarra (most famous for being the site for the annual Moomba Festival) are ringed by a huge number of stalls and tent housing Melbourne's diverse gay and lesbian business, social, support, interest, sporting, media and cultural groups. To spend the afternoon in such an environment surrounded by friends and an amazingly diverse display of communal life can only serve to increase one's pride and joy in belonging to Melbourne's rich queer family. It is also a fitting end to a festival dedicated to engendering a deep sense of community.

## Spooky signs, twisted siblings

Tracey Parry unbuttoned some trusty symbols of 'evil' at this year's *cLUB bENT*

The Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival has at last acquired that essential element of any arts fiesta—the totally cool, off the wall, late night cabaret venue, *cLUB bENT*. The first *cLUB bENT* in 1995 won the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Special Festival Award and was a huge success with both audiences and critics. It developed from a desire to provide an open forum for the presentation of "the latest in hybrid queer culture", from the deadliest of nightclub performers to the most twisted of their theatrical peers. Focusing on the queer, the diverse, and the outlandish, *cLUB bENT* 1996 was, however, not exempt from the usual controversy that surrounds such events.



Alister Grant aka Alistair von Trapp in *Wenn ich mir was wünschen durfte* Heidrun Löhr

The diversity of performances at this year's *cLUB bENT* was impressive and the improved quality of the works did not require that rawness be sacrificed to perfectionism. There was the usual array of exposed pudenda and a proliferation of boys showing off their dangly bits, used in a fabulously gratuitous and artistic manner.

Female performers, such as Barbara Karpinski, Azaria Universe, and Moira Finucane offered works that were both intelligent and amusing. Those who think that the savvy queer crowd that *cLUB bENT* attracts are permanently unshockable should think again. Arguably, it was the acts by local male performer Alister Grant that caused the most controversy at *cLUB bENT* 1996.

It wasn't the nudity that disturbed some elements of the audience. His performance as "Alistair von Trappe" was considered fascistic by some, while others perceived his enactment

of a child sacrifice as going too close to the edge in its supposed references to paedophilia. In this specifically 'pervy' arena of post-politically correct art, is it still possible to push too many buttons and boundaries?

*The white faced figure enters the stage dressed in decidedly Berlinesque attire. Staggering in black stilettos and wearing a black silk slip, suspender belt and stockings, he sings in German with a tortured inflection. His blacked-out eyes and lips reveal nothing from beneath the shadow of the peaked cap whilst blackened fingernails poke through the long fingerless gloves that grope a black feather boa. He strips to reveal a chest adorned with a smudged swastika, crudely drawn in red lipstick.*

Although many received the piece quite well, some German-speaking members of the audience were clearly affronted. "Context", says Grant, "is the key to understanding the



Wendy Starr, Barbara Karpinski and Derek Porter in *I'm too Beautiful to be a Lesbian* Heidrun Löhr

piece. My performance was not a fragment from some neo-Nazi rally but an act performed in an open, queer forum, a space that is relatively open to addressing taboos."

The controversy centred on the obvious signifiers of Nazism and Fascism. Many who saw the piece complained that they could not understand the lyrics and therefore had no idea of the message he was trying to convey. Grant states that singing in German was central to his strategy. "When you sing songs in another language people tend to concentrate more on the atmosphere of the piece, the music, the image, the movements. For example, the first song was a 30's German song about class warfare, told from the perspective of a maid protesting the

oppression of the upper classes. Nina Simone later sings it with a 'black slave' twist. I wanted it in German to reinvest its origins and to say something about the fascism of that era."

Grant's postures both convey the situation of the victim and expose the strategies of the oppressors. He disrobes and delivers a song sung by Charlotte Rampling in the movie *The Night Porter* where she tells of her plight as a concentration camp victim. The swastika is deliberately imprinted on his chest as a sign of victimhood, much like the Star of David was imprinted on Jews or the pink triangle that was enforced on homosexuals; except this time it is the mark of the oppressor that is deployed. Grant states that he deliberately smudged the symbol to make it look more like blood, much like neo-Nazi's carve swastikas on their victim's flesh or mark walls after acts of oppression.

As Grant states, "The Nazis knew full well how to deploy powerful and seductive psychosexual imagery, such as the aesthetics of beauty associated with the Aryan race. With sharp and impressive uniforms, they invested this order with extra appeal. I wanted to deconstruct the symbols associated with fascism to show that they are not exclusively owned by that order." It is another reminder that the swastika was originally an ancient Indo-European symbol for life and progress prior to its appropriation by the Nazis.

Grant chose his costume for a clear reason. In the thirties, cabaret functioned partially as a protest against the rise of fascism. Parts of the Nazi uniform were combined in a satiric manner with costumery associated with cross-dressing and homosexuality, in order to subvert the power of the Nazi image. The white make-up and blacked-out eyes also purposely dehumanise the face in order to further emphasise the position of victimhood.

Grant employed similarly confrontational tactics in his second performance at *cLUB bENT*. Wearing a leopard print mini dress, a Frida Kahlo mono-brow, ripped fishnets, and a high, black 'Mexican prostitute wig', Grant 'sacrificed' a ten year old boy on stage. The performance, says Grant, was an illustration of a song by Soft Cell called *Solo Adultos*, which addresses aspects associated with the religion of Santeria, a voodoo-like mixture of Catholicism and West African beliefs popular in parts of Cuba and Mexico. Animal sacrifice is central to this religion

and is considered as a valid form of 'bargaining' with the gods.

*A mock shrine was erected at the back of the stage. Two zombies enter with candles after which the high priestess comes out as the den mother cum madam. She sings a Soft Cell song as the zombies bring on the child, who appears bruised and abused. They bind him. The high priestess sacrifices a rubber chicken over him, spilling fake blood before entering into a drug-induced catatonic state.*



Azaria Universe in *To Bring You My Love* Heidrun Löhr

In this instance Grant was drawing the connection between the darker aspects of North American culture and the mysteries associated with other religions. He highlights the situation of people with no identities or rights within American culture—such as Hispanic illegal immigrants—who remain affiliated with the so-called 'dark practices' of voodoo-like religions.

Grant foregrounds the types of 'sacrifice', such as child prostitution, that occur in cultures similar to our own. "The child was not brought into the piece as a symbol of erotic desire, but rather to exemplify innocence and exploitation. Hopefully the lurid and corny presentation of the piece served to undermine any serious suggestion of the child as an erotic attraction for the audience," says Grant.

Perhaps any negative and emotional reactions to Alister Grant's performances at *cLUB bENT* serve to reveal more about the elements of 'fascism' and 'aberrant erotic desire' buried in our own culture, rather than leading the audience to safe judgments on the dark histories and secrets of other cultures.

Tracey Parry is a Sydney-based writer.



# OnScreen

## film, media & techno-arts

Feature

### Over the pond, on the beach

Peter Mudie in Vienna, London and Toronto reflects on state of avant-garde cinema

One is given the impression at times that creative based screen work is on the threshold of disappearing altogether. It appears as if there is a diminishing flow of critical screen activities across the country—most of which have been confined into handy little thematic packages for effortless digestion, or merely tired exclamations of everything correct and necessary for some form of limited illustrative discussion. More often than not, these programs rise and vanish just as quickly, in either Sydney or Melbourne. Without access to a linked dialogue with others and/or an established exhibition circuit, it is easy to conclude that the exploration and savouring of subtle nuances has been replaced by the quick hit vibrancy of artificial flavour and the primordial scream for attention. What was once an area that many entered, those 'rare and gentle spacings' now only support a sad acquiescence to the scattered yelling of those engaged in fighting over the few crumbs that remain. In this sense, diversity has been replaced by conformity (no matter how clever we feel that conformity has become), and this conformity can achieve little but the narrowing of intellectual space for all. In a sense, to approach those 'spacings' now is to be relegated to the dated label of something akin to Casteneda's writing. Myopically, there is the assumption that this is also the case elsewhere.



Kurt Kren

In Australia, the celebration of the centenary of cinema saw the demise of *Filmnews*, the constriction of screen based organisational funding, and generally the aimless wandering through so much imported arthouse muck, silent flicker nostalgia, and tacky multimedia sales pitches, that so many feel relegated to be familiar with, in the absence of anything else. Perhaps one can simply get too dispirited towards year's end—perhaps with the centenary I was expecting (at the very least) Paul Winkler's retrospective screenings at the MCA, as well as Albie Thoms' *52 Filmmakers* series at the AGNSW, to tour nationally. Yet this was not to be, and within this sphere, it was only the Michael Snow *Filmworks* exhibition that toured. In retrospect, had I known of the abysmal lack of interest in Mike's work here, it would have been perhaps more 'cost effective' to take the

national audience to Toronto with me. It was with these thoughts that I crossed the 'pond' last November to screen a series of Australian films in Austria (as a prelude to my annual crawling through material in Europe and North America).

The programs that I was asked to assemble for screening around Austria were a broad selection of creative films culled from the past thirty years of activity in Australia—certainly there were others which should have been included, but without internal funding, I could only rely heavily upon the goodwill of those concerned. There was a program of Ubu Films to predicate the 'ground' (including *Poem 25*, *Puncture*, *Blunderball*, *Bluto*, *Bolero* and many others), and a survey program including Paul Winkler's *Long Shadows* and *Green Canopy*; Dirk De Bruyn's *Rote Movie*, *223* and *Understanding Science*; Marie Craven's splendid *Pale Black*; Marcus Bergner's *Musical Four Letters* and *Entrusco Me*; Chris Undy's *Did He Who Made The Lamb Make Thee?*, and two of my films from the 1980s, *L'œil De Deux* and *Balaclava*. Both programs were screened in Vienna at the Institute for Contemporary Art; many of the stalwarts of the Viennese avant-garde were in attendance, smoking and drinking with a consummate ease that contradicted their Teutonic intensity (including Kren, Blackout, Cristanell, Rosenberger, Hendrich and a recovering Adrian). Further afield I included two additional programs in Linz and Klagenfurt: Arf Arf's *Thread of Voice* and Josko Petkovic's *Letter to Eros: The Logic of Enchantment* comprised one, and David Perry's rarely screened masterpiece *The Refracting Glasses* the other. Screening *The Refracting Glasses* seems to be the logical conclusion for a program of Australian creative film—between Malernik's tentativeness and Perry's (almost) 'Vermeer-esque' modelling of the film medium there lies a chord that strikes to the heart of the Australian creative psyche. It was a pleasure to be able to see this film and the others so often over this three week period (a luxury that is apparently impossible here).

Austria (or perhaps more appropriately Vienna) was alive with the Vienna Film Festival during my time there, the highlight of which was a complete retrospective of Martin Scorsese's films. Yet in true Viennese fashion, the avant-garde filmmakers (of which this country has such a rich tradition) were receiving similar tribute as part of their celebrations

around the centenary of cinema. One of the highlights was the launch of a new book on Peter Kubelka (by Peter Tscherkassky and Gabrielle Jutz), with Kubelka coming in from Frankfurt for a lecture and the screening of his films at the Oesterreichisches Filmmuseum. Kubelka spoke passionately between films to the audience and, in thinly disguised terms, equated the domesticity of pigs with the subservient creativity of filmmakers domesticated by the grant system. I was fortunate to have Moucle Blackout interpret for me—no doubt I missed out on many of the elaborate metaphors that Kubelka adopted. Later, Kubelka reiterated many of these to me...

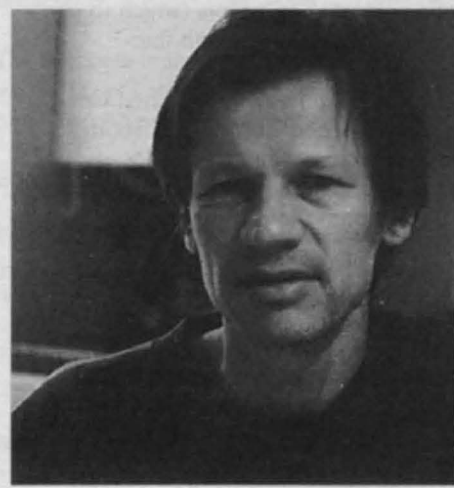


Lis Rhodes

Bernt Porridge

Kurt Kren, arguably the most important Austrian filmmaker in the post-war period had just completed a commissioned film for the 100 Years of Cinema Committee, a film titled *Tausendjahre Kino* (loosely translated in English *Thousandyearcinema*). The film is primarily his association of the anniversary of cinematography with that of the Third Reich (which was to last a thousand years). With the recent publication of an extensive book on Kren, and the exhibition of the film at the Vienna Secession (complete with the enlargement of every frame from it circumnavigating the large gallery space five times), like cream, Kren has once again risen to the surface of the European avant-garde.

One of the more interesting exhibitions in Vienna while I was there was a project by Gustav Deutsche—one hundred battery operated S8 loop film viewers were systematically handed out to one hundred cinema viewers sitting in a cinema with only white light being projected on the screen. All in all, the Austrian example of establishing a Centenary Committee with a generous amount of funds to screen, commission and publish throughout the year is a commendable one—one which can only highlight the importance that they place upon all aspects of their culture (past and present). Comparative assessments can be easily made—equally, they can have little substance. Suffice to say that Austria is similar only in population to Australia—on a per capita basis their government allocates more than ten times the amount annually on 'cultural activities' that we do here.



Guy Sherman

Bernt Porridge

London (as one has come to expect) was alive with a range of activity despite the bleak weather and the guarded responsiveness of residual Thatcherism. The London Filmmaker's Cooperative (LFMC), for so long one of the world's most important creative 'furnaces', was in the process of closing its doors at Gloucester Avenue for a temporary hiatus before moving into the purpose built facility in Shoreditch late in 1996. This relocation and construction has apparently been made possible through substantial grants/investment from a number of sources, including the Arts Council of England and the BFI. I can only suspect that the intelligence and foresight of David Curtis at the Arts Council had much to do with this. Despite the confusion, the LFMC Cinema, workshops and distribution remained operational through

December at their usual hectic pace with the same organisational anarchy that it has become known (and frustratingly, loved) for. With one of the world's finest collections of avant-garde and experimental film, and its history as a seeding ground for advanced film speculation since the late 1960s, it appears as if the LFMC is about to acquire a richly deserved measure of stability and supportive funding for the future. Much of my time in London was spent looking through the wealth of material located in the LFMC film collection. From Dunford and Raban to Leggett, Gidal and Le Grice to Sherwin, the collection at the Coop contains some of the most interesting and important creative films ever made—some of which are the only remaining copies. As is the case for many other such film works around the world—if you want to see it, you have to go to it.

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## Feature

## Over the pond, on the beach

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Sharing the physical facility with the LFMC in the future will be the newly named London Electronic Arts (previously known as the LVA) headed by Michael Mazierre—an organisation which continues to dominate the creative video scene in London. Although many have commented that the 'marriage of convenience' between the LFMC and the LEA will lead to an annexation of one by the other, I feel that with the input of many past members involved in the transition (such as Guy Sherwin from the Coop), the integrity and uniqueness of each will remain for some time yet.

One of the biggest dangers facing independent film and video makers in England over the past decade has been the commissioning, acquisition and screening policies of Channel 4, and the relationship of these with Arts Council generative funding. Although in some ways linked, these organisations (whose policies were once again being re-negotiated while I was in London) have resisted the temptation to merge funding with a television 'pre-sale'—confusing anticipated market need with that of cultural exploration (as some sectors here in Australia have). Many so termed 'avant-garde' films have either been commissioned or screened on television in the UK—including those of Guy Sherwin (*Mile End Purgatorium*), Lis Rhodes (*Light Reading*), William Raban (*From Sixty Degrees North*), and even Kurt Kren's infamous *6/64 Mama Und Papa*.



Malcolm LeGrice

Perhaps one of the finest examples of this assimilation and/or relationship has been the television work of Malcolm Le Grice—one of the primary catalysts of (what has been termed) the English Structuralist-Materialist film project, and the 'Godfather' of the LFMC. Malcolm, (now a Professor at the University of Westminster) is as energetic and insightful as ever, completing a number of video-based commissioned projects which have screened nationally on British television over the past few years. The *Chronos Project* has consumed him for the past six years:

*Chronos Fragmented* (one element of the

*Project* with music by John Eacott and Stewart Louis de Canonville) was completed shortly before my arrival in London, and it should be screened early this year. Although many of us are familiar with his filmwork in Australia (a single screen version of *Berlin Horse* being the film that is screened most often, a number of others are held in Canberra), his video work is extremely poetic and sublime, merging the creative flux of time with the fragmentary building blocks of memory contained in a multitude of images modulated by his computer programming. Working with computers is not a recent development for Le Grice: as early as the 1970s he was experimenting with computers, perhaps as early as his days at the Institute for Research in Art and Technology at Roberts Street in 1967 (known colloquially as the '2nd Arts Lab').

Mid-December found me in Toronto looking through the new work contained in the re-located Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre (CFMDC). Canada has a long and admirable tradition in 'experimental film'—largely achieved through the wide scope of the Canadian Council (providing grants for speculative projects even in film and video) as well as the once powerful (yet sadly humbled at present) National Film Board. With filmmakers such as Norman McLaren, Michael Snow, David Rimmer, Al Razutis, Bruce Elder and others, the avant-garde has blossomed into a proliferation of new work from Carl Brown, Mike Hoolboom, Susan Rynard, Rick Hancox, and Gary Popovich in a variety of methods and media. The 'alchemist' work of Carl Brown is arguably the most interesting—his persistent exploration of material and surface has yet to become repetitive or locked into a specific context. Carl's films (which to my knowledge are yet to be screened in Australia) have much in common with the substance of Brakhage's latest work (unseen here as well).

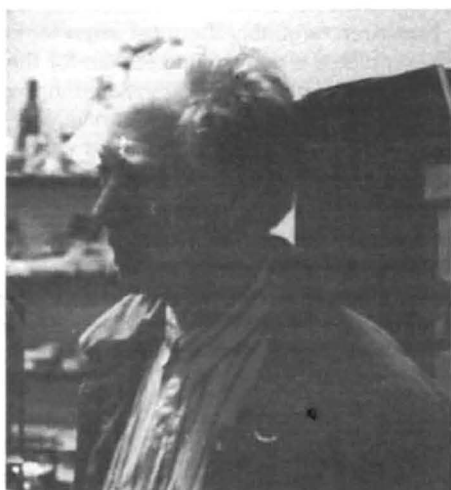
Michael Snow has started a new large film project following the commissioned film *Venice* made for last year's Biennale. Despite being only six minutes long (the shortest Snow film since the animated *A-Z* in 1959), *Venice* is an intense and exhausting reworking/remodelling of the material that formed the base for his photographic piece *Venetian Blind* in 1970. Unfortunately, Snow's *Venice* is not available for either rental or purchase—the only viewing copy resides at the CFMDC.

One of the more interesting developments around the world is the purchasing of films and assorted material by large art galleries or institutions for preservation and posterity. In Vienna I heard of the acquisition of all of Valie Export's filmwork by a gallery; in London there was talk that the Tate was looking into something similar. In Canada however, films have been acquired for some time by the National Gallery in Ottawa as well as the Art Bank at the Canada Council, and the Art Gallery of Ontario (which has long been an exhibitor of avant-garde film on the east coast) is presently negotiating to establish a complete archive of Stan Brakhage's films, elements, and original writings. No doubt the establishment of such an archive, in concert with the present one of Snow's writings, would make the AGO one of the most important centres for research into this area of film beyond the Centre Pompidou in Paris. That such a thing should ever be considered in Australia is unthinkable...perhaps it is easier to let the foundations on the Cantrill's home bear the weight.

After a brief stop to visit family and Chris Welsby in Vancouver, it was back home just before Christmas. On the return flight, I recalled what a colleague and friend once told me: "...there could never be a cultural revolution here, nor could Australia ever sustain a meaningful relationship to the avant-garde. It's simply too easy just to go to the beach instead".

I'm standing on the beach, and there is nobody here—perhaps he was wrong.

Peter Mudie teaches at the School of Architecture and Fine Arts, University of Western Australia.



Mike Snow

Bernt Porridge

## Report

Silicon alchemy:  
frames from an  
imaginary flowchart

Francesca da Rimini at ANAT's January forum on Artists and Interactive Multimedia

*Scene One. Exterior/Day. Canberra skies. 3D Cinema Sequence* <possibly using VRML> Five airforce jets. Formation manoeuvres. Inscribing the relentlessly grey skies of the nation's pre-election capital with the expensively red blaze of technology linked with realtime earsplit audio. Multi-military-media.

*Scene Two. Interior/Day. Canberra School of Art. Talking Heads* <Quicktime Video> Five artists. Computers, VCR, slides. Tattoos and viscera and the intolerable, elective physiognomies, mid-west bowling alley slide to homeless pages on the web, scanning the global telephone book of consciousness, research art, the owning of culture. Five different takes on the phenomenon of 'multimedia'.

*Hyperlink #5 Wallpaper graphics* <voiceover> A forum on Artists and Interactive Multimedia organised by the Australian Network for Art and Technology as an adjunct to its National Summer School. A chance for the 14 students to connect their recently acquired practical skills in interactive mm to current cultural and intellectual debates. An opportunity for other artists, artworkers and IT types to hear five exceptional creative innovators <aka artists, aka 'content providers' in industry lingo> reveal the how and why wonder of their personal connexions to mm.

*Hyperlink #7 The forum. Highly non-interactive. The form bearing the weight of 2000 years of the oratorical tradition. Audience required to be passive, quiet, still, patient. To still the present in order to contemplate the future. And yet there was something compelling about the Bodies with Organs, the experience of fleshmeet however formal, the tensions arising from artists with different cultural agendas, different philosophical bases.*

*Hyperlink #17 Visceral horizontal wipe. Linda Dement guides us through her dark interactive terrains of Typhoid Mary, CyberfleshGirlMonster and In My Gash, a long term project of a virtual space inside a wound. This artist exercises a fascistic control of technology to create a space where the unbearable can be made bearable. Melding flesh not deemed conventionally pretty to objects and organisms which are sharp, dangerous, perversely beautiful, malevolent, Dement slips through the screen, institutionalising herself, prescribing art as therapy <but is she being ironic?>. Hers is a highly blasphemous take on multimedia, defying the legislators who would stamp the future technologies with classifications cloned from The Difference Engine.*

*Hyperlink #24 Jump cut 3D anim. Enter the software artist, the nocturnal self-governing Aberrant Intelligence system whose various projects may be motivated by the desire to create a visual equivalent of music or an interest in seeing how scientific theories of earlier ages bumptopped onto our millennium-fevered minds. John Tonkin's infinite falling squares streammorphed seamlessly into his interactive Elective Physiognomies. Now a series of pseudo gene portraits, now a gang of pseudo mug shots, challenging the player to contribute character assessments based on the purest of subjective responses to the faces <who is the most intelligent/trustworthy/homosexually-inclined?>. Then the tricky bit, the smartware adding each player's ratings to the overall score for each mug on each test, spitting statistical updates politely. An oblique collision of science and art, quietly video.*

*Hyperlink #32 Multiple video windows of Doctor Caligari's Cabinet. Third download, artist and educator John Collette. This digital homeboy lacks a healthy reverence for the government money cow Molly Media, recalling that most enabling technologies have been novelties before finding a social value. Almost heretically <we \*are\* in Canberra, home of Creative Nation> he talks about transforming new media's commercial impetus to things of 'real benefit'. His take on connectivity links to cinema's grand narratives, TV sitcoms' ongoing pantomimes and the net as global phone book of consciousness <a way of proclaiming oneself anonymously>. Through the low/ly bandwidth of the net we can participate and inject something of ourselves, as in Elizabethan theatre. I remember the Indonesian all night Wayang Kulut shadow theatre, shades of LambdaMoo's living room on a bright night. The Collette mm take is redolent more of passion than profit, imagining a utopic interactivia rising from the ashes of infotainment.*

*Hyperlink #49 <http://bowlingalley.walkerart.org> Shu Lea Cheang takes the audience <still so patient, polite> on a comedic tour of some of the cyberfringe zones, revealing her current project of digitalising herself. This nomad in spiralspace appears more interested in homeless pages and collaborations with artists and public to explore notions of access, power and infernal desire than pressing CD ROMs to make a million. From coin-operated video installations to her Eco-cybernoia feature film *Fresh Kill*, from the sophisticated filth of net-grown multi-authored texts triggered by live bowling alley punters to her gender-fuck and justice web project, Cheang constructs contexts for individuals to create their own adventures from elegantly dismembered narratives.*

*Hyperlink #56 Lyn Tune, digital pioneer, asks "how do we own culture?" She distinguishes between what she terms 'research art' and art that feeds into the commercial spheres of activity. Describing mm, Tune's take is that in a small box an environment is created and people are put there. Her take on mm is also passionate, and pragmatic.*

*Transition fade to end cinema sequence. It <the making of a 'good' mm work> may be more about alchemy and serendipity, than it is about data rates and platform reversioning.*

The artist or interface designer who can create an intuitive front end evoking the economic elegance of a haiku to a multi-sensory digitally mediated experience becomes a cultural alchemist, transforming silicon into thought. <And possibly ideas into cash or e-creds>



## Feature

# Immaculate conceptions

Noel Purdon in conversation with Peter Greenaway

**NP** You claim an enormous field of discourse for cinema, a discourse that literature and painting are already granted. I wonder if we can map your specific use of film language within the major area of representation. The seventeenth century, for example, has become your favourite location. You recreate its plays, its visual arts—for what reason?

**PG** I think there are many. But if we could just tackle the situation of representation in terms of the baroque...The baroque is the first period when all the arts came together into—to use that unpleasant contemporary term—intermediality, when art was self-consciously used as a form of propaganda. So that somebody like Bernini working in Rome in the 1650s would use light and colour, incense and music, tableaux vivants, and all the sensations that it was possible to evoke, in order to put up an act of propaganda for the suspension of disbelief. In terms of the 17th Century, this would have been to disbelieve in rationality and therefore to believe in God. It's easy to transpose those terms to the end of the 20th Century, when cinema fulfils the same functions, a highly baroque medium containing vast amounts of interdisciplinary intermediality, supporting a suspension of disbelief, obviously no longer associated with ideas of faith but with capitalism.

Capitalism offers you consolations and solutions, creates a situation which, from a Hollywood position, says "All's for the best in the best of all possible worlds!" And just as the first baroque was an obscenity which in some senses was propagating nothing, there is for me a sense in which cinema fulfils the same function. On another level, the 17th Century has created the modern world. Here begin, especially in a British perspective, the institutions of monarchy, democracy, the collapse of religion, the beginnings of empirical thought and the scientific revolution.

**NP** You make that a hinge in *The Baby of Macon*, with the Bishop's son belonging to both worlds.

**PG** I think it's the first time that the individual became an essence. Although the Renaissance gave us the intellectual framework to regard the individual as something to be pursued, it wasn't until about 1650, post-Galileo, that the whole axis of our position, both on earth and in the universe, and certainly vis-a-vis Faith and the opening up of the New World, really became an essential platform on which to work.

**NP** It's also interesting in terms of your fondness for the painting of that period—in earlier films Velasquez, Frans Hals, Vermeer. Here you run the gamut from the Venetians of the cinquecento to the 17th century Flemish/Spanish schools. Not so incongruous, I suppose, in terms of the cultural centrality of Spain.

**PG** Absolutely, and the way the Tuscan Medici were associated with southern Italy, held then by the Spaniards who had access to the New World, and all those sorts of associations.

**NP** Is that how the link to Cosimo de Medici arrived?

**PG** He is the only real historical character. I suppose for an examination of the movie it's not necessary to know that the whole phenomenon is happening exactly on his 17th birthday on 16 September 1597. But that is a useful pivotal point for me in relation to his father and grandfather, who had encouraged Galileo, and Cosimo's mother who was a religious hysteric and tried very hard to reverse the whole situation. She had a disastrous effect on her son who in later life was deeply unhappy. In the film he's always crossing himself and showing off his religiosity, but desperately misunderstanding the tenets that are constantly being crammed into his education.

**NP** Yet you seem not to use the iconography of the Medician court, but rather that of the didactic theatre of the Jesuits and the Spanish rituals of the auto-da-fe and the bullfight. I'm thinking of the slaughtered man and beast, and the Rhetoric of the Senses.

**PG** There is another Medician association which is to do with the Petrarchan idea of the procession as a hierarchical examination of society. The procession, as demonstrated in the Piazza dessa Signoria as well as in St. Mark's Square, constantly reminded everybody of their position in Society. Everyone knew where the State was in relation to the Church.

**NP** Thinking of processions, I wondered why you called one character 'Carpaccio'. Because while the altarpieces in which you stage the play within the film do recall earlier Venetian painting, the costumes and architectural details are distinctly baroque. Is that why he's there?

**PG** Yes. He was a little sort of signpost for those who want to play the game. It's all subsumed now. But there were two other quite influential painters. One is Monsti Desiderio, working in Naples in about 1660, who specialised in the most extraordinary, extravagant, dramatically lit interiors.

**NP** Like the Explosion in a Cathedral?

**PG** Which looks as if he has seen stop-motion photography before it was invented. And the other, much more obscure, is a character called Crevalcare, who was working in the Veneto round about 1550. He specialised largely in decapitated heads. And the images of decapitation at the end refer very much to that semi-mystical vision. There's a beautiful painting which we somewhat flagrantly put on our T-shirts, which is an image of St Catherine with her eyes turned up to heaven and her neck rather discreetly cut. Again, they're rather obscure references but they are part and parcel of the debate which Sacha Vierny and I had about our visual style.

**NP** Do you notice any great difference between his work for you and his camera style for Buñuel, Resnais and Raul Ruiz?

**PG** I think I've allowed him his pictorial head so to speak (laughs). I do know he takes a great delight in lighting all those interiors. I think he has probably had a great influence on my activities, if only in practical terms. In *Drowning by Numbers*, which was the last movie we did in a real location—some time ago now—there was always the practical difficulty of wanting to

use artificial light in a natural landscape. God always defeats you because you can't compete with the sun, though we tried very hard to stylise by putting light in the foreground, on trees and so on. So the desire for his particular vocabulary and for me to use it meant that we started to do more and more movies not so much in studios but in interiors. Here, because it was much cheaper, we actually used an ice-skating rink outside Cologne where we built that theatre. It had the most extraordinary practical advantage for me because ice-skating rinks are very flat, and I could track and dolly in a way I've never been able to before.

**NP** There's certainly a great mobility of the camera. It carries on from both *The Cook and Prospero's Books*, which is itself a giant procession eternally in motion.

**PG** That's right. There, though, because of the constriction of the studio floor, most of them are on rails and travel very much in straight lines. There's a mobility of the dolly in *The Baby of Macon* which I've never done before and which was therefore very exciting.

**NP** Heard in a well-equipped theatre, the 16-track sound mix is also extraordinary. I had the impression of being an audience caught in the middle of the imaginary action, not an audience that was the vanishing point of the audience that you already have watching the play within the screen. The sound seemed to be working as ambience, as soundscape. Was that plotted pre-production?

**PG** It was. I've gradually developed a fine relationship with my sound man, a brilliant guy called Christopher Wyatt. We've done five films together now. I'm giving him more and more opportunity to excel in those things he's good at. And also the particular use of music this time, which is travelling a long way from my relationship with Michael Nyman by going back to the original music of the period, all of which was specially recorded for us, sometimes in sync, sometimes not.

**NP** There again you move from the English Renaissance of Tallis and Purcell to the Venetian composers.

**PG** Right. And Frescobaldi and the northerners.

**NP** There's a pan-European movement from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, with Monteverdi Vespers coming in ironically precisely at the moment of the so-called Virgin Birth. You obviously take tremendous care in your artistic reference.

**PG** Indeed. Don't you think cinema deserves it?

**NP** Absolutely. I used to be fascinated by Pasolini's set-ups of mannerist painting. Along with Buñuel, you and Pasolini would form a trio of directors who approach distasteful subject matter with an extremely analytical aesthetic. I said before we started the interview that there was a time when I found *The Cook* pretty repulsive, but had I not been prepared by his earlier films, I'm sure I would have felt the same about *Salo*. Do you acknowledge this affinity between yourself and Pasolini and Buñuel?

**PG** Well, yes. For me Pasolini's films are very uneven. There are some brilliant ones and things I don't connect with at all. I've always been slightly irritated by Buñuel's reputation in Great Britain, because he's been latched onto by the easy-thinking liberal middle classes who've used him as a convenient touchstone.

**NP** Exactly the people he mocks so resoundingly.

**PG** In *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. All that's not Buñuel's fault, though it does in some sense affect your opinion about his currency. But of course I do have enormous respect for both those gentlemen.

**NP** What other directors would you find admirable?

**PG** The key, both in the past and, indeed, the present, would have to be Resnais. The first five movies. I'm not so sure about the subsequent ones. But definitely *Last Year in Marienbad*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *Muriel*, and the documentaries that go before.

**NP** On the painters? Van Gogh and Gauguin?

**PG** Yes. And *Night and Fog*. Much superior to *Schindler's List*. There's a way in which his intelligence strikes me as incredibly cinematic. There is no way in which those products could be made in any other form, which is something you can't say about 98 per cent of world cinema.

**NP** That brings us to the kind of 'image-commodity' that cinema has become. You've written about your reaction to Olivieri Toscani. Could you tell me more?

**PG** Do you remember—I don't know whether it was the Australian experience, but in Great Britain and certainly in Europe—about six or eight years ago there were very large images for Benetton, the clothing manufacturer, of a young baby? People found the image extremely shocking. It was that sensitivity about shock which Toscani could manage and organise that I was very curious about.

**NP** Like the nun and priest kissing? And the AIDS victim?

**PG** They were later. For the moment here's this image of a newborn child, a state we all pass through, covered in mucus and blood, seconds out of the womb, in some cases 30 metres wide, put up in all the high streets in England. There was a tremendous furore and they all had to come down. What is it about this image, which in some sense is so crucial, so vulnerable, but also so personal, an image of our total equality? You could imagine that a few seconds after that photograph was taken the child would

• continued page 20



## Feature

## Immaculate conceptions

• from page 19

have been wrapped up in a sheet or a blanket. At once we would have known its position in the world in terms of the Third World and so on. So there's a way in which politically, and certainly physically, the vulnerability was an image of extraordinary equality. Why were people so upset? There was a great elegance, in a way; and very witty that Benetton should have used such an image, because we're all born naked into the world and sooner or later we're going to need clothes. So why not use Benetton? That was also offensive to many people. But it was just the rawness of that image that gave it power. Subsequently, as you rightly indicated, he expanded the hypocrisies of advertising. Advertising basically uses a very small percentage of human activity, where an aspirin cures all your ills, a packet of cornflakes satisfies all your desires. We've now brought pain, anxiety, death and all those negative sides of human experience into an area which is normally so flippant about them. I think this is a very interesting argument.

NP But it's curious, isn't it, that people who would watch this or a De Palma original and gulp up the blood, should find your films offensive?

PG I was watching *The Untouchables* on BBC television a couple of weeks ago. You know the sequence where Sean Connery is slaughtered? The whole area is covered in blood from corner to corner for about ten minutes, it seems. If you look at that segment, it's a justification, an emotional, heartstirring, violent pull on you in order to justify the murder of the admittedly evil assailant at the end of the film, so that you can absolve Kevin Costner. In other words, there's a manipulation for very obscene moral reasons which people don't even consider. The justification of blood is its revenge value. You're so right. The manipulation of that phenomenon is neither criticised nor noticed. Yet people pour all their hatred into a movie like *The Baby of Macon*.

NP De Palma himself won't even admit what he's doing now. I asked him last month whether he made any analysis of his use of violence and transvestism.

PG What was his reply?

NP He said "It's just kind of scary". I guess 'child abuse' is establishing itself as another terror term where thought must be suspended. The notion that there might be a pornography of sentimentality about children seems not to be considered. Is that something which you were also attacking in *The Baby of Macon*?

PG Yes. It has now become an apparently journalistically acceptable subject to discuss. But there's so much hysteria and so much prurience involved in the gutter press in Great Britain, which has incredibly hypocritical views about it, exemplified in the lubricious recording of the Woody Allen and the Michael Jackson cases. So public attitude, the journalistic attitude to it, is highly questionable. And I just wanted to discuss all these things, and the concept of the child as power-broker; an opportunity to satisfy ambition, to recreate the potentiality of wealth, to act as an accessory to fashion. All those phenomena are built into the argument of the film.

NP And the depiction of women's complicity. This, as well as the rape scene, has already drawn hostility. The rape is deliberately prolonged. It's a very long take, as I remember.

PG Yes. It's as long as I could get out of one magazine: 10 minutes 25 seconds. The manufacturers reckon you can only get 10 minutes, but we managed to squeeze an extra 25 seconds.

NP From *A Walk Through H* onwards, you've always exaggerated the cinematic apparatus, with distortions of the text, or the body itself. You seem obsessed with proportion, but also with a wish to change the shape of the image or the text.

PG Well, that horrible sense of normalisation, straightforward narrative mainly. I prefer the organisation of objects or events into lists, catalogues, colours. It makes us think about those aspects of life which seem fantastic, out of the ordinary, but which are, in fact, the ordinary experience of all our lives.

NP I was puzzled by your setting the film in Macon, since I've been there, and as you must know the cathedral is actually ruined. What sort of distortion or association led you there?

PG Many years ago I was staying at Nevers. That's quite cogent for me, because it's the setting of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. It was just a vacation with my daughters. And then by accident I came across the front cover of *Elle* while sitting beside the pool. It depicted one of Toscani's images where he'd borrowed a Renaissance image of the Virgin and had turned it into a fashion design by creating a 14-year-old, presumably virginal, model, extremely beautifully dressed in a pseudo-Renaissance costume, holding a child who patently wasn't hers. So here we were playing with the idea of virgin birth as an accessory for attracting people's attention towards buying clothes. Just the contemplation of this image and all it stood for fused with what I'd learned about Macon, where there had, in the fourth and fifth centuries, been apocryphal child martyrs conveniently put to death in the cause of propaganda. It was also the area where the infamous 1212 Children's Crusade started up. The Church had the extraordinary idea that where all the chivalry and knighthood of Europe could not succeed in Jerusalem, they would send over 50,000 children. Of course, they all miserably perished or were sold into prostitution and only about 400 of them ever made it. So much for societies who 'care' about children.

NP What do you have in mind now?

PG The next film is called *The Pillow Book* which is a modernised and considerably reworked version of a thousand-year-old Japanese journal by Sei Shonagon.

NP Will you set it historically?

PG There will be historical flashbacks. I'm not sure that Shonagon would recognise herself in the film, but I hope that's legitimate, after all, that book is a classic. But it's a catalogue movie again; another catalogue list, I'm rather familiar with that format. Since it's a thousand years old, I'm going to set most of it in the hours approaching the 31st December 1999, for all sorts of parallels. And I want to play with calligraphy as being the ideal composite of the image. I admire the ability of the Japanese to contain, as it were, both the primacy of the image and the primacy of the text.

Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* will be released by Dendy Films in September.  
Noel Purdon is an Adelaide writer and teaches film at Flinders University.



**AUSTRALIAN  
FILM  
COMMISSION**

## New Players Fund

The Industry and Cultural Development branch has introduced a New Players Fund.

Limited funds are available for new one off projects related to screen culture activity in Australia. Support will be provided to projects which fulfil the aims of the ICD program and are not in receipt of regular funding from the AFC.

**The deadline for the New Players Fund is 18 April 1996.**

Guidelines are available from Lucy Hall, Industry and Cultural Development.

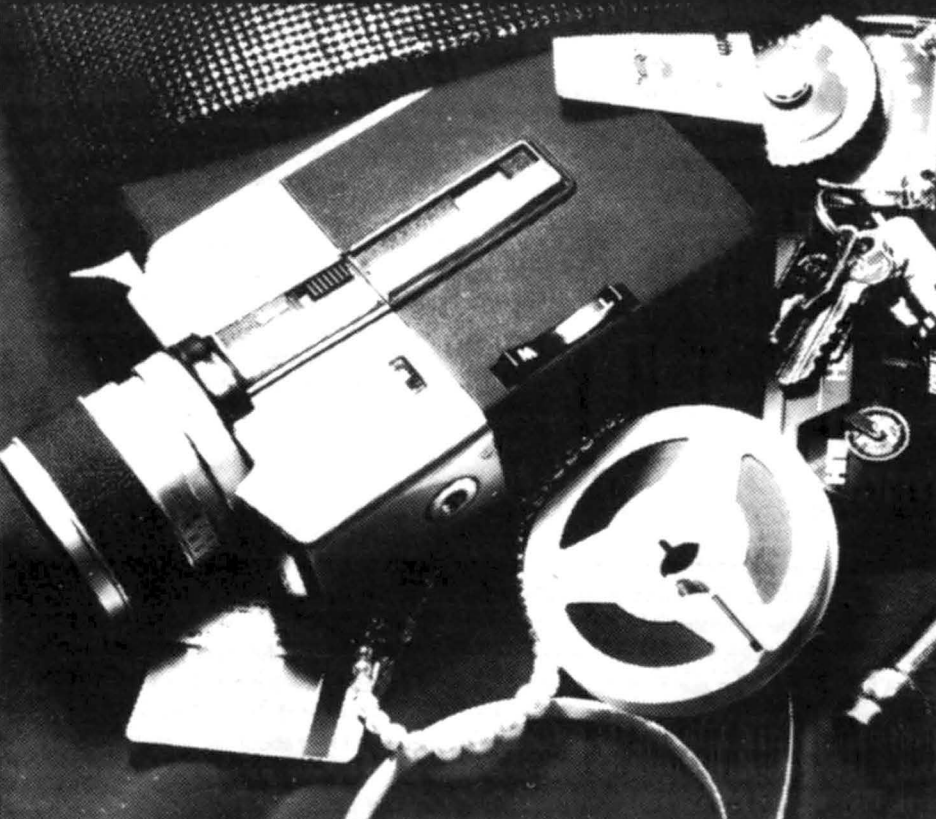
Contact:  
AFC Sydney Office, 150 William Street, Woolloomooloo NSW 2011  
Tel: 02 321 6444 Toll Free 1800 226615 Fax: 02 357 3737  
Email: info@afc.gov.au

## Women on Women

# WOW

## FILM FESTIVAL

Presented by WIFT (NSW)



**17, 18 and 19 May Chauvel Cinema SYDNEY**

Ph: 02 332 2408 Entry Deadline: April 12



Feature

# Sunny Salo

Colin Hood passed up the legal quagmire of new media classification for some tastier insights into an ongoing controversy

*My films have received much greater consensus in the Catholic world and have brought about many more conversions than all those cited in this absurd list.*

Such was Franco Zeffirelli's huffy response to the Vatican's list of approved filmmakers which included Pier Paolo Pasolini, Liliana Caviani and Luis Buñuel.

Without having scrutinised the details of the Vatican's top one hundred, I assume that approved filmmaker status would probably extend to the artist's entire oeuvre. This being the case, we might safely conclude that *Salo*—also—does a merry jig to the "Vatican Rag". Not a whiff of smoke has risen above that celestial city in recent days—and I've been furiously burrowing the net for updates—that might indicate a sudden change of heart.

It was in 1988 when John Dickie, a staffer in the Attorney General's department, found himself a hot but suitably upholstered seat as the man possessed of such common sense and delicate-enough scissor hands to enforce decency in communication and entertainment across a variety of media.

Unfortunately for those of us in the film community who are old enough and smart enough to sit through whatever's on offer (without becoming sociopaths or scrambling our cause and effect relations in real time), Mr. Dickie is still there, 'patting down' dissenters and sharpening the blade, but with not the suitable 'wit' to read gratuitous violence and demeaning representation into complex narrative (or gasp!—allegorical) contexts.

Now we shouldn't blame cinema proprietors and PR workers for lacking finesse in distinguishing film genres. I remember, for example, the Valhalla Cinema's advertisement for Andrzej Zulawski's *Possession* (starring Isabel Adjani as a housewife possessed by a theologically correct devil—by medieval standards anyway—a lizard-like multi-phallused, multi-orificed stud, driving husband—Sam Neil—to despair, jealousy, desperation).

"A Grand Guignol feast of blood and sex"? They could well have added an extra pitch to those readers of a deeper Catholic symbolism (which comes to the surface occasionally in Eastern European theatre and film). But this common sense, burns on seats approach to distribution and advertising is not what really concerns me here.

The Office of Film and Literature Classification (now recast as the Classification Board) is a statutory authority which is granted considerable independence from political pressure—or so it might seem. Reading through the Hansard report from Monday, June 1, 1992, the 'seeming' begins to unravel into the kind of mess depicted in *Babe*; and who can forget the glorious aftermath of the scrap between pussy and pig: paint, broken crockery, signs of domesticated animal violence all over the shop.

Four years ago, the Senate Select Committee on Community Standards relevant to the supply of services utilising telecommunications technology, headed by Margaret Reynolds, put some tricky questions to the Chief Censor. In this exchange between an enthusiastic Senator Brian Harradine and Mr. John Dickie, the long shadow of *Salo* was thrown yet again upon the fire-wall of cine-illiteracy.

Did the Chief Censor have a good track record in dealing with community requests (for special exception for films or videos which have been deemed unclassifiable and therefore unavailable for commercial release)?

An unsuspecting Dickie goes no further than a "Yes...yes" before a letter—written by the man himself—is tabled as evidence of a possible "No...no":

**Sen. Harradine**—*The letter is from you, Mr. Dickie, and it says: "The indignation seems to be slowing ebbing ... the roused passions spent ... Solo ... I assume Solo [sic] is a film, is it?"*

**Mr. Dickie**—*Yes, it is.*

**Sen. Harradine**—*It continues: "Solo might now be laid in repose until some other depraved bastard lodges an application. I would not like it thought that I had made any judgement about the enclosed."*

*The next letter is from yourself to Mr. Haines and Mr. Greenberg. It states: "Without wishing to let my prejudices get hold of me, who else but a wanker senior lecturer from Latrobe would put such bullshit on paper. I suppose it would not be appropriate to point out to whoever it is behind the tortured outlines at the end of the letter that George was able to pick up an illegal video. I think we should provide this bloke with the reasons, indicate that as the law stands we cannot change the previous decision. We could also point out what the law says about viewing refused material. What we can do for the poor deprived bastards at Latrobe whose whole life is likely to be changed by watching Solo I am not quite sure."*

I will spare the faint-hearted readers of *RealTime* from any more excerpts from this readily available and seemingly 'depraved' document. But I would like to add a few words of support to those poor deprived bastards who have obviously failed to read that paragraph of the social contract which—outside of the context of media studies—demands community standards before the right and proper film education of consenting adults.

It is highly likely that under the existing legislation, films like *Salo* (outed very briefly for the 1993 Mardi Gras Film Festival) would again be refused importation for future screenings—either commercial or festival. Readers of The AFC's 1996 submission, *Film Festivals and Screenings Events* (prepared with the assistance of ex Deputy Chief Censor David Haines) will already be aware of how the special exemption status for festivals (granted by then Attorney General Gareth Evans back in 1983) has been seriously compromised in recent years by the OFLC.

The Spanish film *Tras El Cristal* was not only refused registration for importation—which in itself would not prevent it being screened in a festival context—but was also

refused classification because it did not meet public exhibition criteria (becoming—in effect—a prohibited import). The chief censor—it seemed—was having a bet each way:

*I did not refuse to register the film for NSW as claimed in the editorial [Film News 1995]; refusal to register did occur, but under the Commonwealth Customs legislation. (p 6 AFC submission)*

Dickie's comments read like those of a man disempowered, unable to help out in accordance with the amendments to the Customs (Cinematographic Films) regulations introduced by the Attorney General in 1983. But turning to Appendix 25 (Transcription of Decisions of Film and Literature Board of Review) of the OFLC's *The Year in Review 1994-1995*, the reader will discover that a film is not a film (under present legislation) if it raises "community concern about child exploitation and abuse".

But what exactly is community concern about child exploitation and abuse? Without putting a finer philosophical point on notions of community I would suggest that it is political pressure rather than community sentiment that is driving the present board of review into a new spirit of supra-parental frenzy in its policing of representations of child abuse.

Current community concern is not exactly the result of accurate and detailed reports in the media or of lengthy TV interviews with social workers administering to the many thousands of notifications pouring into departments of family and social security. A recent report by a Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Crime Authority on the activity of paedophiles suggested:

*1/ that most offenders are relatives and neighbours who are not paedophiles in the strict sense of the term and who do not operate in any organised or networked way.  
2/ There is no evidence of any commercial production of illegal child pornography in Australia.*

In a letter to the Australian Broadcasting Authority, the ex-Minister for Communications and the Arts, Michael Lee, made the following request:

*I am writing to direct the ABA, in accordance with the attached instrument, to conduct an investigation into the regulation of the content of on-line information and entertainment services.*

*I am aware that there is significant community concern about offensive and possibly harmful material on on-line information and entertainment services and I believe that the ABA has the necessary experience and expertise in program content issues to investigate the issue and report to me.*

*I would appreciate hearing from you in due course about how you intend to establish and conduct this investigation, and your views about the best means of involving the above bodies or other relevant bodies in the investigation. I also intend to appoint the Chief Censor, Mr John Dickie, as an Associate Member of the ABA for the purpose of this investigation.*

This letter was posted in November 1995 and retrieved for the purpose of researching this article from <http://www.dca.gov.au/aba/hpcov>. Following an invitation to *RealTime*, I attended a seminar (jointly convened by the AFC and the OFLC) on the restructuring of the OFLC and the future of classification of Australian media entitled "A New Era in Australian Film Regulation" which promised three key speakers and a discussion panel.

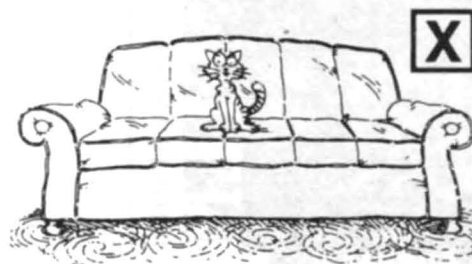


Illustration from OFLC Information Bulletin No. 7

"Media commentator" and former administrator of the US Film Classification and Rating System, Richard Heffner was the principal speaker and speak he did—so much in fact that the promised panel discussion was driven into the no-where land of lunch-time conversation and out the door. In faultless (groomed for TV) grandfatherly tones, Heffner, hammered the evils of 1st Amendment driven media production and long-time enemy Jack Valenti (head of the Motion Pictures Association) equating

"absolute free speech" with child endangering "for-profit media".

I must have caught the bus to Miami by mistake—and died on the way—for there was—let me count them off:

*no discussion of the classification problems raised by the crossed wires of new media  
no discussion of the new fees for classification that were introduced on January 1 this year  
no discussion of the re-routing of Tras El Cristal (already screened on Spanish TV) from "exempt for festival" status to prohibited import.*

I don't mind being rude for a moment and I wouldn't trust the chief censor to mind my cat for half an hour let alone supervise the "simplification of administrative procedures" for federal importation laws for films, videos and computer games. If the management of media classification, public relations, and the ability to read the complexities of cinematic and new media art for the purpose of protecting children and the 'community' is to 'really' advance into a new era, then perhaps Mr. Dickie might begin his re-education by tuning an ear to an alternative American voice:

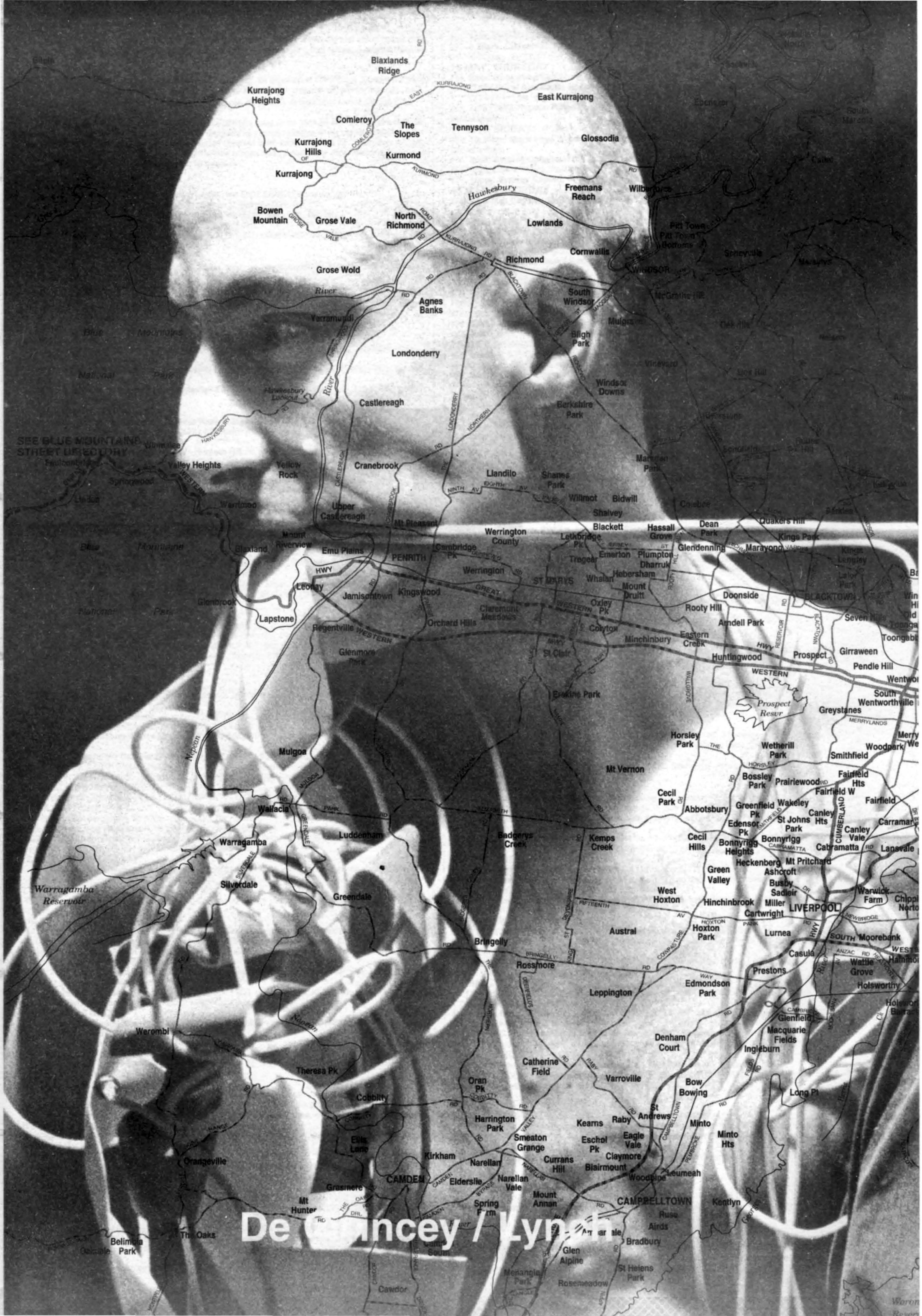
*You are terrified of your own children, since they are natives in a world where you will always be immigrants. Because you fear them, you entrust your bureaucracies with the parental responsibilities you are too cowardly too confront yourselves. In our world, all the sentiments and expressions of humanity, from the debasing to the angelic, are parts of a seamless whole, the global conversation of bits. We cannot separate the air that chokes from the air upon which wings beat.*

(John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace", 1996.)









De Wincey / Lyn





TRUE NORTH, GRID NORTH AND MAGNETIC NORTH ARE SHOWN DIAGONALLY. MAGNETIC NORTH IS CORRECTED FOR AN ANNUAL MOVES EASTERLY APPROX. 0.04 DEGREES.

COMPRESSION 100

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SEE WONGONG STREET DIRECTORY



**COMPRESSION 100 - SYDNEY** is 100 performances in different venues and sites around Sydney during May. Tess de Quincey and Stuart Lynch will perform with a wide variety of collaborators, from dancers to writers to musicians to visual artists.

While the information in this grid was correct at time of going to press, the organisers of Compression 100 warn that some details may change. For a *daily update and to confirm times and details of performances call 1800 061 942* (please note that this number will operate only during May). At other times contact (02) 358 6759.

All performances are free and accessible to the public unless otherwise stated on the grid - for example when in a particular venue where entry fees are normally charged or at a site designated for a specific audience. In wet weather, outdoor performances may be in The Performance Space Studio (199 Cleveland Street, Redfern), but call the 1800 number to check. The scheduled numbered performances in the grid are the main or major works; further minor, impromptu or electronic media works will occur daily. Please call the 1800 number for details.

#### 1 MAY, WEDNESDAY

- #1. **6am: Parramatta Rd** - secret location • DQ/L collab. with SADIE CHANDLER, sculptor. Dur. 1hr.  
#2. **9am: The Australia Council - Foyer**, 181 Lawson St, Redfern. • DQ/L. Dur. 2hrs.  
#3. **12noon: N.S.W. Minstry for the Arts** - Governor Macquarie Tower. • DQ/L. Dur. 2hrs.  
#4. **3pm: A.F.C.** 150 William St, Woolloomooloo. • DQ/L. Dur. 2hrs.  
#5. **7pm: cinema** (To be announced; please phone 1800 061 942). • DQ/L collab. with CHRIS RYAN, performer & DEAN WALSH, performer. Dur. 30mins.

#### 2 MAY, THURSDAY

- #6. **9am-9am: Artspace**, The Guntery, 43-51 Cowper Wharf Rd, Woolloomooloo. • SL collab. with NICHOLAS TSOUTAS, director. Dur. 24hrs.  
#7. **10am: Choremotion Studios**. No public access. • TDQ with JANET MUNYARRYUN, cultural tutor/dancer. Dur. unspecified.  
\*\*\*\*\*12noon-1pm: *Future Shock* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

- #8. **9pm: Sydney Town Hall - front steps**. • TDQ. Dur. unspecified.

#### 3 MAY, FRIDAY

- #9. **11am: Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School**, No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 30 mins.  
#10. **1-3pm: North Shore Tour - Quarry**, Lofberg Rd, West Pymble; **Chatswood Mall**; **Cliff face**, Gore Creek, Greenwich. DQ/L. Dur. unspecified.  
#11. **7.30pm: Sydney Town Hall - Dance Advance Concert** - entrance fee applicable, tel.241 4022. • DQ/L. Dur. 3-6 mins.  
#12. **10.30pm-midnight: Tunnel at Cumberland & Lower Fort St** • DQ/L collab. with ROD BERRY, sculptor. *Lung Transil*. Dur. 1hr 30min.

#### 4 MAY, SATURDAY

- #13. **11am: Blackwattle Bay Park, Jubilee Park, & Stormwater Channel**, Glebe Point. • DQ/L simultaneous collaborations with JOAN BRASSIL, sculptor & GARRY BRADBURY, musician. *Bridges and Intervals*. Dur. 1hr.  
\*\*\*\*\*11am-12noon: *Arts on Air* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#14. **4.30pm: Marist Fathers Monastery - Hunters Hill**. No public access. • DQ/L & TPU. Dur. 30mins.  
#15 & 16. **7pm: The Performance Space - Cellar**, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. • DQ/L collab. with STEPHEN SEWELL, writer/dramatist. *One of the Last Things I said to her*. Dur. 10mins; NICHOLAS WISHART, sound artist. Dur. 30mins.

#### 5 MAY, SUNDAY, The J.G. Mystery Tour Day

- #17. **8am: The Domain Parking Station**. • DQ/L. Dur. Site specific.  
#18. **9am: Mrs Macquarie's Chair**. • DQ/L collab. with NELIA JUSTO, sculptor. Dur. unspecified.  
#19. **11am: Martin Luther Kirche**, Lutheran church, 90 Goulbourne St; part of church service. • DQ/L & TPU, collab. with Pastor DIRK ROMMER, RUARK LEWIS, writer and PAUL CARTER, sound artist/writer. *On Raft*. Dur. as yet unspecified.  
#20. **2pm: Nielsen Park Changing Sheds (NPWS)**, Shark Bay. • DQ/L & TPU. Dur. unspecified.  
#21 & 22. **3pm: The Gap (NPWS)**, Watsons Bay. • DQ/L collabs. with ELIZABETH DAY, sculptor. *Here, There and Everywhere*. Dur. 15-30mins; NELIA JUSTO, sculptor. Dur. unspecified.  
#23. **4.30pm: Waverley Cemetery**, Clovelly. • DQ/L & TPU. Dur. 30mins.  
#24. **8pm: Our Lady of the Snow - soup kitchen**, Belmore Park, Central. • DQ/L collab. with MICHELLE MORGAN, singer/vocalist. Dur. 30-40mins.

#### 6 MAY, MONDAY

- #25. **10am: UWS-Nepean, Westmead**, Dance Dept. • DQ/L. Dur. 20mins.  
#26. **2.15pm:UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**, Visual Arts & Performing Arts Faculty. • DQ/L. Dur. 30-40mins.  
#27. **4pm: Penrith Shopping Mall/Penrith Panthers**. • DQ/L. Dur. unspecified.  
#28. **8pm: Train Yards**, Valley Heights Heritage Museum, Tuscullum Rd, Valley Heights. • DQ/L & TPU collabs. with

SHANE FAHEY, sound artist & JOHN KOUSSATAS, visual artist. *Memory Maps*. Dur. 30mins.

#### 7 MAY, TUESDAY

- #29. **11am: MacDonald College**, No public access. • DQ/L group choreography for students. Dur. 10mins.  
#30. **2pm: Sydney Surveillance Centre**, 1 Oxford St. Limited public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 3-6mins.  
#31. **4.30pm: Conservatorium of Music**, No public access. • DQ/L group choreography for opera students. Dur. 10-20mins.  
#32. **6pm: Metronome Restaurant**, 413 Bourke St, Surry Hills. No public access - camera only. • DQ/L collab. with VIRGINIA BAXTER & KEITH GALLASCH of OPEN CITY Inc, *Promiscuous Spaces - 2, Table Talk*. Dur. 1hr.  
#33. **10pm: Cafe de Lane**, 15 Brisbane St, Surry Hills. • DQ/L collab. with JIM DENLEY, sound artist. Dur. unspecified. Admission charge applicable.  
\*\*\*\*\*10-11pm: *Audio Daze* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

#### 8 MAY, WEDNESDAY

- #34. **10am: Kindergarten**, No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 15mins.  
#35. **1.30pm:Long Bay Prison**, No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 20mins.  
#36 & 37. **6.30pm: First Draft Gallery**, 116-118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills. • DQ/L collab. with Gallery. Dur. unspecified. And collab. with JOY SAUNDERS, animator/sculptor. Dur. 10mins.

#### 9 MAY, THURSDAY

- #38. **11.30am: UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**, Foundation Year. • DQ/L group choreography for students. Dur. approx 20-30mins.  
\*\*\*\*\*12noon-1pm: *Future Shock* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#39. **4.30pm: UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**, 4D Dept. • DQ/L group choreography for students. Dur. approx 20-30mins.

#### 10 MAY, FRIDAY

- #40, 41, 15 repeat, 42. **11am-3pm Hyde Park Barracks**. • DQ/L collaborations with ROSS GIBSON, writer, & BOGDAN KOCA, speaker, *A Dollar is a Dollar* (originally commissioned for Radio Eye, ABC Radio National). Dur. 4mins; REBECCA CUMMINS, sculptor/photographer. Dur. unspecified; STEPHEN SEWELL, writer/dramatist, *One of the Last Things I said to her*. Dur. 10mins. DQ/L performance. Dur. unspecified.  
#43 & 44. **8-9pm: Ariel Book Store**, 42 Oxford St., Paddington. • DQ/L. collabs. with YUJI SONE, performance artist; TOM FIELDING, musician. Dur. unspecified.  
#45. **12midnight: Kinselas**, Taylor Square, Darlinghurst. • DQ/L collab. with PHIL HARDY, disc jockey. Dur. 6mins.  
#46. **1am: Sydney Casino**, Darling Harbour. • DQ/L. Dur. 6mins.

#### MAY 11, SATURDAY

- #47. **11am: Congwong Bay, (NPWS)**, La Perouse. • DQ/L collab. with JANET MUNYARRYUN, cultural tutor/dancer & MATHEW DOYLE, musician/dancer. Dur. unspecified.  
\*\*\*\*\*11am-12noon: *Arts on Air* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#48. **3-5pm: Sites around Airport Perimeter**. • DQ/L. Dur. unspecified.  
#49. **5pm: Glebe Town Hall - the big hall**, 160 St John's Rd, Glebe. • DQ/L collab. with HELLEN V. BUB, vocalist/composer. *Map of Cells*. Dur. 20mins

#### 12 MAY, SUNDAY

- #50. **11am: Taronga Park Zoo**. • DQ/L. Dur. 1hr. Admission prices applicable.  
#51. **12.40pm: Ferry, Taronga Park-Circular Quay**. • DQ/L + TPU. Dur. 20-30mins. Ferry Charge applicable.  
#52. **3pm: Museum of Sydney on the site of first Government House**, cnr. Phillip & Bridge Streets. • DQ/L. Dur. 2 x 20mins; Admission prices applicable, tel.251 5988.  
#53. **8pm: El Alemaine Fountain**, Macleay St. and **Soho Bar**, Victoria St, Kings Cross. • DQ/L & TPU collab. with MANDY SAYER, writer/director.

#### 13 MAY, MONDAY

- #54. **8.45am: Royal National Park, Sutherland** - Main Entrance Gate, Farnell Ave. • DQ/L collab. with ZSUZSANNA SOBOSLAY, dancer/trainer artist & MICHAEL ASKILL, percussionist. Dur. 2hrs.  
#55. **4pm: NAISDA**. No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 10-20mins.  
#56. **8.30pm: Harbourside Brasserie**, *What is Music Festival*, Pier One, Hickson Rd, Dawes Point. • DQ/L collab. with ROB AVENAIM & OREN AMBARCHI, musicians. Dur. unspecified. Admission charge applicable tel.252 3000.

#### 14 MAY, TUESDAY

- #57. **11.30am: UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**. InterDisc. Dept. • DQ/L group choreography. Dur. approx. 20-30mins.  
#58. **3.30pm: UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**. Theatre Dept. • DQ/L group choreography. Dur. approx 20-30mins.  
#59. **7.30pm: UWS-Nepean, Kingswood**. Asian Theatre Studies, Theatre Dept. • DQ/L group choreography. Dur. approx 20-30mins.  
\*\*\*\*\*10-11pm *Audio Daze* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

#### 15 MAY, WEDNESDAY

- #60. **10.30am: City Tour & Martin Place Amphitheatre**. • DQ/L collab. with BERNARD COHEN, writer. *Public Opinion*. Dur. 30-40mins.

- #61. **1pm: Sydney City Galleries**, Grosvenor Place. • DQ/L collab. with ROGER DEAN, musician. Dur. 20-30mins.

- #62. **8.30pm: Conservatorium of Music**. No public access. • DQ/L group choreography for opera students. Dur. 10-20mins.

#### 16 MAY, THURSDAY

- #63. **9am: Rookwood Cemetery**. • DQ/L collab. with JENNY ANDREWS, dancer, *Sleeping Angels*. Dur. 12mins.  
#64. **11am: Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children**, Hawksbury Rd, Westmead. • DQ/L. Dur. 10-20mins.

\*\*\*\*\*12noon-1pm: *Future Shock* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

- #65. **7pm: UWS-Nepean Kingswood** - Theoretical Studies, Theatre Dept. • DQ/L group choreography & workshop. Dur. unspecified.

#### 17 MAY, FRIDAY

- #66. **10.30am: Mark Foys Window**, cnr Elisabeth & Liverpool Sts. • DQ/L collab. with SADIE CHANDLER, sculptor. Dur. unspecified.  
#67. **3pm: Sydney College of the Arts**, Rozelle Campus, Balmain Rd, Rozelle. • DQ/L. Dur. 40mins.  
#68. **6pm: Butler Stairs**, Woolloomooloo. • DQ/L collab. with BARBARA CAMPBELL, performance artist. 20-30mins.  
#69. **10pm: Sydney Casino**, Darling Harbour. • DQ/L & TPU. *Butch Procession*. Dur. 40mins.

#### 18 MAY, SATURDAY

- #70. **9am-1pm City Installations:-** 9am Addison Rd Community Centre; 9.30am Tempe Tip; 10.30am Marrickville roundabout; 11.30am State Library; 12.30pm Pitt St Mall. • DQ/L collab. with CHARLES RUSSELL (Carlos), artist/performer, *Red Stories*. Duration site specific.

\*\*\*\*\*11am-12noon: *Arts on Air* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

- #71. **2pm: Sydney Harbour Bridge**. No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 2hrs.

- #72. **5pm: Centre Point**. • DQ/L. Dur. 31 seconds.

- #73. **9pm-ish: Sydney Opera House - main steps**. • DQ/L collab. with NIGEL KELLAWAY, performer/director & CHARLES RUSSELL, artist/performer.

#### 19 MAY, SUNDAY

- #74. **11.30am: Sydney Zen Centre**, 251 Young St, Annandale. No public access. • DQ/L collab. with JIM FRANKLIN, CATHY & KIM LUKEMAN, music. Dur. unspecified.  
#75. **2pm: S.H. Ervin Gallery**, National Trust of Australia, Observatory Hill. • DQ/L. Dur. unspecified.  
#76. **6.00-9.00pm: Sydney Aquarium** - outside front entrance, Darling Harbour. • DQ/L collab. with DAMIAN CASTALDI, sculptor, *'Infowaterway'*. Dur. 10-15mins.

#### 20 MAY, MONDAY

- #77. **10am: R.S.P.C.A. Animal Pound**, Yagoona. Restricted audience access.\*Those interested in attending please tel. 042 675 281. • DQ/L collab. with ZSUZANNA SOBOSLAY, dancer/trainer & MICHAEL ASKILL, percussionist. Dur. 2hrs.  
#78. **2.30pm: Mulawa Womens Detention Centre**, Silverwater. No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. as yet unspecified.  
#79. **4.30pm: Mangrove Walk**, Bicentennial Park, Homebush. • DQ/L. Dur. 30 minutes.

#### 21 MAY, TUESDAY

- #80. **11am: Norma Park Womens Detention Centre**, Parramatta. No public access. • DQ/L. Dur. 20-30mins.  
#81. **4pm: N.I.D.A.** • DQ/L workshop & group choreography. Dur. 10-15mins.  
#82. **6pm: Conservatorium of Music**, Ver Brugen Hall. • DQ/L collab. with TIM GRUCHY, *Synthing*. Dur. 30mins.  
#83. **8.30pm: Conservatorium of Music**. No public access. • DQ/L; workshop & group choreography for opera students. Dur. 10mins.  
\*\*\*\*\*10-11pm: *Audio Daze* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*

#### 22 MAY, WEDNESDAY

- #84. **11.30am: Newtown High School of Performing Arts**. No public access. • DQ/L workshop & group choreography. Dur. 10-15mins.  
#85. **2-5pm: M.C.A, Circular Quay**, 140 George St, Circular Quay. MCA entrance charge applicable. • DQ/L various performances in and around Gallery.

#### 23 MAY, THURSDAY

- #86. **11am: Mortuary Station**, Regent Street, Chippendale. • DQ/L choreography for TPU. Dur. 20mins  
\*\*\*\*\*12noon-1pm: *Future Shock* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#87. **12.30-1.30pm:** Three simultaneous performances:- **NSW Art Gallery** - steps; **Circular Quay** - MCA to the Opera House; **War Memorial**. • DQ/L with PEGGY WALLACH, *Unknown Performance Artists Out and About*. Dur. 1hr.  
#88. **7pm: Hyde Park**. • TDQ collab. with CHRISSIE KOLTAI & Artists. Dur. unspecified. • SL Collaborations yet to be announced. Dur. unspecified.

#### 24 MAY, FRIDAY

- #89. **1.30pm: Casula Power House**, 1 Casula Rd, Casula. • DQ/L Choreography for local area students with NICHOLAS WISHART. Dur. 20-30mins.  
#90. **3pm: Casula Power House**. • DQ/L collab. with RIK RUE, sound artist, *'Cohabitation'*. Dur. 2 x 10 mins.  
#91. **4.30pm: Southern Line** - Train from Casula to St James. • DQ/L with JOHN KASSOUTAS *'On the Train to Town'*. Dur. unspecified.  
#92. **7.30pm: Tunnel at St James Underground**. No public access. • DQ/L Collab with NIGEL HELYER, sculptor;

JIM DENLEY, sound artist; OONAGH SHERRARD, cellist/sound artist; NIKKI HEYWOOD, vocals. Dur. 30-40mins.

#### 25 MAY, SATURDAY

- #93. **10am: Middle Head (NPWS)** • DQ/L & TPU. Dur. unspecified.  
\*\*\*\*\*11am-12noon: *Arts on Air* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#94. **5pm: The Haven Amphitheatre**, free shuttle bus from Castlecrag Shopping Centre from 4pm rain, hail or shine. • DQ/L & TPU collab. with MICHAEL DALE singer, XU FENG SHUN, Peking Opera. Dur. 1hr.

#### 26 MAY, SUNDAY

- #95. **2-4pm: Harbourside Brasserie**, Pier One, Hickson Rd, Dawes Point - works with TOM FIELDING for the launch of JAMIE FIELDING'S CD *Extinct*. Admission \$5.

#### 27 MAY, MONDAY

- #96. **1pm: Centre for Performance Studies**, Woolley Bldg, Manning Rd, Sydney Uni. • DQ/L + ELISABETH BURKE & PIERRE THIBAudeau. *Carvings 1980-1996*. Dur. approx 15-20mins.  
#97. **3.30pm: Mark Foys window**, cnr Elisabeth & Liverpool Sts. • DQ/L collab. with GORDON HOOKY, visual artist. Dur. unspecified.  
#98. **8-10pm: The Performance Space - studio**, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. • Open unedited meetings for anyone interested to talk about the work of the month or to perform.

#### 28 MAY, TUESDAY

- #99. **11am: Prince Henry Hospital**, Little Bay. No public access.  
#100. **1pm-5pm: Long Bay Prison**. No public access. • DQ/L workshop & group choreography. Dur. 10-15mins.  
\*\*\*\*\*10-11pm: *Audio Daze* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#101. **10.15pm: Newtown Square outside The Hub** - radio transmission retrieval (*Audio Daze*). • DQ/L collab. with GARY KENT, sound/visual artist. Dur. 20mins.

#### 29 MAY, WEDNESDAY

- #102. **10am:** secret location • DQ/L performance for child yet to be born. Dur. unspecified.  
#103. **12.00-3.00pm:** (site to be announced; please phone 1800 061 942). • DQ/L collab. with JAMES McALLISTER, sculptor. *Interval*. Dur. as yet unspecified.  
#104. **4pm: Bondi Beach**. • DQ/L collab. with DEBORAH POLLARD, performer/director + others (unknown number); part of series of works *Pasir Badie - Sand Storm*. Dur. unspecified.

#### 30 MAY, THURSDAY

- #105. **11am: Art Gallery of NSW - Steps, Foyer, & Hall**. • DQ/L. *HOMAGE*. Dur. 1hr.  
\*\*\*\*\*12noon-1pm: *Future Shock* 2SER.FM 107.3\*\*\*\*\*  
#106. **4pm: Bondi Beach**. • DQ/L collab. with DEBORAH POLLARD, performer/director + others, part of series of works *Pasir Badie - Sand Storm*. Dur. unspecified.  
#107, 108, 109. **9pm: The Performance Space - Studio**, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. • DQ/L collab. with LEISA SHELTON, performer/director; JOHN GILLIES, visual/sound artist; AMANDA STEWART, text/voice. Dur. unspecified.

#### 31 MAY, FRIDAY

- #110. **10am-6pm: Dancing the Parramatta Rd** - From Parramatta to The Rocks.  
#111. **6pm-12.00midnight Observatory Hill**. • DQ/L collab. with VICTORIA SPENCE + annotated meetings and intermittent articulations during the 31 days.

#### KEY

Dur. = Duration; TDQ = Tess de Quincey; SL = Stuart Lynch; DQ/L = De Quincey / Lynch  
TPU = The Performance Union: ongoing shifting workshops and choreographies throughout the project. Volunteer Unit-Martin del Amo, Garry Finch, Catherine Hassall, Andrew Maddon, Heike Muller, Regina Winkelstroter.

**2SER.FM 107.3** - Programs will include live performances, critique, interviews & sound works resulting from the project.

**Venue & Production Co-ordinator:** Jenny Andrews

Thanks to all participant artists and venue staff involved. Particular thanks also for support from RTA, City Rail, Brenda Holleman, Suanne Russell, Clare Grant, Nigel Helyer, Kim Spinks, Eugenia Raskopoulos, Hedge, Sarah Waterson, Lizzie Marshall, Bernice & The Performance Space.

This project and **The Performance Space** is assisted by the **Australia Council**, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body, and by the NSW Government through the **Ministry for the Arts**.



THE PERFORMANCE SPACE



## Feature review

# Thumb-pricking good

Shane McNeil tastes recent Adelaide short films

With its tightly knit community Adelaide has often been compared to New England both in terms of its layout and its puritanism. It's the sort of place Hawthorne would have moved to if he ever got writer's block. With a long tradition of unsolved mysteries, undrinkable water and unloved league teams, Adelaide has always played Horatio to the eastern seaboard's Hamlet. Supportive, yet cautious; sensorial, yet sensible; logical, but not half as exciting as a swashbuckler in the clinch. However, while Adelaide's small population would seem a shortcoming compared to the cultural life of the larger capitals, it has in fact been a veritable boon for inventive filmmakers who have successfully manipulated limited resources and personnel to their best economic advantage. Just ask Peter Weir. Or Bruce Beresford. Or Rolf de Heer. Or Scott Hicks.

Perhaps in response to its sense of cultivated elitism and stylised insularity, a number of local short films have recently capitalised on Adelaide's very 'averageness' as a location, its surface banality which marks it as a site of difference, rather than attempting to create any general notion of national identity through its landscape.

This, combined with an increased sense of collaboration amongst Adelaide independent filmmakers in terms of production partnerships, rotating crews, unified tertiary film education programs, dedicated government funds, and a 'hands-on' attitude towards exhibition practices, seems to have spawned a canon in the short film form which

celebrates the horrors, existential and otherwise, of the suburban experience.

Limited space prevents me from diving too deep into these dark waters. Suffice to say there must be something in the water that makes Adelaide better suited than other capitals to examining the shadowy metaphysics which surround life in the suburbs. Dirt. And lots of it.

Trudi Gardner and Daniel Cardone's *Curious* seems inspired by repeated viewings of *Rear Window* and Robert Frost's line that good fences make good neighbours. What would you do if you found out that your next-door neighbour was agoraphobic and hadn't left her home in seventeen years? In this clinical study, the L.B. Jefferies character becomes so obsessed with catching a glimpse of his housebound neighbour that he's prepared to do anything just to get a look at her. Cunningly built around a central metaphor that gets an audience to sit on the fence at their own peril, *Curious* carries its self-reflexive tone with the greatest of ease. Here is a cautionary tale for everyone who has ever copped a peek over the back fence and *not* been caught. As the Coyote supposedly sighed when he finally caught the Road Runner, "What do I do with him now?" Beautifully structured and paced, *Curious* gives a new twist to the old Hitchcockian thematic and similarly indicts the viewer by asking how we can rank one perversity as more tolerable than another. After all, aren't we who watch such tales just a little curious also?

*The Human Device*, drawing perhaps a little too heavily on Philip K. Dick, is a futuristic thriller about an android psychologist, his estranged wife and the

robot divorce solicitor who's working on his wife while he's working on him. Full of witty referencing, (the term 'artificial intelligence' takes on dangerous connotations in the company of lawyers), *The Human Device* is an extremely ambitious short which tackles so many plot-lines that even Robert Towne would be hard-pressed to unravel them. Unfortunately, such indecision in the short film form only creates confusion about whose story it is and which of its three leads is the main character. I also say ambitious because through the character of the android lawyer, Venner tries for bites of Dickian philosophy that even *Blade Runner* couldn't swallow—what is the nature of being human? Is identity programmable? What also distinguishes *The Human Device* from more conventional sci-fi is the deliberate existential emphasis it places upon its central romantic relationship rather than the predictable elements of futuristic narratives—SFX overkill, philosophies of technological dread, spiritual resolutions, etc. Venner's film reminds one that the axiom to live by in making short films is, if you don't have it, don't show it.

*Purge* by Hugh Freytag has been described as the world's worst hangover film. The day after the night before finds a woman alone with vague memories of a row with her partner. Alone except for a couple of empty flagons, she begins to ponder the relationship between his absence, the dirt on her hands and the shallow grave in her backyard. Produced through Pachyderm Productions (whose 1994 model animation *Total Recession* probably set the standard for this recent Adelaide aesthetic) this is yet another cautionary tale about identity, relativity and the absence of being. With more than a nod to the stylistics of Nic Roeg in general and *Bad Timing* in particular, *Purge* adopts a deliberately ambiguous position in refusing to verify its shifting points of view with any objective commentary. However while Roeg's film examined the impropriety of a conscious carnality, *Purge* explores the anxieties of an unconscious venality. And like Roeg's best work, its jump cuts and non-diegetic inserts become evocative of either repressed memory or radical wish fulfilment. *Purge* could be either your worst nightmare or your dream come true, depending on your gender.

If there's one thing that links nearly all short films made in Adelaide it's not a thing but a him. Gerald Thompson. It would be no small boast to say that under his guidance as either cinematographer, script editor or technical adviser, most Adelaide filmmakers started their cinematic careers on sure footing. *The Cuckoo* (also produced with the assistance of Pachyderm Productions) is his second short film after his pixilated study in angst, *Despair*, and likewise is full of inventive animation techniques. Ostensibly 'a children's film' about the reveries of an introspective little girl seeking metaphoric refuge in a cuckoo clock from her soulless family, *The Cuckoo* comes across like the MTV animation *Grinning Evil Death* meets *Alice* via Svankmejer. Thompson's eye for the bizarre in the banal comes to the fore in his striking compositions which deftly blend front projected mattes, 3-D animated models and live action in the service of a phantasy in which, like *Purge*, the morality aroused is never innocent and often full of dread. Although reminiscent of Gilliam in its highlighting of the clockwork mechanisms which oppress individuality and creative expression, Thompson's film poses broader self-referential questions concerning how the artist/child/dreamer can best express their identity through mastering technology in the service of imagination. This he would call 'cinema.'

Like *Curious* and *Purge*, a number of Adelaide shorts seem structured around a domestic Armageddon that brings about

the end of a way of life if not literally the entire world. Sue Brown's clever *Snoop* is that rarest of cinematic hen's teeth—the well-made, self-funded film. By adopting an alternating point of view which splits subjectivity, *Snoop* capitalises on everyone's greatest fear—not being caught out in your underpants, but being caught out in your flatmate's underpants drawer.

Cole Larsen's *Marcel & Aardvark* is a Kafkaesque tale about the perils of ignorance and apathy, freedom and responsibility. Although seemingly set in a totalitarian state where everyone dreads the late-night knock on the door, it is actually concerned with the state between being and nothingness. Its surrealist employment of acausal titlecards, unstable mise-en-scène and non-linear trajectory only further endorses this sense of an all encompassing existential paranoia. With strong absurdist performances from Brian Cawley and Noel Purdon (who's quickly becoming to Adelaide short films what John Flaus is to the Melbourne independent scene) as a couple of bickering roommates from whom Pinter would be proud to collect the rent, Larsen's film conclusively supports Horace's maxim that if it's not your business when the wall next door catches fire whose is it?

More ironic and bleaker visions of a global apocalypse are to be found in the dark 35 mm fantasies of two Adelaide films where the end of the world comes not only before lunch but on a tight budget.

Barry Mitchell's *Night Release* succinctly captures one of the daily terrors of urban living—being trapped in the postmodern narrative's equivalent of the haunted house, the multi-storey carpark. Using oblique cinematography and disjunctive editing to suggest the form of a dream within a dream, Mitchell's sleep of reason does indeed produce monsters. And my own short *the unforgiving weight of anatomy* similarly casts a shadow on such millennial fears by documenting a university lecturer's frantic quest for the time and place of the end of the world. As Rod Serling might have elegised, this misguided Virgil quickly finds that when it comes to conspiracy theories, the only thing worse than being wrong is being right. Both films assert that while knowledge may be its own reward, the associated freedom it brings is often more than punishment enough.

For want of a collective unity, recent Adelaide shorts concern themselves with the relationship between 'absences' and 'endings'. Screened collectively, they chart the associated anxieties and inevitable moral consequences which result from any attempt to achieve freedom and hence narrative closure by filling this lack. Perhaps this is why so many Adelaide filmmakers also choose to employ (either literally or figuratively) 'the dream' as a narrative structure, since its ambiguous perspective still leaves the gap between being and nothingness open for contemplation.

Whether it's the end of a relationship or the end of the world, the philosophical causality motivating these films remains constant. They all investigate the closing of the gap between what Sartre specified as *en-soi* and *pour-soi*—the nature of being as either 'in-itself' or 'for-itself'. Through the critical-paranoiac eyes of Adelaide's filmmakers it would seem that Hell is indeed other people. And the more near, the greater the fear. One doesn't have to look too far west to see that something wicked this way comes. Just over the back fence.

Shane McNeil is a writer, critic, filmmaker and film theorist lecturing in Screen Studies at Flinders University where he is Head of Production.



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# Virtual nation: I want my Telstra

Boris Kelly considers the implications of the sale of Telstra in a new internet context

Anyone who uses on-line services as part of their daily work routine will understand the recurring tension between the value of patience and the lust for speed. Running a high performance modem with a late model computer is no guarantee that travelling the infobahn will be a smooth, economical and productive experience. More like a stop-start traffic jam than a freeway cruise, the negotiation of virtual space can be frustrating, even infuriating, but there's the salt in the wound of commercial on-line rates to be endured as well. Touring the web for a day can cost almost as much as taking a guided tour of Sydney in a taxi. At this stage in its development the net, and particularly the web, is a place for people with money (presumably through some kind of employer subsidy in most cases), time, determination and patience and that is likely to be the case for some time to come as the technology struggles to keep pace with the needs and expectations of consumers. For although both Optus and Telstra are currently installing hybrid fibre-coax cabling in areas selected for pay TV delivery it is unlikely that the entire continent will be wired—either via cable or digital satellite delivery systems—before the end of the century.

Once the broadband infrastructure is in place, however, the nation will be overlaid with a sophisticated telecommunications grid which will redefine the nature of space, place, community and identity. William J. Mitchell, for example, in his book *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn* (1995) proposes a shift in the function of architecture and urban design to meet the needs of the information age:

*In a world of ubiquitous computation and telecommunication, electronically augmented bodies, postinfobahn architecture, and big-time bit business, the very idea of a city is challenged and must eventually be reconceived. Computer networks become as fundamental to urban life as street systems. Memory and screen space become valuable, sought-after real estate. Much of the economic, social, political, and cultural action shifts into cyberspace.*

Mitchell, Australian-born, is Professor of Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences and Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Like his colleague, MIT Director Nicholas Negroponte, Mitchell writes in short, sharp grabs which link the historical with the futuristic. He sees architecture as needing to redefine itself as a discipline capable of embracing the reconfigured nature of space, place and time which result from changes in communications technology and which compel society and individuals to negotiate the uncertainties presented by the electronic frontier. In cyberspace, Mitchell argues, the conventional relationship between community and territory is displaced. The notion of a "body of people living in one place, district, or country" becomes a geographically and culturally disparate group inhabiting the "soft city" of common interest defined by access to the virtual space comprised of computer code, software deployment and electronic connectivity.

Although the 'information

superhighway' metaphor is already rather tired it is useful in considering some of the political implications of scenarios such as those presented by Mitchell, because of the curious relationship between transport and communications which Marcos Novak alludes to in his essay "Transmitting Architecture" in the on-line journal *C-Theory*.

*The history of invention alternates between advances of transport and advances of communication, that is to say from transmitting the subject to transmitting the sign and presence of the subject, establishing a symbiosis of vehicles and media that leads from antiquity all the way to the present.*

Just as the promotion of the convenience and status of individual ownership of automobiles belied the consequences for the nature and use of public space, the primacy of a fossil global economy and negative environmental outcomes, so too is the information age being characterised by a muteness in respect to the true value and potential dangers of the communications revolution. The construction of a virtual nation state existing within a corporatised, global superstructure is masked by the lure of by-products like cable television and net surfing. The inevitability and inherent goodness of change is promulgated by the individuals and corporations who have most to benefit from seeing it implemented and there is far too little critical discourse in the public sphere.

It is ironic that the purchase of Telstra as a complete entity is beyond the means of any single Australian owned corporation but within the capacity of the national superannuation fund. In other words, the country's most valuable, single asset, currently in public ownership, is able, theoretically, to be purchased with the combined savings of the populace. This would appear to be an indication of a relatively healthy economy and society which is why the proposed partial sale of Telstra presents a real dilemma for the nation. There can be little doubt that if the partial sale did go ahead it would be a matter of time before the entire asset was divested of public ownership to pass into the hands of global, corporate interests. Given the

compelling arguments of William J. Mitchell and many others assuring that the future is digital, the Australian people need to consider very carefully the degree of political, cultural and economic autonomy which is at stake in the proposed sale of Telstra.

The decision by the Coalition to link the sale with its environmental policy was a cunning political calculation. The launch of the policy was unanimously endorsed by green lobby groups who then, realising the implications of the Telstra link, withdrew their support and made it conditional on the removal of the link. The policy itself, however, remained a winner despite the notable sticking point over uranium policy. The Democrats and Greens in the Senate, although quite rightly standing their ground in the interests of their constituents, may be under considerable moral pressure when comes the time for the big decision.

The Coalition government will be able to level a compelling argument that the minor parties are being dishonest and hypocritical in preventing the delivery of a widely endorsed environmental package by their intransigence on the Telstra question. This could be the midpoint between a rock and a hard place for the minor parties and may result in a double dissolution. If so, the minor parties could be regarded by the electorate as obstructionist and could suffer irreparable damage at the ballot box resulting in a further consolidation of the Coalition's position. No doubt the Labour Party's awareness of this will determine their Senate vote on Telstra and could result in a political compromise on their part in which, despite their avowed opposition to the sale, they vote with the Coalition to avoid the long term consequences of a double dissolution.

The cultural implications of the proposed sale need to be carefully considered. The fledgling multimedia industry, stimulated by Keating through the Creative Nation initiatives which have been largely endorsed by the Coalition, is confronted with the kinds of difficulties arising from the imperatives of the global marketplace. In respect of the production of multimedia titles, of which CD ROM is the current delivery

system priority, the Australian Multimedia Enterprise (AME) has made it clear that it will only invest in titles with potential on the international market. For this we can read the North American market, meaning that creative material needs to be fashioned first and foremost to the tastes of that constituency at the expense of local cultural and social values. The domestic market then becomes a secondary consideration resulting in a duplication of the case with television in which American product has dominance in the distribution channels despite a clear viewer preference for local product.

Rupert Murdoch would be the first to admit that control of the means of delivery means control of the market and if we, as a nation, surrender that control by selling Telstra at this critical juncture in our history, then we may be signing away the remaining vestiges of our cultural autonomy. As the virtual nation is superimposed on the existing material environment and as "soft cities" become the cyberspace alternatives to transport grids and community space we need to know that whoever owns the 'streets' of the future has the best interests of the country and its people at heart. The public ownership of Telstra stands as an important national symbol signifying the resolve of our nation to maintain sovereignty over its culture as we enter the new millennium. The challenge for the Coalition government lies in convincing the electorate that the sale of Telstra is, in the long run, in the public interest and not simply an ideologically driven expediency.

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## AUSTRALIAN NETWORK FOR ART AND TECHNOLOGY ART AND TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS FUND

The Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) is an arts organisation with a national brief to support and promote contemporary art practices which use and explore science and technology and develop opportunities for artists to extend their practices.

The Art and Technology Conferences and Workshops Fund is a new quick response scheme which has been devolved to ANAT from the Australia Council to enable artists to attend and participate in forums dealing with art and technology.

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# How's tricks?

Jane Goodall at Sydney Intermedia Network's *Matinaze*

The morning after. After the election. After the Mardi Gras. The news is hang-over stuff. We're all a bit stupefied, sitting there in the half dark in the Domain Theatre of the Art Gallery of NSW. A constituency, for sure, but of what? The Labor party, having reinvented itself as the Liberal party has lost out to the Liberal party masquerading as the Labor party reinvented as the Liberal party. It's a day for getting caught in ambiguities: for mixed signals, mediated voices, spluttering, and a kind of deadpan processed gaiety.

On a platform in the auditorium Stevie Wishart lightly torments a violin to get out of it a set of choked bow strokes, spasms and squeals; Amanda Stewart, whose instrument is a mouth, creates accompanying emissions in the form of pops and prolonged limpet kisses. Result is a noise like a radio dial moving across a short wave band, occasionally finding a snatch of voice or music. Barbara Campbell comes in as the voice of Tokyo Rose, presenter of *Zero Hour* on Radio Tokyo as broadcast on August 14, 1944 to audiences of assembled GIs in military bases all over the Pacific. Campbell's transcript of the complete original program comes up on screen, marking the time intermittently in minutes and seconds.

"Hello you fighting orphans of the Pacific! How's tricks?"

The ambiguities are multi-layered and hard to read: 'Tokyo Rose' was a generic name given by the troops to all

the female announcers on Radio Tokyo and this particular Rose was Iva Toguri, a *nisei* (Japanese-American) whose dual nationality led to her getting stranded in Tokyo without a valid passport. From here she found her way into a situation of deeper ambiguity: she was picked to be trained as a radio announcer by Major Charles Cousins, a POW with radio experience who was forced to help in the making of propaganda programs on behalf of the Chinese and who proposed to subvert the propaganda effect through an obviously sardonic tone in the announcer's voice. Toguri had just the raw voice he wanted. She was coached to read his scripts word by word, with every pause and inflection chosen to disrupt the sense that this was a voice which meant what it said. The ambiguity was lost on the American court which tried her for treason in 1948 and found her guilty.

Were the GIs who heard the original programs more discerning than the American jury who convicted her? And how does a present day audience 'read' this voice, further mediated by Barbara Campbell? Announcements of soupy songs and general *C'mon boys* patter are interspersed with news extracts. Some are about Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek. Some are about John Howard and Kim Beazley. Amanda Stewart reads the latter verbatim, unedited, from a bulletin that went to air half an hour before the performance. Campbell says the idea is to evoke in present day audiences some



Barbara Campbell in *Zero Hour*

Heidrun Löhner

of the discomfort of Tokyo Rose's original listeners, hanging out for the latest bulletin on the state of the war. It's accident not design, apparently, that the performances have coincided with an election weekend, and that the twenty four hours between the first and the second performance are right at the high end of the nerve spectrum. People tell me that the mood of the audience in the first performance was in stark contrast to that in the second.

I'm increasingly fascinated by what makes an artist choose something to focus on. Why this episode, this individual voice and its embroiled little history, from amidst the vast array of recorded chattering from the past half century? Campbell has a flair for representing a figure and a history with an intensity of focus that burns into your brain. Selection is so much more direct a challenge than assemblage, which is what happens on the internet. The net is about options, not choices. Nothing is ever selected out; it's the library of Babel in the making.

The websites featured in *Matinaze* are called galleries, museums, magazines, systems: they're places of accumulation, and the net artist is always a curator, if not of other people's work, then of his or her own. Urban Exile offers the most visually ambitious work in its *Temple of the Third Millennium Exhibition*, which reflects a tendency to the Gothic and mediaevalism in internet art. Why? Perhaps there's something about the web page that evokes the illuminated manuscript, and realises the fantasy implicit in books of hours, that you could just fall into the scenes framed on the page and move through them. This is the exhibition technique used by Urban Exile, with each image allowing you to pass through to a selection of others. According to the curatorial statement, "the new age is non-linear, a matrix of infinite combinations and permutations". System X offer simpler, more targeted projects. It's a sampler for the work of a wide range of artists, some specialists in electronic media and some not. You can call up images of recent installations by Derek Kreckler, a VNS Matrix anthology, a whole directory of the work of Clan Analogue (and much more). *Geekgirl* is a rich mix and also offers some great directory services, though I'm a bit resistant to the cultishness they're so desperately trying to stir up. Try *Click* for an alternative. The two individual artists featured—Lloyd Sharp and Dennis Wilcox—presented, respectively, fluids and

machines. A touch of the obsessive in both, I thought.

The curators' panel for the film and video program selected 22 pieces from 80 submissions. The selection keyword has changed, apparently, from 'experimental' to 'innovative', with the implication that film and video artists now can be expected to have absorbed a wide range of experiment by their predecessors and be ready to move into less reactive, more purposeful explorations. Attitude and punchline-oriented work are on the out, it seems, and the quality of commitment to the subject matter is what distinguishes the best work. *White* (Francesca da Rimini and Josephine Starrs) offers a stark and restrained portrayal of clinical confinement: there are allusions to surgery, to mental illness, with the first person experience recounted in Spanish and translated through two other voices. An anthology of whites—snow, nurses' shoes, bandaged limbs, a white dress, sheets, toilet bowls and sinks—intercuts images of an angular body with a heavily textured scar down the line of the shoulder blade. Alyson Bell's work, too, concentrates on a subject for whom images and words diversify and chain themselves without ever moving towards coherence. *Here I Sit* presents dispersed words travelling across the screen over collaged images whilst the voiceover tries to explain the schizophrenic experience. Bell's *Lexicon*, made in collaboration with Chris Newling, is a more contained exercise, based on the simple concept of words chaining associatively across the screen cueing a string of interpretive images. The collage approach quickly leads to overload for the viewer in an anthology program like this (by half way through it was in danger of coming across as just one goddam collage after another) and there's more impact in pieces that offer continuous footage of a well-chosen subject. *Chain of Holes* (Alice Kerrison) is a cameo documentary of a country rodeo with the riders of the bucking broncos also offering voiceover accounts of failing crops and bankruptcies. Very memorable. A fly buzzes as the credits roll.

Thanks to Sarah Waterson and Barbara Campbell for discussion and information. *Matinaze*, Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 2, 3 and 9. Jane Goodall lectures in the School of Humanities, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury and is the author of *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*, O.U.P.

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## Report

## Tactical media

Ian Andrews reports on the *Next 5 Minutes* conference in Amsterdam

Amsterdam in January. It's minus 5 degrees, the wind is howling and a homeless black man desperately attempts to grab my attention. He asks me what kind of music I am listening to. I hand him the headphones which are keeping my ears warm and tell him that it is one of the local pirate, or at least semi-legal, public access radio stations. "I used to be a DJ...I love music", he says, and goes on to tell me his sad recent history. It is at this moment that I realise that for some people, access to communication technologies, even in a wired city like Amsterdam, is less a question of access to the internet than a question of access to even basic technologies such as radio or telephone.

This question of access to old and new technology, for individuals and groups from different economic and cultural circumstances, is one of the central themes of the second *Next 5 Minutes: Tactical Media* conference and exhibition (the main reason I am in Amsterdam freezing my butt off). The *Next 5 Minutes* is an ongoing project (the first *Next 5 Minutes* was held in 1993) which combines grassroots political activism with art practice, and the innovative applications of communications technology, drawing on a diverse series of critical discourses surrounding the new technology. This "proudly" non-academic conference brought together people from over thirty countries providing examples of the way in which different groups and cultures are dealing with various media technologies. Particular emphasis was given to Eastern Europe (where a critical re-evaluation of Marxism is replacing a rejection of Communism), and the former Yugoslavia (where the most important agenda is peace).

The term 'tactical media' is probably unfamiliar to most people, or at least those outside of this particular nexus of theories and practices, so I will attempt a definition. Tactical media refers to non-hegemonic media practices performed by a conjunction of media artists and media activists operating on a tactical rather than a strategic level. In short, the aim of tactical media is to achieve creative solutions for specific situations. However, as David Garcia (from the Centre of Tactical Media in Amsterdam, one of the organisers of the *Next 5 Minutes*) points out, the number of individuals, groups and projects operating along these lines is large enough, and the activity has been going on long enough, to be considered as a distinctive movement within contemporary culture: "a movement which some of us have chosen to call tactical media. Tactical media are works and projects that act out the dream that we are moving from a culture of consumption into a culture of participation and communication". The tactical media movement is concerned with the democratization of media practice. In this sense, *Next 5 Minutes* was not just about access and participation, rather it openly encouraged visitors to make their own contributions via a variety of platforms including 24 hour live television and radio, electronic publishing, internet access, an extensive library and media archive, and a 'temporary autonomous zone' in which visitors were able to schedule their own presentations. The mainstream of the conference, however, consisted mainly of presentations, performances and installations. Some of the issues and debates which from my perspective were particularly interesting, included the following:

#### Tactical media as tools or weapons

One of the most fruitful benefits of the new communications technologies seems to be the use of the net as an organising tool, bringing like-minded people together, despite geographical distances, to form temporary alliances over specific actions. In this way, the net is being utilised to empower individuals and groups by creating shared workspaces which cross national boundaries. Examples of this 'many to many' communication were provided by DeeDee Halleck (Paper Tiger TV, New York), Rena Tangens (Zerberus, Bielefeld)

and Frannie Armstrong (One World of the McLibel Case, London), all of which use the internet along with older technologies to organize resistance, or increase public awareness of the undemocratic and socially harmful activities of specific corporations.

#### Copyright? Copyleft?

The enforcement of copyright legislation in many cases functions as a form of censorship. This was demonstrated by Bernard Timberg and Sut Jhally, whose particular brand of 'montage critique' has in the past drawn threatening responses from certain copyright owners. Both cases were successfully defended under the concept of 'fair use', a First Amendment right in the US which is sadly absent from many other national constitutions, including Australia's. It seems that if an artist wishes to engage in a critique of a media institution (for example, to analyse the depiction of women in the publications of a specific media enterprise) this criticism can be muted by refusing to grant copyright clearance on the reproduction of images in question. Resistance to the limitations imposed by copyright can be witnessed in the proliferation of 'shareware' type anti-copyright schemes such as copyleft, MACOS (Musicians Against Copyright of Samples), and the copyright violation squad.

#### Net criticism

The growing international theoretical practice of 'net criticism' involves not only an analysis of the infrastructure and praxis of the internet, but also the critique of net-theories and net-ideologies. On a theoretical level, many of the presenters attempted a critique of cyberculture which they saw as a product of a corporate culture described as the 'Californian ideology'. The utopian rhetoric which enthusiastically proclaims the internet as a means to an egalitarian and democratic society, where the body gradually drifts into obsolescence, was continually put into question by Mark Dery, Katja Diefenbach and Peter Lamborn Wilson. As Marleen Stikker (Society for Old and New Media, Amsterdam) suggests, "the American Dream version of the technoculture, 'the desire to be wired'" finds itself brought down to earth by the "cynical European movement of 'proud to be flesh'".

On the practical level, it was emphasised that tactics must be developed to fight the commercialization of the net and the large service providers which often suppress free speech by censoring communications between individuals and groups as they see fit. Another less visible threat to public access is the centralization of control of the net via the registration of domain names. Paul Garrin (Mediafilter, New York) has proposed the introduction of a decentralised autonomous network called 'panet' (permanent autonomous network) as a concrete strategy enabling media tacticians to escape this unnecessary control.

#### Do the new media really lead to greater democracy?

Nina Meilof (Digital City, Amsterdam) presented a virtual online city in Amsterdam called 'Digital City' (URL: <http://www.dds.nl/>) in which residents and visitors can be kept informed of the everyday decisions made in local and national government. Check it out on the net. There is a description of the project in English but the rest is in Dutch. To be a resident of the city one must live in the Netherlands. It is hoped that through this level of participation something like direct, as opposed to representational, democracy might be achieved.

But for some people it is still a matter of getting access to the internet at all, as is the case in some Eastern European countries. As Bob Horwitz commented, the right to a postal address exists but the right to a net address does not.

#### What next?

Will the new media bring about radical

social change? At least not by itself, and certainly not with the help of the corporate culture of the 'Californian ideology'. As Katja Diefenbach rightly stated, "democracy is a social practice". We must be wary of the technological determinism that infects much of the discourse on and around the internet. Is the concept of copyright becoming obsolete? Do we really want a push-button democracy? And can this question be separated from the question of 'access for all'? And finally, what are the implications of a fully wired world for oral cultures such as Australia's indigenous communities?

These questions will not have to wait until the next *Next 5 Minutes* because many of the debates will continue online. To keep updated with the debates, exchange ideas on these subjects, or access the archive catalogue of the *Next 5 Minutes* go to the following URL:

<http://www.dds.nl/~n5m/program/archive.htm>

In the meantime, I will leave you to ponder the following question. Throughout the *Next 5 Minutes* the debate addressed the valorisation of reality over the abstract spaces of the net. Sivam Krishnapillai (Cambridge), who presented a paper on ethno-national cyber-quarrels in Sri Lanka, up-ended this paradigm with the following observation: "in Buddhism the world is Maya (Illusion), so maybe cyberspace is real".

Ian Andrews gratefully acknowledges the support of the Industry and Cultural Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission for making his attendance at the *Next 5 Minutes: Tactical Media (N5M2)* conference possible.



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## Report

## After the Wall

Jan Bruck experiences the 1996 Berlin Film Festival

It is late February, at the end of a cold winter. The Berliners have warmed to their Film Festival, and I have warmed to their city. Freed from the thorn of the Wall, Berlin is again revealing its unique fascination and beauty. A lot of building and reconstruction is under way, adding a new cosmopolitan touch to the old pre-war charm.

The 'Berlinale', as the festival is called, used to draw a lot of its energy from the dynamic tension between East and West. Filmmakers from the former Soviet Union found an outlet for their politically sensitive films which could not be shown at home. And not only socialist countries benefitted from this island of political freedom: the critical Left in West Germany could expose their radical ideas and cultural practices which were not tolerated as easily elsewhere. Berlin was a haven for alternative thought, and this was reflected in the festival.

Now the role of the Berlinale is changing. There has been a clear shift, at least in the main program, towards the demands of the market. Nine out of the 24 films in the competition come from the US i.e. Hollywood, about one third from all of Western Europe, a handful from China and South East Asia, very few from the former Soviet Union, one from Australia—John Hughes' first feature, *What I Have Written*—and none from Africa and South America.

As one critic pointed out, there are just no good feature films being made in the former Soviet Union right now; the established filmmakers of the past have given up, and the younger ones are still dealing with an identity crisis, drawing mostly on foreign and exotic topics. The long-time director of the Festival, Moritz van Hadeln, has made the best of changing circumstances and redefined the role of the festival, bringing it closer to Cannes and Venice.

Coming as it does at the beginning of the year, Berlin opens important doors to the international market. With the political weight and intellectual debates of the past gone, audiences, critics and buyers alike have the opportunity to survey and consume as much film culture as possible in a short time, while also enjoying the limelight which has eluded the city for some time. More stars and celebrities than ever have been invited, and to everyone's surprise, more than ever actually turned up, from Hollywood of course.

Their every step is carefully stage managed, and well covered in all the media, with daily press conferences at the Intercontinental Hotel. First in line, Emma Thompson, screenwriter and star of *Sense and Sensibility*, followed by Jodie Foster who overwhelms everyone with her power of will (or will to power?), John Travolta and Danny de Vito playing nice games with their audience, Oliver Stone earnestly explaining *Nixon*, Jack Lemmon telling wonderful stories in return for a Golden Camera Award, and Elia Kazan love-hating the publicity in his honour. Finally, Bruce Willis adds a rock concert performance to his latest film role, briefly supported by his wife Demi Moore—and all for what? Not just for the delight of the public, but also with an eye on the Golden Bear which, although nothing like an Oscar, still makes an impact on sales and audience figures, which is what counts most in the end.

The growing importance of Berlin as a marketplace for film is apparent when one realizes that over 10,000 guests are accredited this year—producers, filmmakers, celebrities, buyers, critics and journalists from all over the world—much to the delight of the hotel and catering industry. To accommodate such large audiences, many films are repeated, and the various sections of the festival are spread out among ten different theatres.

There is an awful lot to choose from. 386 films in 585 screenings over ten days. Apart from the Main Program, which features the 24 films competing for the Golden Bear, and the International Forum, organized separately by Ulrich Gregor, which runs a lot of alternative and more intellectually demanding films, both documentary and fiction, there is Panorama for special and unusual features. Films for Children, and Retrospectives, this year featuring William Wyler and Elia Kazan.

How did the films fare in this consumer-oriented environment? From what I picked up in conversations, standing in queues or sitting in cafes, and through the local media, no major new trend is emerging in this Berlinale. What most characterizes the event, apart from the

dominance of Hollywood, is an openness to all kinds of filmic forms, styles and topics from around the globe, all of which have their own value and meaning for different people.

There is clearly more emphasis on subject-matter and thematic elaboration rather than on the exploration of the filmic form as such, and as one commentator remarked, few films seriously explore the relationship between the two, among them Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking*, which impressed many critics.

Any serious discussions on the formal challenges to filmmaking and audiovisual culture would have taken place at the Videofest, running concurrently with the Berlinale. Like most video festivals these days, it dealt with multimedia and interactive film and television. But being more interested in filmmaking than in new media technology, I did not attend.

I enjoyed Stone's *Nixon*, which for me revealed the fundamentally absurd nature of politics, as well as the frailty of all human beings, particularly those at the top. I also learnt some kind of 'truth' from it: as long as the US dominates the sphere of economics, technology and politics, it will also dominate our thinking and our dreaming in the cultural sphere.

Only in the US can filmmakers dare to rewrite modern history, create grand science fictions and reinvent mythologies, and be taken seriously by the rest of the world. One could not imagine such a film as *Nixon* being made now by a Russian, German, or Australian filmmaker about their own political figures—like Gorbachev, Brandt or Whitlam—with any serious global impact.

Just as we have to accept the economic predominance of the only remaining 'superpower', even if we might question it, so we also have to accept its cultural predominance, even if we don't like it. Nothing can change this at the moment, while everything is subsumed under the all-pervasive power of money and consumerism.

What is hard to take as a result of this, is that with the demise of 'communism' as a political and theoretical system, there is no longer a belief in an alternative. This, I think, weighs more heavily on many people's minds than the loss of local 'identity', which some cultural critics tend to complain about.

But there are some small signs of a different perspective. I saw two excellent documentary films coming out of the former East Germany, both providing intelligent and sensitive insights into how people have been living and thinking on the other side of the Wall. *Lange nach der Schlacht* (*Long after the Battle*), by Eduard Schreiber and Regine Kuhn, almost four hours long, observes over several years what happened to some of the officers and their families after the closure of a Russian airbase in the former GDR, as well as to some of the German people living around the base.

The second documentary, part of a long term study by Barbara and Winfried Junge, traces the life of a boy in an East German village from the time of his first day at school in 1961 until 1995. This last part in a series of ten films, *The Story of Uncle Willy from Golzow*, presents some revealing insights not only into the life of a person, but also into the social values and the effects of economic change on a small village in East Germany, over a long period.

I hope these films can be seen in Australia in the near future. I found them more challenging and stimulating than most of the new German feature films screened at the festival, and in the local cinemas, which usually don't move much beyond the old formula of love, sex and all the problems associated with modern relationships. Germany's film industry is still not out of the doldrums of the eighties, despite some new talents and improving box office. And one can't just blame Hollywood for that.

At the end of this magnum event, the Golden Bear was awarded to *Sense and Sensibility*. The prize could have gone many other ways, but that's a formality now. The all-night party afterwards must have been a rave.

The day after. On my way to the Berlinale office on a spring-like morning I share the lift with the festival director, Moritz de Hadeln, and two of his staff. Standing only a few inches away from the person most responsible for the organization of the festival, I am tempted to ask some questions. But I refrain, because he looks exhausted. Turning to his colleagues he says, with a sigh of relief, "We've done it again".

## Interview

## Healing virtual realities

Eric Mason interviews virtual reality performance artist Vincent Vincent

North American artist Vincent Vincent was in Perth recently (February 28 to March 5) for a series of lectures and performances. I caught up with him following a demonstration of his company's Mandala Systems technology at the Alexander Library Theatre.

*EM Your visit to Perth was organised by Revelation magazine and the Department of Commerce and Trade. What was Revelation's interest in your work?*

VV They probably connected with one of the things we occasionally do and which has become popular—live link-ups in the Rave scene. We have sold Mandala Systems specifically for this. Within the techno community or the Rave community, there's a real sense of global community. Often organisers will try to link up Raves between two places with teleconferencing or *See You See Me* or whatever they can basically get hold of. Mandala systems are starting to be used in Raves really as a sort of play-toy in this way.

*EM How would you describe the Mandala Systems technology developed by the Vivid group?*

VV It's a new form of interface for the computer, a very hands-off kind of interface because you're just stepping in front of the video camera and then you're inside the computer world with which you can interact. The fact that we chroma-key people in means they're able to put themselves in context with a surrounding world and treat it like a reality in the computer whilst trying to make the interaction as natural and as smooth as possible—whether that's an art performance, a sports simulation or a business presentation. By allowing the computer to know where the body is and letting the person actually be a part of a live environment, we're able to allow the person to interact with the graphics, control them and play with them.

*EM During your seminar you were saying that you originally devised the technology for use in performance art.*

VV My first thoughts of doing something with computers really came about from being involved in dance, music and visual arts and being a psychotherapist in art therapy. I just happened to be lucky enough to be at a university where people were thinking about computers. This was before multimedia computers showed up. The first idea was to be a dancer and create the music from my dancing, because when I was dancing I would hear a lot of additional music in my head and that would make me want to pick up an instrument and play that music out.

I teamed up with my partner Francis McDougal and we came up with a solution that was fairly lightweight in terms of hardware, versus my original ideas which involved huge plates with infra-red beams, light shows and stuff. First we had to get it down into the computer and create graphical worlds that we could step into. That let it be a bridge technology for performance art which involved being a computer artist in the computer while I was performing. I could be a juggler, or a mime artist or an actor or a dancer or a musician just by choosing which environment I wanted to go into. It was the idea of having complete control over the computer's data base of worlds that would allow it to be a performance medium. Then of course it was a matter of creating all those worlds and then being able to string them together in performance.

*EM What will your performances in Perth involve?*

VV They will be half hour performances employing the Mandala Systems technology and then a live link up to Toronto where someone there will step into the environment with me and we'll do stuff together. After that the link up worlds will be there and the public will be invited to play inside them. The performance will be a combination of juggling, stick twirling, dancing and playing guitar, both in the real world and in the virtual world. The main idea behind the performance is to heighten the idea of your own body in a space and to do this by taking you into a virtual world.

*EM The worlds we saw were static and two dimensional. Do you have any plans to expand these environments into 3D moving 'scapes' that you can actually go into and explore?*

VV The system we have here is Amiga system and its very old and it's unfortunate that this is the one we were constrained to bring on tour. We actually work on Silicon Graphics machines now which are dramatically different but the Amiga travels better! As the company has evolved the focus has been games and public installations, so we haven't had the time to build up more sophisticated performance worlds on the PC and SGIs. These new worlds are very much 3-D worlds you can travel into. Part of this work is happening in partnership with Intel and this is the way we are headed now.

*EM What sort of thematic concerns do you concentrate on in your performance work?*

VV It's very much like a dreamscape in that a lot of the imagery evokes this sense. It was one of the original ideas and one that I am sticking with. I like the idea that you can create a dreamscape and have people step into it and use it therapeutically. The metaphorical images and transitions through time and space when you are dreaming are very interesting to me. It's like travelling from world to world, going through either obvious portals or just quick changes of entire scenes.

*EM So that's an experience you'd like to impart to your audience.*

VV Yes. Over time there have been other themes, like we do a lot of environmental work in Canada. We run the Earth Day for the City of Toronto where they put on very large concerts and for that we'll create songs or worlds that have environmental messages in them about solar power or something. For the most part it's very much a journey through the unconscious and little themes and snippets of time space scenarios appear. For example, the idea of jumping back and forth in time and space or taking imagery from daVinci and then something from Easter Island and then a 2001 theme where we play it out. We emphasise time-space trajectories—when you're in this dream world you can be jump between these very quickly. Therefore we have a lot of space imagery, a lot of travelling through corridors where you get the sense of being lost, and then arriving someplace.

*EM Some of the new media art's use of technology is attacked from other areas of art and performance art as being techno gimmickry—techno people playing with toys.*

VV It's true for the most part, but I've always been of the view, and this comes from my background as a creative therapist, that everyone is creative and that everybody is an artist. It's been quite an interesting trip being on a lot of panels with artists and art aficionados who are very much into the idea that the artist must be maintained as a separate entity. The genius notion. To me this is the greatest time we've ever had because there is so much opportunity for everyone to find some way to be creative. Multimedia is accessible to more people and especially to technologists who are traditionally not seen as creative but in fact are immensely creative within their own realm. It's the visualisation of each other's creativity that's the important thing. I learned that from my partner Francis who is the brains behind the computer aspect of what we do.

*EM Have you had much to do with the Banff New Media Centre which is reasonably well known in Australia?*

VV No, not really. In the beginning, yes, but they moved into headset related areas of virtual reality with SGIs and we didn't have that kind of gear or focus. At the moment they seem to be in a phase of retraction with a withdrawal of a lot of their government support. It's a good centre and they have done a lot of exploratory work and pieces there. One piece by Brenda Laurel, who works for Intervol but is well known in the virtual reality community as a spokesperson for the social consciousness of technology. She was doing a project creating a world based on the themes

• continued next page



## Interview

of indigenous peoples and animal spirits. It was very much a performance piece where two people travelled through a very large virtual world of low resolution graphics. It was a very good experimental example of the use of head mounted displays in a performance piece. Jargon Lanner is the only other person I've seen do a virtual reality based performance piece. He's like the father of VR and was the big spokesman for it when it started out in 1989/90 through his company PL. He's a master musician with over one hundred instruments from around the world and plays them all in performance and on albums. He also integrates into his performances SIG head mounted worlds which he enters to play weird virtual instruments he's also invented.

## Book review

### Seductive and timely

Wendy Haslem reads Laleen Jayamanne's collection *Kiss Me Deadly*

*It is dangerous, and the danger for us is that we might be infected by coming into contact with the ecstasy, by touching what is 'red hot'.*

Lesley Stern

*Kiss Me Deadly: feminism and cinema for the moment* is a timely investigation of the seduction and danger of the alliance between feminism and the cinema. It is a collection of papers that were first presented at a conference on cinema and contemporary feminist thought held at The University of Sydney in 1991. Further contributions inspired by the conference were composed subsequently and incorporated into this collection.

The book's title is appropriated from Robert Aldrich's American independent noir film *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and in many ways the conditions of production and the contemporary reception of the film parallel the desire of the contributors. In each essay it is the writer's intention to highlight the potent affiliation between feminism and film. As editor, contributor and conference director Laleen Jayamanne introduces the volume by suggesting that what was originally claimed to be Aldrich's misogyny is better understood as inventiveness. The seemingly dubious choice of casting a range of 'B-Girls' actually had the effect of modifying the 40s image of the femme fatale. Jayamanne claims that this contributed towards 'enriching the lineaments' of the representation of femininity. The reinvigorated interest in film noir renders Aldrich's film ripe for reading through feminist film theory. In the book *Kiss Me Deadly* the scope of feminist film theory is enriched through the diversity of theoretical paradigms and the variety of film texts represented. In its entirety, *Kiss Me Deadly* reaffirms the prominence of feminism in the realm of cinema and cultural studies.

The title is also intended to encapsulate some of the ambivalence that has been a feature of the 'feminist film project' since it became recognised within the academy as a legitimate mode of discourse in the 1980s. Jayamanne describes the initial exhilaration of being able to examine the question of women in cinema, something that was sharply undercut by a moment of hesitation when it became evident that the same theoretical discourse that set out to emancipate women might also be responsible for the demise of pleasure in the cinema. Jayamanne argues that these two diametrically opposed elements are bought together like a kiss of death. The seductive force of feminist film theory was mitigated by the threat of destruction. The essays in *Kiss Me Deadly* address this clash and recapture some of the fascination, obsession and pleasure that is a consequence of the conjunction of feminism with the cinema. In her introduction Jayamanne critiques what she understands to be the contemporary tendency to 'theory fetishism' where a devotion to discourse takes prominence over a recognition of the allure of cinema. Jayamanne and her collaborators adopt a different approach. It is their intention to distinguish their contributions from other writings in feminism and film theory by maintaining a mimetic relationship with the film text. The essays that have been selected and presented are predicated on a fascination with the cinematic, and are governed by a desire to sustain this enchantment in the act of writing. Each essay negotiates a fine line between a pre-theoretical nostalgia and a discourse that is primarily influenced by Deleuze and Benjamin. Overall, *Kiss Me Deadly* endeavours to replenish the passion in the once alluringly seductive liaison between feminism and film. Another thread that binds each essay in this collection is a concern with time. Whilst this book acknowledges the centenary of Australian cinema, it is specifically devoted to one quarter of this period which is characterised by an interest in the relationship between women and the cinema. This book marks 25 years of a feminist film his(her)story. Whilst the subtitle refers to the moment, all contributors draw from an extensive background in feminist film theory, something that Jayamanne suggests has had a "...short but intense history". Time is considered in a conventional historical, chronological mode, but it is also discussed in a more abstract form.

Jayamanne characterises the conjunction of feminism and the cinema as 'momentary' to remark upon the velocity of film theory and the desire to understand how we "... apprehend that elusive 'object' film". From the outset the instant is recognised

## Book review

by its lack of fixity, its ability to encapsulate a variety of temporalities. It has no specific tense, no limits on its duration, only a sense of transience and fluidity. The moment might be a flash or an instant, but it also might clearly mark an epoch or a period. In what is ultimately revealed to be an understatement, Jayamanne writes: "This elastic notion of the moment, which can sustain a sense of multiple durations, memory, and incommensurable temporalities, a sense of passing time and perhaps its concomitant urgency, is important to this work". Obviously in the cinema the vicissitudes of time are vital. The tempo that determines verisimilitude and regulates dynamism on the screen might be twenty-four frames per second but these film theorists move far beyond a consideration of the moment in its operational capacity in the cinematic apparatus. One particularly evocative essay is Lesley Stern's 'Meditation on Violence'. This is a piece of spirited writing that reinvents the presence of Maya Deren and her obsession with transfigured time, motion, dance and performance as seductive and 'red hot'. A more sublime analysis of the moment appears in Toni Ross's account of Nicholas Roeg's film *Bad Timing*. Excluding the introductory and concluding sequences, this film dispenses with a representation of time that is based on a chronology, preferring the compilation of sequences according to intuition. Ross produces an exemplary discussion of this fragmented time, as well as a reflection on the illusion of the elongated instant that marks the final encounter between the protagonists. Again, this piece is composed to move beyond the limitations of the hysterical claims of misogyny.

As a contemporary collection of essays, Jayamanne's book is well informed, dynamic and substantial. It divulges an obsession with the cinematic without debilitating it with theory. It is certainly about pleasure, but it also acknowledges the darker moments, positing a relationship of contingency between pleasure and the incessant threat of death. In her own contribution about Raul Ruiz, Jayamanne writes about sublime instances of blackness or moments of forgetting that separate each frame on the film itself. She calls these multiple moments of death, instances of darkness. They also have the effect of reminding us of its concomitant state, light and an impression of life. Fundamentally *Kiss Me Deadly* flirts with darkness and light, focussing on the ecstasy that characterises the cinematic experience.

Laleen Jayamanne (ed), *Kiss Me Deadly, Feminism and Cinema for the Moment*, Power Publications, 1995, ISBN 0 909952 26 4

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## Film Reviews

*Private Eye/Public Eye*  
Directed by Tony Woods  
cafe bohémio, Feb 25

Tony Woods must be one of the most prolific filmmakers in Australia today, with about half a dozen new works screened over the last 12 months. He does it by working in Super 8 and video. He has moved his three decades of work and consideration of the image as a painter into the area of the moving image.

*Private Eye* (Super 8, 27 min., 1996) is his latest piece and the most dense and complete so far. It was shot on Tony's beat around Fitzroy, a circle around his neighbourhood that he traverses daily, like a mantra for the feet. Each time he sees different things, the light or shadow on a shop window, epiphanies that he tries to catch with his camera because they are often not there tomorrow. There is something of the everyday ritual about this but also of the drifting eye, akin to what the Situationists encapsulated in their concept of the dérive. The filmmaker, through years of seeing, is continually reconstituting himself, reaffirming through the flux of the everyday. Raoul Vaneigem points out that "the revolutionary moment is when everything reality presents finds its immediate representation". There are moments, glimpses in this film, that strive for such a release.

*Private Eye* suggest two almost opposite places. One intimates things personal, emanating from a precious self, and the other a more daring, mischievous, taboo, voyeuristic eavesdropping, a searching and solving, perhaps a measured indifference. They come together in this private drift through public space: the street. Benjamin would have approved of this morphing of window shopping into image shopping, and again, we also have this play with the artifice of cinema itself—the screen, this window onto the world.

At times the images are so private that Tony is not even looking through the lens, suggesting that the technology itself has its own privacy. But there is a trick because the artist is still pointing the camera, spurred by a kind of inner visualisation of the scene to be documented, and the movement transferred to the camera still comes from his breathing and body, a rhythm that spreads, is played, through the whole work, whether it is caught with the eye, or a camera held to the side of the body in automatic writing mode.

There is also this feeling that each image exists on its own, has a life of its own, a recognition of the importance of that first glimpse that caught the artist's eye. Each image exhibits its own totality yet holds its place in the string of movement that constitutes the whole film. This is how it should be.

As a film the images march across time in different layers, receding in distance from the eye. The artist gives you time to let your eye traverse the image, whether it be a person walking across, a flicker of light, a stream of ants or a flicker of light. One

## Film reviews

layer of the film is made up of shadows, abstracted and moving, another is pure texture and yet another is articulated light itself. Within this web are shown objects of the street, of the store window, moving people and fragments of signs broken up in very pleasing gestures of light and motion. These patterns dance close to the eye and in further layers into the distance. The movement of your eyes links these worlds up in space as well as time. Often enough these patterns come together in one crescendo, one pure hit of an image that combines shadow, texture, movement, objects, reflection and refraction in layer upon layer, and your eye has time to pleasurably dart around its intricacies. One of these was a reflection in a window with an aquarium, where fish, pedestrians, shadow, signs and light created a more pleasing, ambiguous image than one can ever imagine hyperspace to be. One is always reminded, in each image and between shots, of the way the eye works and moves through the streetscape. This quality is kept intact. The street is Tony's mandala. A truly remarkable document of the everyday.

*Dirk de Bruyn* is a film and media artist, curator and writer currently programming film and video at cafe bohémio in Melbourne



Rose McGowan as Amy Blue in *The Doom Generation*

*The Doom Generation*

Directed by Gregg Araki

Palace distribution

Verona Cinema Paddington; George Cinemas St. Kilda, other states to follow

Known as a whizkid filmmaker, the in-your-face Gregg Araki has slipped from the homo-American margin on to the inter-sexual mainstream and given the world his first 'heterosexual film'. Following the road journey of Jordan White (James Duval), Amy Blue (Rose McGowan) and Xavier Red (Johnathon Schaech) Araki maps key experiences of ménage à trois intimacy permissible in a society characterised by fear and hate, paranoia and neurosis, violence, and more violence. His earlier film, *Totally F\*\*\*ed Up*, must have provided the historical context for *Doom*: the lifestyles of the bored and disenfranchised, the young and hopeless, the alienated and sad youth subculture of fringe sexualities.

The film is like a bad acid trip. The first scene is set in a nightclub where the signage reads 'Welcome to Hell'—here Araki uses his bigger budget to make cracked ideas reality. It rollercoasters semantically from 'Shoplifters will be Executed' posters in Quickiemarts to checkered motel rooms at the end of the world. Taking conspiracy theories at face value Araki throws in the totem cliché of consumer paranoia by bringing down the price of life and death (take away food) to the alchemical number 666. He plays with doomsday like a cat with a mouse in a barnful of vermin.

Araki the scriptwriter is a genius of the colourful expression. The doleful Jordan White likens the state of his soul to that of "a gerbil suffocating up Richard Gere's asshole" telling us nothing new about the much misaligned star but highlighting what Generation X thinks about the price its soul has paid for the American Dream. A Ginsbergian 'howl' readymade for the angst ridden nineties youth market.

Araki the director has the same love of music and weirdness that sent Penelope Spheeris on her filmmaking journey from *Decline of Western Civilisation* and *Suburbia* to *Wayne's World*. Araki homages Spheeris in *Totally F\*\*\*ed Up*, and *Doom* reveals the urban problems of LA's alienated youth as much as *Suburbia* revealed the violent culture of the 'burbs. For Spheeris the sexual scenario was a no-no; for Araki it is the beginning, middle and end of filmmaking.

Araki breaks conventions with Generation X sex. Imagine having your knowledge of sex hegemonically imposed as a fast lane to the grave from as early as twelve! Sex is going to seem at once a death defying deviation and an accessible pastime. It isn't just because the characters fuck, or the girl fucks the guys, or that the guys fuck her simultaneously—it's more to do with the way they talk about it. The descriptions. Language tips the scale between erotica and pornography. There are times it titillates, others it horrifies. One can only laugh when Jordan and Amy reveal they are both virgins while discussing AIDS and the possibility of having intercourse.

Up until the death of Jordan, *The Doom Generation* is a tragedy-comedy exaggerating the patois and preoccupation of kids in fin de siècle southern California. But the death of Jordan is totally fucked up—a dead end, an unbelievable negativity. We can salvage the point about toilet training. If we were not such victims of it, as Bataille said we were, the kids may have had more luck holding off the vicious homo-hating, homo-raping neo-nazis but in a film about hate and sex and death Araki refuses to give us a break. The gentle must die and in answering a question from an earlier filmic exploration Araki says, yes, it is as sad as it seems.

*The Doom Generation* needs to be seen by anyone involved in youth culture and especially 'adults' who publish ridiculous doomsday sex guides for teenagers. What Araki makes clear is that these kids are too young to be carrying all this guilt and baggage. It is time to re-educate the Grim Reaper and his disciples!

Shelley Kay



Joaquin Cortes and Marisa Paredes in *The Flower of my Secret*

*The Flower of My Secret*

dir. Pedro Almadovar

Globe Film Company distribution  
Academy and Valhalla, Sydney  
Nova and Como, Melbourne

Another middle-class, middle-age angst film? A reflection of Almadovar's own advancing years? Well, maybe, but even so, this film, in which Almadovar surprisingly pares back the camp he is synonymous with to a bare minimum, is a refreshing affirmative glimmer in a landscape dominated by *Leaving Las Vegas*, *Dead Man Walking* and *Casino*. *The Flower of My Secret* tracks the emotional development of Leo, a striking (in a drag-queen kind of way) and cultivated woman in her forties, who opens the film in a state of ridiculous helplessness and professional crisis of faith, but concludes it toasting to her future independence from both the tyrannies of the heart and the banality of the bodice-rippers she writes for a living. This basic structure provides Almadovar with plenty of opportunity to muse, often with a comic but not a terminally ironic slant, on contemporary relationships, between lovers—Leo's manic love for her husband (a Latin Ken-doll in fatigues called Paco) is revealed as an attempt to compensate for his lack; between friends—Leo's best friend abandons her affair with Paco because she can't stand Paco's treatment of Leo; between family—Leo finally finds healing by returning to her mother's arms; and between class-divided people—Leo's acknowledgment of the artistic prowess of her maid is a significant moment in the film. Almadovar's emotional authenticity, sympathetic characters and happy ending mark quite a departure from the jaundiced view we've come to expect from his oeuvre to date, rendering this film, in a minor way, an enjoyable diversion.

JM

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## Film reviews



David Ngoombujarra as Shane Francis in Richard Franklin's *No Way to Forget*

### From Sand to Celluloid

6 new works by indigenous filmmakers  
Directors: Bill McCrow, Richard Frankland, Warwick Thornton, Darlene Johnson, Rima Tamau and Sally Riley  
Screening Melbourne April 19, 20 & 21, George Cinema; Perth April 22, 23 & 24, Lumiere Cinema; Brisbane May 26 Metway Theatre; Cairns May 19 Palace Independent Cinema; and in Coober Pedy, Alice Springs, Geraldton, Mt Isa, Ballarat, Lismore, Armidale and Nambucca Heads. From the private hell of a man haunted by the devastating evidence before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (*No Way to Forget*), to the poignant identity-crisis of a fair-skinned Koori teenager (*Two Bob Mermaid*), this collection of short films is both deeply moving and entertaining. While most of the filmmakers have opted for structured narrative form, the styles vary widely. The slick production values (complete with brumby chase à la *Man From Snowy River*) and light touch of 'buddy' genre *Round Up*—the parable of a black stockman and his white counterpart whose encounter with the city brings them from fisticuffs to brotherhood—contrast starkly with the down-at-heel VHS graininess and harrowing sombreness of *No Way to Forget*, and the surreal images and theatrical staging of *Dead Man Down*. The films however are conjoined by the intimacy and immediacy of their characterisations and personal dilemmas, as well as by some common concerns: alcohol, jail, the breakdown of community, cultural ambivalence. If, at times, the iconography tended to the obvious—the spirit of the ancestor cajoling the dejected prisoner in *Dead Man Down* a case in point—at others it was fresh and incisive. In *Fly Peewee, Fly!*, for instance, a little boy's grandmother daubs a white chicken feather with shoe-polish so it will resemble the elusive peewee feather which her grandson hoped to take to school for 'show and tell'. In Warwick Thornton's *Payback*, a wizened man catatonically goes through the paces of prison release after twenty years, in preparation for the black law's punishment which meets him with spears at the prison gates, the avenging elder a compelling metaphor for the double jeopardy familiar to many indigenous Australians. JM

### Video Fool for Love

Videographed, edited, directed by and starring Robert Gibson  
A Kennedy/Miller release  
Valhalla, Chauvel and Cremorne Hayden Orpheum, Sydney, other states to follow  
*Video Fool for Love*, previewed in the Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals, was variously described as confronting, funny, painful and brutally honest. Gibson has a lens fetish and videoed his whole life for ten years, going through a string of women he liked to refer to as 'my babe'. We see a lot of one, the beautiful Gianna. Shame we have to rely on Gibson's peculiar vision of her. Despite his candour and self-mockery, Gibson is an unlikeable protagonist who gives us no room to back off. Painful and brutally honest yes, but attention to camera focus often overrides spontaneity—while Gibson masturbates for a sperm count he's peeking sideways to where he's planted the camera and when his fiancée leaves him he jerks tears for the camera with the help of romantic records. I didn't find any of this confronting or funny—just contrived. (Or is that the whole point?) His long-suffering parents marvel at his carryings on and their loving and supportive comments are a highlight. As you can imagine, it's hard for all the babes to put up with the camera once lust and narcissism wears off, but one of them finally helps him extract from ten years' footage what could best be described as a feature length wank, complete with reference to Scud missiles. Hope you feel better now Bob. LM



Robert Gibson in *Video Fool for Love*

### Video Fool for Love

You should see this because it's a rare attempt at male openness in Australian film. You might have been told the attempt failed, that this man, the director Robert Gibson, lies his way into self-justification of his dismal treatment of his female partners with selective editing of his and their Handycam-ed lives. If you want either total self-lacerating honesty or to see the film as male lie, you're not going to enjoy *Video Fool for Love*, because its power is in its incompleteness, the agonising mix of insight and error, of naivete and calculation. This is not to say that it's 50 per cent of one and 50 per cent of the other. Clearly Gibson makes the best possible case for himself as victim and, because good old documentary interviewing is not part of his verité technique, the women in his life, unfairly, do not get to speak for themselves. He gets the voiceover and a fair bit of monologue to camera to himself. That aside, it's intriguing and psychologically demanding to try to fill the gaps that Gibson leaves or refuses to fill. The number of heated discussions over the film I've heard pivot exactly on this act of completing the narrative, deciding what he is *really* like, how objectionable, how egotistical, how oppressive. Putting your life on film and starring yourself in it is somehow much more damaging than putting the same into print. Time also plays a role in heightening his apparent bad behaviour: ten years crammed into a feature length film might make for great drama (the appeal to producer George Miller) but it can also make Gibson look like a case study—I don't know how many times I heard viewers and reviewers speak of "a chain of women" he'd left behind emotionally ruined! Whatever, it's a film that provokes and divides viewers, raises issues of the limits of sympathy and the meaning of empathy, and shows, thanks to excellent transfers, that the humble Handycam can produce work that looks precise and dynamic on the big screen without losing its curious integrity. KG

## Newsreel

### Digital comix

Johnny Ice uses the resources of the web to track down file-wall climbers, maniacal world-programmers, cyberspace goddesses and bodies without organs. Artist Bill Donovan uses the latest programming techniques available on the web to create a comic-strip with sounds and music, oversized pages the reader explores by scrolling, click-on sound effects and animated images. The first episode of Johnny Ice: Digital Detective will premiere 1 May as part of the e-zine Australian Multimedia Magazine. <http://www.mm.com.au/amm/johnnyice>

### Young luminaries

Winners of the 10th WA Film and Video Festival's Lumiere Awards presented March 16. Music Video: Fiona Snashall *Drugs*. Education/Training Film: Edith Cowan University Media Production Unit *Business Practice and Customs in Indonesia Parts 1 and 2*. Documentary: Joint winners Samantha Kelley *Secret Fleets* and Andrew Ogilvie & Susan Fleming *Requiem for a Generation of Lost Souls*. Young Filmmaker Documentary: Janine Lucy & Vicki Jackson *Dying is Easy—Comedy is Hard*. Commercial: Neal Kingston *RAC 90th Year*. Promotional Film/Video: Ross Tinney Productions *The Renewal*. Experimental Drama: Karen Marree *The Best of Life*. Drama: David Broun *Fly Breeder*. Short Drama: Daniel Habedank *Two Men in a Pine Forest*. Interactive Multimedia: Marie-Louise Xavier *Finger Face*. Most Promising Young Filmmaker of the Year award was won by Russell Vines & Paul Blake *Fungimentary: The Magic Mushrooms of Balingup*. Young Cinematographer's prize went to Glen Preece *Mere Mortals*. Sound: Trevor Hilton & Gordon Inglis *WA Opera*. Original Music: Chris Norman *Secret Fleets*. Cinematography: Ross McLean *Encounters with Speed* and Mark Zagar *Struck*. Editing: Owen Beck & Robert Bygott *Blossom*. The Young Writer's and the Director's Award went to Des Hicow for *Mere Mortals*. Editing: Karryn de Cinque *The Renewal*. Writing Award went to Steve Peddie *Struck*. Award for Direction to Michael Joy *RAC*. Awards for Experimental Work went to Jo Law *Static with White* and Martin Heine & Gunnar Mueller *The Industrialist's Nightmare*. Music Video Prize to Denson Baker & Illya Smith *Free in Time*. Achievement in Art Department prizes went to Mara Pelss *Home Security* and Magda Koman & David Marshall *Struck*. Prizewinning Male Actors: Michael Djukic *How Louie Found Love in the Lift* and Murray Dowsett *Struck*. Female Actor: Neeleen Bland *Mere Mortals*. Award for Sound-Young Filmmaker Division went to Fred Porter *The Buffer Zone* and Original Music Craig Wallace-Gibb *Through My Eyes*.

### New screenwriters scheme

AFC has announced the first recipients of the New Screenwriters Scheme. Four writers will receive investment funding to each develop a full length screenplay and each will be teamed with an experienced industry practitioner to act as script editor and mentor. The writers are Graham Peterson a biker-busdriver from Brisbane teaming with writer-director Jackie McKimmie. Filmmaker and academic Emily Ballou mentorless as yet. Former barrister Nicholas Cole will work with director Bill Bennett and cinematographer Neil Mansfield teams with script editor Kevin Roberts.

### Australian shorts

Chauvel Cinema in association with the AFI is presenting a monthly program of short Australian films that showcase new work. The March season included some excellent work by Leon Cmielewski, Caroline Grose, Kate Toll, Lisetta Moscardo, Jo Guarino, Paul Vincent and Kelli Simpson. The 3rd selection, *Two Timing Shorts* screens Wednesday and Sunday 24th and 27th April.

## Newsreel

### Cinematheque 96

Meanwhile, the April Cinematheque program includes Lindsay Anderson, Reis, Pasolini, Antonioni, Resnais and a *Tribute to London* season featuring Peter Clifton's *Tonight Let's All Make Love in London* 1967, Patrick Keller's *London* 1994 and Nicolas Roeg's *Performance* 1970.

### The Language of Interactivity

The AFC's Language of Interactivity Conference to be held at the ABC Ultimo Centre April 11-13 exams the emerging language of interactive media. Local and international speakers will discuss ways in which disc-based multimedia and on-line interactive works convey meaning. The conference provides an opportunity for interactive media artists, developers, writers, designers, educators, filmmakers and other media professional to examine the creative opportunities of this new form. Speakers include multimedia artists Nic Beames, Sally Pryor, John Colette, Gloriana Davenport *Boston*, Derek Kreckler, web artist Shuh Lea Cheang (USA) interactive cinema artist Chris Hales (UK); interactive storyteller Kathy Mueller; interactive scriptwriter Mark Morrison; animation artists Jon McCormack, programmer Gideon May (Netherlands) magazine editors Amanda Wise *Click*, Paul Brown *FineArt Forum* Stuart Clarke *Hyper*; producers, Osamu Sato creator of *The Lost Souls of Tong Nou*, one of Japan's top selling CD-ROM games; Gary Warner; media industry consultants Hal Josephson (USA), Fiona Ingram. The event incorporates workshops in CD-ROM with Linda Dement and Mike Leggett and complementary exhibitions *Burning the Interface* and *Phantasmagoria: Pre Cinema to Virtuality* at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Info: Vicky Sowry, Multimedia Assistant Tollfree 1800226615 E-Mail: [v.sowry@afc.gov.au](mailto:v.sowry@afc.gov.au)

### Epiletograph

The imperative of the charge and pulse within the brain is the subject of Isabelle Delmotte's work in progress: *Epiletograph: The Internal Journey*. Video projection, illumination and sound technologies combine to explore the artist's relationship with and experiences of epilepsy—once called "the holy disease" due to the loss of consciousness and magical return. Epiletograph is concerned with the loss of identity experienced through a seizure and how in the process of recovery a sense of self has to be reconstructed and almost relearned. This is a work in progress, not unfinished, but an ongoing process of exploration and accrual by an artist who has been inspired to investigate her experiences and present them as creative behaviour rather than disability. April 4-28 at ACCA, Melbourne.

### News from the Booth

The Booth looks much like the photo-booth you remember; the tiny cubicle with the half curtain, the strips of photos on the outside, the dinky mirror to check your hair. On approach you might hear the recorded voice of a spruiker, inviting you in. You take your seat, adjust the height. Set into the wall in front of you is a 14" touch-screen monitor. You put your \$4 in the coin-slot. The screen tells you that live video is being fed from the inside of the Booth, direct to the Booth's Web site. Yup, anyone logged on to the Boothsite is watching you now; too scary? You can decide to turn the camera off. OK what's next?

You now have a choice to select from 20 short audio/visual works that have been generated on video, desktop or film, and mastered to CDROM. If you like you can create your own film from the different works on offer; a piece of this with a piece of that; four parts in all. You settle on your choice, and sit back to watch, and listen there are four high quality speakers mounted around you and then Flash!, your photo's taken; four flashes—four digital photos—during the course of your private screening, at moments the filmmakers determine. The film finishes, a phone handset built into the front wall rings. You pick it up, it's the spruiker inviting you to leave a message; you do, and it's automatically uploaded to the Booth site and dropped into a constantly changing soundscape. Did you notice the slot under the screen about the size of a VHS cassette? You could've brought along a short video, a little video postcard of your own, fed it into the slot and the Booth would've digitised it and uploaded it straight onto the Web site. The Booth collects these contributions as it moves around the country; they reflect the Booth's travels and offer impromptu video versions of the range of Australian places visited by the Booth an important feature for remote overseas 'visitors' to the Boothsite.

The Booth's now telling you your photos are ready so it's outside to the delivery slot. What do you think? Do you want your portraits posted to the Web site photo album? You choose. At this stage you're probably wondering what this Web site looks like. A second monitor outside the Booth shows you.

A large track ball set into the outside wall helps you navigate; there's the photo album, pages for each location and photo-strip of all Booth participants, and there's a shoebox into which all the reject photographs have been tossed. As well: a soundscape with your own sound bite mixed alongside many others; biographies of all contributing artists; two QuickTime windows one a live window into the Booth, the other playing the VHS video postcard contributions; a continually updated touring schedule, and links to MutleyMedia's info site, with details for people interested in various parts of the Booth process and ways they might get involved. No matter if all of this is too bombarding at this stage; the Boothsite URL is printed on your photos and you can dial it up and follow its progress from home, making other contributions that way.

Booth debuts in a limited Boothlite version at the Digital Aesthetic One Symposium at the College of Fine Arts April 9-12. It begins touring in its fully fledged Boothliness around September this year. And it wants your work. For the poop on the national call for entries, phone or fax MutleyMedia—a cross-state collaboration of new media artists on 02-314.2936 or get the even small print via [mutley@magna.com.au](mailto:mutley@magna.com.au)

### Globe

GLOBE-E Electronic Journal of Contemporary Australian Art edited by Robert Schubert launched at ACCA April 3. Address: [global@arts.monash.edu.au](mailto:global@arts.monash.edu.au) Recommended.

### Transgression and Culture

Also launched in April at ACCA the papers from the 1995 Gordon Darling Foundation Seminars. Topic: Transgression and the Cultural Industry; Critical Media: Perspectives on New Technology. Convenors: Denise Robinson and Julianne Pierce.

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# Catching the sixth Next Wave

Virginia Baxter previews the 1996 Next Wave program.

When he spoke to Natalie King (RT#9), Next Wave Festival Director Zane Trow anticipated a festival that was diverse, site-various and contemporary and it looks like he's pulled it off with an impressive assembly of experienced and emerging artists in all manner of multi-dimensional collaborations and intersections.



Fail, Failed, Failure by Ronnie Van Hout at Linden Gallery

In the Performance program, choreographer Cazarine Barry presents *Help*, merging visual art with high energy theatre and an original techno soundtrack by Ollie Olsen of Psy Harmonics. 3D projectionist Tao Weis has covered all bases in his collaboration with Barry creating images that celebrate the world of technology, information and media whilst acknowledging their simultaneous destruction of the natural world. Julie McDonald in *Rub the Angel* performs to an original score in a 3D video environment. In *Downloading* dancer Josie Daw and dancers delve into their personal and dance histories to make some connections between movement and memory, featuring live percussion and design by visual artist Kate Daw. A cast of 30 assembles in the form of Stompin' Youth from Tasmania fusing dance and video in *Grind* performed in the industrial setting of the Lonsdale Street Power Station. A rare chance to see contemporary indigenous performance in *Seven Stages of Grieving*, the acclaimed production from Brisbane's Kooemba Jdarra. Another intersection in *Character X* with Shelley Lasica, Carlee Mellow, Sandra Parker and Kylie Walters with composer Paul Schutze, visual artist Kathy Temin and architect Roger Wood. "Not voiceless drama but full-bodied, dramatic, refined oddity".

The Young Playwrights Festivals is replaced by *Making Performances 96*, a weekend of activities covering theatre creation of all kinds—plays, movement/dance theatre, music theatre, opera and musicals, performance art and all combinations thereof.

Footscray Community Arts Centre and Dog Theatre present *All the Helicopter Night*—storytelling on acid, featuring puppetry and live music. (Is viewing puppetry on acid a health hazard, I wonder?) Bharatam Dance Company present *The Nomad's Heart*, two concerts exploring Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, Maori, Italian and Middle Eastern influences directed by percussionist Alex Pertout and singer-songwriter Kavisha Mazella. In *Features of Blown Youth*, playwright Raimondo Cortese creates a work-in-progress over two weeks with 20 young performers culminating in a moved reading directed by Nico Lathouris. VCA students present *Traitors* by Stephen Sewell, directed by Grigori Ditiatkovski (resident actor/director with Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg), visiting artist of the School of

Drama, and *The Golden Age* by Louis Nowra directed by the School of Drama's new Head of Performance, Bruce Shapiro.

Free *Real Wild Child* concerts at the Vic Arts Centre include NT Reggae-rock-funk band *Wildwater*, hardedged *Paradise Motel*, hardcore *One Inch Punch* plus grunge grrls *Sourpuss*.

Spoken Word abounds in the Writers Program. Slaughterhouse and Howlings in the Head present Readings/Spoken Word Performances at Budinski's. Meanwhile, new writers from town and country perform fictions in *A Little Bit of Country* at La Mama. At *See Through Launch*, Neil Boyack and Simon Colvey launch their UQP short story collection featuring spoken word performances with live music and DJ. There's an exhibition exploring the history and current trends in pamphlet publication and distribution at the State Library. In *Raw*, seven New York spoken word artists are linked electronically to Next Wave.

There are some nice tie-ins. A special edition of *Overland* will publish writers under 30, edited by writing students from



John can jump  
Betty can jump



Betty can run  
John can run

Run Spot Run at ACCA

Victorian tertiary education institutions. ABC Radio will feature young writers in their regular profile, short play, poetry and 50 minute fictions spots. Writer Herb Wharton takes up residency in Healesville Sanctuary where he will conduct creative writing workshops. Meanwhile, five writers will inhabit the emotional hothouse (in Wagga?) of five airports across the country and run workshop with local writers, including secondary school students. There are workshops at the Victorian Writers Centre on Spoken Word, Science Fiction, Sports Journalism, Dirty Realism, Writings about and with Music, Writing for TV and radio, creating a fan-zine. *Writers Weekend* includes performances by writers Justine Ettler, Michael Foster, Edwina Preston, Ben Sibley and others. In *Electric Words* Antoni Jach gives an introduction to CD-ROM Literature. There's a forum on 'Fear and the Other' (Homophobia, Misogyny, Racism and the Writer); journalists discuss their writing; *Show and Tell* is an evening of spoken word, live bands and more live crosses to New York performers.

The Visual Arts Program picks up the collaborative thread. At ACCA, *Serial Kids* features a show by four Sydney College artists curated by Neil Emmerson. While in *Flower Show* David Chesworth, Noni Nixon, David Rosetzky create a human scale bouquet that plays at the borders of art and everyday life. In *First Floor* artists take on the idea of the Masterpiece. Three artists play a game of *Chinese Whispers* at the Chinese Museum. For *Working in Collaboration*, a series of eight exhibitions over four weeks, 30 artists have invited 2-4 non-artists to collaborate on the

construction of an exhibition over one week with successive groups using the previous installation as a basis for their own. *Hypertrophy* focuses on the invention and installation of hybridized gymnasium and sports equipment. In *Box*, the opening of boxes made from a variety of materials suggests other ways of thinking and doing. The exhibition (some other) solutions for a small planet is intended as an antidote to the particular set of cultural and historical norms that form the current definition of "technology".

*Chinoiserie* takes another look at the academic practice of making copies of original works of art. Greg Pryor and 16 students from Melbourne art institutions respond to Max Meldrum's *Chinoiserie* (1928). What will the copies reveal? In *Evolute* a group of printmaking graduates from University of New England explore the relationship between region and centre. 8 artists from Australia and NZ examine guess what? Failure? *Address* takes to the tiles of Spencer Street Subway—Platform 2 hosts the work of students from the Drawing Department of the VCA.

In a festival that looks from many angles at the role of institutions in the education of artists *See Spot Run* revisits the site of this pivotal text to see where all that running and jumping got Betty and John. *The Art Maker* features seven artists in an examination of the impact of technology on the role of art making. *Heirloom* curated by Natalie King unfurls historical images, the way they're re-used, how symbols are passed from one generation to the next. *The Third Art* at RMIT Union Theatre features four forums on the subject of Education and Contemporary Art in Australia.

*Artech 1996* brings together artist from across Australia and overseas who are working with new technologies: CD-ROM, artificial life, video surveillance, robotics, fax and photocopier combine with more familiar technologies like photography, painting and sculpture. The event incorporates *Perception and Perspective* an international exhibition by artists working with familiar as well as mindbending technologies at the Murdoch Gallery, NGV; *Be Your Best*, the Second New Wave Artech Symposium; and *Lumens 3* at the CCP in which Dan Armstrong, Marion Harper and James Verdon will explore the use of light and mixed photo media. *Nothing Natural* features work on technology and the biological imperative by, among others, Martine Corompt and Patricia Piccinini. At *Ruins in Reverse* an exhibition to launch the radically renovated RMIT Gallery, 13 artists (including Hewson/Walker, Callum Morton and Kathy Temin) present site-specific works which highlight the relationship between art, architecture and institutional space. And there's a Colour Laser Photocopy Workshop where you can explore the potential of digital colour copying guided by experienced artists.

The Music program *Sing Sing* is directed by David Bridie (Not Drowning Waving) and brings together musical cultures from across Australia, PNG and Torres Strait Islands celebrating the traditional and the contemporary. Ruby Hunter, Archie Roach, Frances Williams, TI Dance Troupe and the Kaiwosi PNG performance group are performing. Not Drowning Waving will reform for the duration of the project for



Shelley Lasica, Deanne Butterworth, Carlee Mellow and Sandra Parker in *Character X*  
Polly Borland

collaborations with Telek, Yothu Yindi drummer Ben Hailts and flautist/vocalist Pius Wasi (leader of the Kiawasi performance group). Musicians will be joined by choreographers, lighting, visual and sound designers. Contemporary and traditional dance will be a strong element.

This is an ingenious program, daringly digital, seething with hybrids, playful collaborations and confronting juxtapositions planned with careful consideration to the concerns of Australia's emerging artists.

**fish out of water**

A tale of violent exotica and a melting lemon meringue pie

written, conceived & performed by  
**Deborah Pollard**

music composed & performed by Margaret Bradley & Bahandi Koonoth

artistic consultant: Nigel Kollaway  
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# Identities with a vengeance

Brett Levine witnesses art as cultural negotiation at New Zealand's International Festival of the Arts

Spend any time at the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts in Wellington and you have to be aware of the subtexts. In this year's festival this means cultural politics with a vengeance. Not surprising, given that Maori make up more than ten percent of the population and that Auckland to the north is one of the largest Polynesian cities in the world. But understanding the uniquely New Zealand approach to negotiating differences requires more than knowing that diverse communities are being represented. What is more necessary is understanding how New Zealanders represent themselves in the international arena and who these New Zealanders are. Ten days at the Festival gave me a few insights.

Many events focussed closely on cultural identity. The Festival's only two specifically commissioned plays, Oscar Kightley and David Fane's *A Frigate Bird Sings*, and Hone Kouka's *Waiora*, highlighted the differences felt by Samoan and Maori communities in New Zealand today. *A Frigate Bird Sings* tells the complex story of Vili, a fa'afafine in Auckland. Now the easiest way to define fa'afafine is transvestite, but it is really much more. In Samoa it is a social and cultural role in which a male child, in families with no women, 'becomes' a woman. Transplant this traditional and culturally highly acceptable mode of living and being from Samoa to Auckland and imagine the implications. That the Festival

committee would commission the play, and that it would have such a positive impact on the theatre-going public suggests how ably Pacific Island cultures have adapted their cultural practices for New Zealand in the 90s.

Hone Kouka's *Waiora* is set in a sixties South Island town. It explores the loss of language, of family and of iwi through relocation and the desire—now being rejected—for assimilation into Pakeha society.

Kouka uses traditional Maori songs and dances and writes much of the dialogue in Maori to highlight Maori/Pakeha differences and to make bold statements concerning the effects of 'becoming Pakeha', a strategy adopted by urbanising Maori communities at the time but often rejected with vehemence both by children and subsequent generations. A New Zealand friend suggested that in the past, plays dealing strongly with cultural issues were usually found in the Fringe. *A Frigate Bird Sings* and *Waiora* show just how far visual cultural politics have shifted in the nineties.

Culturally specific visual arts exhibitions continued the approach of 'similar but different'. *Patua*, an

exhibition by contemporary Maori artists at the City Gallery, was a demonstration of primarily traditional arts practices. While tattooing, carving and weaving are one element of Maori visual arts, it was disturbing to find that *Patua* contained no non-traditional performance element, no multimedia, and no experimental film or video. Reading Wellington's *Sunday Star Times* it is possible to engage with the

current debates on Maori visual arts, but unfortunately these issues do not come under close scrutiny in any Festival exhibition. New Zealand artists of Chinese origin appeared in the *New China/New Zealand* exhibition, a display of installations by two New Zealand artists and photographs by artists from Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan. Here the question that wasn't asked was

'Why New Zealand Chinese installation artists when no one else in the exhibition is working in that way?'

Pacific Island artists also had separate exhibitions and Maori and Pacific Island artists had weeklong cultural spectacles, *Te Toka a Toi* and *Tu Fa'atasi* respectively. Again, traditional practices were key components.



*A Frigate Bird Sings*

## The art of the uncategorisable

Maryanne Lynch on the Brisbane Festival

Maree Cunningham is the Visual Arts Manager of the inaugural Brisbane Festival, August 30 to September 8, 1996. Her principal focus is on the creation of a new performance works program.

ML Tell me about your position within the Brisbane Festival, and about the festival more generally.

MC The Brisbane Festival was originally Warana, which had been around for 34 years. There was a lot of talk about Warana going down the gurgler, and at the last minute a liaison was developed with the Queensland Performing Arts Trust (QPAT), which actually saved the festival, I believe, because it took it in a new direction. Prior to this the festival had been totally free; the only major festival of its kind in Australia. Basically, the liaison means QPAT is creating hardtop events, most of which will be ticketed. At the same time there will be all of the community events that people have come to know and love. And, for the first time, a curated visual arts component.

That appointment has been quite crucial to the festival, I believe. It's copped a lot of flak in the past because of the landscapes-in-tents syndrome. Now there's an attempt to say 'Hey, we can incorporate a visual arts presence within what has been a performing arts festival'. The opportunity now is to be able to bridge the performing arts and the visual arts.

ML What's your role?

MC I've moved away from fixed exhibitions. I believe that some of the most exciting and vital work being done, not only in the visual arts but in performance, is happening from a visual arts basis. What that has done has been to open things up and create performance

situations that are not based on plays. So, I'm producing a program of new performance, which will span 4 days, in conjunction with the Institute of Modern Art.

ML Did you have a brief for your position, or have you had the freedom to develop this position yourself?

MC I had a brief initially. In fact I originally shared the job (with Shirley Powell), and we were brought on board to create an event in 2 months. That event, *Running with the Liberty Horse* (Warana, 1995), happened to have a substantial performing as well as performance art component to it—I interchange 'performance art' and 'live art' because I think that 'performance art' is a very difficult term—and prompted us to think about the connections between the two. That's the direction we kept moving in. I think that the more we can infiltrate public art with ephemeral work, work that's performative, and we can move people away from the idea that art has to be a fixed sculpture, the better.

ML So you're focusing on the performative aspects of visual arts, and the visual aspects of performance?

MC That's right. And that's not to create some sort of casserole where all the elements are dissipated. I would hate that to happen.

ML There wasn't a Performance Manager appointed?

MC There are people who are producing hardtop performance, drama, dance, fine music and popular music but no one else is encouraging cross-disciplinary practice.

ML I just wondered how much leeway you were being given, and how much direction?

MC I sound like a lone gun here but if I have a vision for something, I'll find the people to fulfil that. And if people come to me with their visions, then that's fabulous. I want to be there to facilitate the ideas being offered to me. I want to serve the artists as well as generate ideas.

ML How do you propose to do that?

MC I think that you have to do an enormous amount of groundwork. You've got to talk to lots of people, let them know you're absolutely open to whatever they want to present to you, and that whether they come with a finished concept and a budget or an idea, I am there to help them. The festival can provide financial support, materials, production costs, fees, so that the artist isn't in a position of walking away with nothing at the end of the day.

ML What's the budget?

MC The budget is 10 times our budget for last year. We're able within that to have a national component, a local component and to look at 3, possibly 4, different hardtop sites, as well as some outdoor ones. We wanted to have an international component, and it's possible that we can tap into the Asia-Pacific Triennial.

ML Is what you're organising regarded as the fringe of the festival?

MC That will probably be inevitable because it will showcase work that is challenging and provocative. However, I think that exciting ideas can actually create sponsorship.

ML How do you locate the direction you've

Writers and Readers Week, on the other hand, gave many New Zealand writers and poets the opportunity to position or reposition themselves locally and internationally. Allen Curnow, arguably New Zealand's greatest living poet and winner of a Commonwealth Poetry Prize, read from his collection *Continuum*. Bill Manhire, winner of a New Zealand Book Award, launched three books, one a collection of previously published small poetry volumes. Australian readers may have difficulty obtaining these books because distribution of New Zealand writing in Australia is limited. British writer Alan Hollinghurst joined New Zealanders Peter Wells, Renee, Annamarie Jagose and Witi Ihimaera on *The Wild(e) Ones* panel, the festival's first serious examination of queer lit. Panel members were divided on the marginalisation of gay and lesbian writers and the question of whether straights could write from a gay or lesbian perspective. All but one thought so. Interesting.

It seems clear that the Festival approaches subjects which would be too risky for many international arts events. Politics rears its ugly head not because it is an 'issue' or because the assembled guest list of international culturati are interested in 'the Maori problem' but because Maori/Pakeha relationships and their implications are what figure all exchanges—political, social, cultural and economic—in New Zealand today. So what might seem like a festival focussed on the national, and then more broadly the regional, is in fact a cultural negotiation and jockeying for position within fin de siècle New Zealand. And that, with all of the subtexts, can make for some compelling viewing.

taken within the broader festival context?

MC I think what will make or break this festival is vision and imaginative programming. So, if you are going to bring somebody who has the most fabulous reputation in a particular area, how can you use them in a new way? How can you recontextualise them? And I think that if that doesn't happen, we've got a very dull festival. This is the first year of the Brisbane Festival, with a very short timeline, and we cannot expect to create the perfect festival. But what we'll be striving for across the board, and I would hope that this would be the vision of the festival, would be to create new points of entry for people.

ML Who's your imagined audience?

MC Ideally a crossover audience from visual arts, theatre and music. Hopefully also a young audience who go to dance parties and clubs, but we'll have to take the work to them. One of the ways to get our audiences is to take the work out into the community because you'll only get a certain type of audience to the IMA. You'll only get a certain type of audience to clubs like Grand Orbit or the Roxy. That's the way it is. By taking the work out into the community, time-based pieces at specific or changing sites, the work has a greater opportunity of being seen. Some works would be absolutely dynamic away from their marginalised sites. Also, if the work utilises music, in particular popular music, that's the great carrier.

ML Is your position that all art is essentially performative, and so you've taken your brief and run with this idea?

MC I think that we really need to open up the whole idea of what performance is, and what visual arts is. We've seen great examples of that in this country—as well as the big luminaries overseas like Robert Wilson and Pina Bausch. These works and the most interesting work being done today in this country is truly uncategorisable.



# Yearning for the real thing

Zane Trow at a rare Melbourne performance event

With little break from the monotony of literary performance culture in Melbourne, the Dancehouse venue, offers the potential for change. Melbourne audiences flock to performance art whenever it is produced in the city. Melbourne Fringe's *New Short Works* used to offer a space for different work, and Modern Image Makers have also produced 'performance' evenings as part of *Experimenta*. There is always a good audience, diverse in age and demographics, hungry to see work that isn't just actors talking to each other under lights. So, *Expositions*, an evening of performance art co-ordinated by Ballarat-based artist Michael Cook at Dancehouse, offered a rare chance in Victoria to see something that wasn't just 'dance'. As usual, it looked like another full house.

I could not help noticing firstly the fact that the installation component of Cook's *Bringing Home the Gnomes* looked as if it was about to burn down. This seemed unintentional: resting hot light bulbs on linoleum is not wise. The installation itself became a prequel, almost, to the later performance.

In the meantime, Stelarc began the evening with a fully developed technique of amplified body and an excellent, simple and effective soundscape and lighting rig. Great shadows. Stelarc always has an air of positive malevolence, rather like a good Robert Fripp chord progression. Nothing here that we had not seen before in

Stelarc's work, but he has a genuine ability to twist time and space, and therefore the audience. He also had the professional courtesy to acknowledge his collaborator in sound Rainer Linz.

Next up, Lloyd Jones and Ragnar Purje. While better than some of the following performances, it was held back by bad mask work and some rather clichéd 70s imagery: sweeping the floor, throwing salt and raking it, passing out water to the audience, and an attempt at controlled tension drawn from Purje's martial arts technique. Enveloping white costumes seemed to annoy both of them, and subtle movement seemed difficult. The whole thing reminded me of the work of IOU/Welfare State in Europe circa 1976.

Julie Drysdale and the vocal ensemble UQ performed a "butoh/noh influenced" work. Nothing happened. The voices sounded like any first year acting student's voice warm up. Drysdale did all the classic stuff: the slow motion, the meaningful look. The beginning of the work had everyone rolling around in black bags growling. Yoko Ono it was not!

Ray Woolard is a Ballarat visual artist, "returning to performance after a long absence". *Powerglove Honeybear* referenced both Stelarc and Goji Hamada in the dismally small program notes provided to Dancehouse's summer newsletter. In performance Woolard paid homage to Beuys: a foolish, off-hand

intensity, with no deference to theatre at all. He also wore masks, but completely unpretentiously. He scratched a treated violin. He carefully unscrewed a box containing small teddy bear, he filled it with honey, he screwed it back up again, he showed it to us. He scratched some more violin. He put a chocolate easter bunny on a stick, held it towards us and shouted "Homage to Joseph Beuys!!". Then he went home. The real thing: simple, precise, humorous, and dangerously elegant.

Michael Cook concluded the evening with *Bringing Home the Gnomes*, a surrealist fantasy. Covered in ceramic hands and wet fish he moved in a deliberately hesitant jiggle accompanied by hand scratched vinyl and live percussion from two unnamed collaborators. His character was sustained through body precision far more effectively than Jones and Purje, but it was too long. We all knew he was going to smash that table full of garden gnomes, and he did. Then he got the strobe light going for a while and then he let off a nautical flare, covering the ceiling with hanging smoke and adding to the transformation of the space. Perhaps he did mean to burn the linoleum. It worked, and the image of his gentle jiggling will stay with me.

In the end Stelarc and Woolard stood out as artists not simply performing for the sake of something to do. Surprisingly for Melbourne there were no strong women artists here, no one with the technique of

an Orr, Traill or Sproul. Did Cook ask them? Further, if the evening had a curatorial premise it was not evident. There was no information to hand, no acknowledgment of others involved, nothing. If resources were thin surely just a photocopied sheet would have done.

Some performance artists are now embarrassed to use the term, feeling it has been usurped by pretenders. *Expositions* had both the authentic and the pretend, and the difference was clear to see. I hope that the artists who know what the term 'performance art' can mean will re-claim their ground soon. Of course, this is complicated by Melbourne not having a PICA or a Performance Space. However it does have an audience, and options must be developed for the betterment of Melbourne based independent performance work. From this may also develop a critical debate that will hone the work. All power to Dancehouse if it becomes the site for such a process.

*Expositions—An Evening of Performance Art, curated by Michael Cook, Dancehouse, Melbourne, 8pm, 24 February. Michael Cook, Bringing Home the Gnomes, Julie Drysdale with UQ, Dance with the Moon Seas, Lloyd Jones & Ragnar Purje. White on Black; Kath Pengelly, Objects In The Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear; Stelarc, Zone of Erasure—Absent Body/Elapsed Desire; Ray Woolard, Powerglove Honeybear*

*Zane Trow is a composer/performer and currently Artistic Director of the Next Wave Festival and Chair of the Contemporary Music Events Company.*

Synthia is in trouble. In trouble with her parents, in trouble with her teachers. In trouble with the law. A few of her friends are pissing her off as well. Cynthia is a teenager with a 'fuck you' attitude to anyone who tries to understand her. She takes drugs, has sex (well, she snogs a fair bit) and knocks stuff off on a whim. Cynthia is angry—with everything, with everyone, especially herself. She would rather be anywhere but where she is. But she's stuck in the maze.

Like Cynthia's world, Canberra Youth Theatre's *The Maze* is bleak and uncompromising. It's also a slick, well-crafted piece of theatre; an articulate and provocative interrogation of the complex issues facing adolescents. The work doesn't judge nor does it provide answers. But the questions put by these young artists demand our attention. Their performances are powerful and committed. Greg Lissaman has directed a tight ensemble work (design by Stuart Vaskess and soundscape by Lea Collins) and Niamh Kearney's text (winner of the 1994 National Young Playwrights Competition) is gritty, poetic and at times, very moving. Structurally, I felt the work collapsed a little towards the end; a narcotic dreamlike sequence which was unnecessarily repetitive and shapeless could have stood some cutting. And I thought at times, the performances were pushed and somewhat uncomfortable. Small criticisms really. Canberra Youth Theatre have created a polished theatrical work that is tough and challenging. Jai McHenry

Canberra audiences have an opportunity to re-enter *The Maze*. CYT presents three performances this month and there are plans to tour to Melbourne.

*The Maze* photo by Tanya Hart



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# Rococo/Zen

Roland Manderson worries at Splinter's *Mysteries* in Canberra

*Mysteries* has been touted as a step forward for Splinters, Canberra's home-grown theatre of spectacle, as a move, or return, to the theatre stage. Adapted from the famous Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun's novel of the same name, *Mysteries* was produced and directed by Patrick Troy, with Peter Haynes as dramaturg and Nigel Kellaway as choreographer.

*Mysteries* boasted a large, enthusiastic and disciplined cast featuring Virginia Anderson, Bradley Barnett, David Branson, Catherine Hassall, Nigel Kellaway, Jai McHenry, Renald Navilly, Anna Reeves, Rebecca Rutter, Ian Sinclair, Jessie Tucker and Tim Wood. Rich turn of the century costumes created by Imogen Keen, the quirky set by Stuart Vaskess, Gerard Murphy and Kauru Alfonso, and evocative lights and music by Ivan Smith and Kevin White respectively. All spoke of a substantial endeavour. It's a rare thing that so many professional theatre workers can come together on the one piece, and Splinters should be congratulated for making it possible.

*Mysteries* began as a satisfying spread of dressed-up, intense and obsessive characters; detailed and glowing like an oil painting in a world filled with surreal furniture, hanging artefacts and distorted perspective. Bourgeois rococo? David Branson as the very central character Johan Nagel, in a terrific yellow suit,



Renald Navilly rehearsing *Mysteries*

arrived via the audience, and in the process described or invented his rationale for arriving, his view of everything and everyone, his regard for himself. Nagel was a fascinating disturbance for this already disturbed village. I was waiting for it all to happen.

And things did happen. But the parts were greater than the whole. Nagel impressing, pontificating, charming and deceiving everyone in an atmosphere of distorted strings, and menacing gloom. The

well dressed middle class, variously vibrating or sighing on the same breath as they competed with each other. Nigel Kellaway's capering, grovelling, live wire creation of the dwarf, Johannes Grogard, seemingly obliged to the glad handing outsider. Renald Navilly's angular, precise and comic self importance as the steward and Ian Sinclair's smugly beaming boorish doctor, both at work on being important. Catherine Hassall as an ex-lover comically abusing Nagel. A host of slowly moving umbrellas creating suspense and foreboding. Virginia Anderson's Dagny Kielland, full of flighty distress, and reluctant passion and fascination for Nagel's egocentric generosity. And best of all, Jai McHenry's dignified and vulnerable Martha Gude, with Nagel's bizarre and irrational enthusiasms. It was an interesting village when I think of it now.

For the audience on opening night however, *Mysteries* remained a mystery. Notes in the program told us it was chosen for its "timeless beauty, its raw power and its accurate depiction of the human condition". At the time, however, while the play was entertaining, tiring and confusing in turn, there was nothing within it that could affect us in this way. It seemed to be about a lot of people who were full of themselves, in a village by the sea.

I know that *Mysteries* is the story of Nagel. He arrives full of bullshit, upsets the repressed apple carts of small town life and then discovers there is nothing inside himself when, due to circumstances, he is forced to look. And that's the heart of it. What could be a more appropriate message for a piece of theatre of our time? Especially in Canberra. Especially from

Splinters. But I didn't get that when I saw the play. There was too much furniture removal during the performance, too many words by far, too many quivering responses and slow zen-like walks that, whilst very focussed, powerful or funny, had no cumulative significance. More is not necessarily good. In their pursuit of a theatrical style Patrick Troy and team didn't make choices that would deliver the disturbing emptiness which *Mysteries* could have been about.

If *Mysteries* stayed in repertoire for five or ten years it might become a great show. But ensembles in our time depend on people working for nothing, investing their own time, and hanging around. And they won't hang around forever. Splinters have had an ensemble of sorts thanks to the core group's commitment to working together, because they engage skilled professionals from across Australia, and through their variously praised and maligned capacity to incorporate and enlist the commitment and energy of a changing crowd of young associates. That's an achievement, a luxury and an asset.

More than ever, I want Splinters to use that asset. To find something to say and think it through, before this continual investment of ideas and energy just tires them, as well as us, right out.

Roland Manderson is the artistic director of Canberra Youth Theatre.

## Book review

### Getting into the Act:

*Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829*  
Ellen Donkin, Routledge 1994

In his play *The Female Dramatist* (1782) George Colman the Younger's central character, Madame Metaphor, is to be cured of her passion for writing by a young nephew: "You shall see me transform her into a downright housewife—and by a Single Stroke of my Art, turn her pen into a Needle, and her Tragedies into thread papers." Donkin's study of women playwrights in Restoration London has many salutary lessons for today's women writers, for not only are there very real structural and economic obstacles which prevent women becoming playwrights but all the dealings of women with the theatre are inflected by the intricacies of gender. Whether it is the disapproval of a professional father in the case of Frances Burney, or the outright obstruction by the theatrical manager Garrick of the independent Frances Brooke contrasted with Hannah More and Hannah Cowley's dependency on Garrick's patronage which make them both vulnerable to charges of plagiarism; a savaging of Joanna Baillie's own critical stance at the hands of newly powerful male critics, the sexually compromised but

determined success of Elizabeth Inchbald undermined by successive biographers, or the repeated rejection of manuscripts by Sophie Lee until their anonymous submission, in all these instances none of the scenarios are unfamiliar. They are well documented in the recent Australian publication of Playworks' *Playing with Time*: covering a decade of Australian women's writing for performance (1985-1995).

What distinguishes this collection of case studies is Donkin's attentive analysis of the conditions of production within which these women attempted to become playwrights - what is critical is not just that women wrote but that they had opportunities to be involved in all stages of the production of their work. Because playwrighting is a collaborative and public art form, prevailing ideologies and patterns of gender prevented them from developing professional networks, participating in rehearsal processes, supporting each other or legitimately contributing to debates about the art of writing itself. Donkin's book, without being dogmatic or narrowly historical, is a lively exposition of the 'undesirable appetites' of those women who want to author action on the stage. RF

## Autonomy and opportunity

On Pitt Street, opposite Sydney's Central Station you'll find the Actors College of Theatre and Television based in the buzzing St Laurence Arts Centre, home of the Sydney Youth Orchestra and the One Extra Company (its future now in doubt with the recent resignations of artistic directors Graeme Watson and Julie Anne Long). The thriving college is a private institution enjoying a recently announced N.S.W. government contract which will pay for a group of students to take on the College's full-time Performance Skills course. College director Lesley Watson says, "For the first time, people will be able to study here and have their tuition fees paid by the government in the same way as those studying at NIDA or TAFE". Watson thinks that this accreditation will have the additional benefit of achieving a higher level of recognition for the college's graduates. As far as she knows, says Watson, the Actors College is the first independent acting school to achieve this kind of support for students who otherwise couldn't afford tuition fees. It will create twenty additional places for a one year intensive course with selection for positions focused on students who already have some background in performance. It's a foundation certificate course in performance skills with a strong physical base. After the course, the students can opt for an additional year's training to gain their diploma. Watson says that over and above rigorous acting training, the College's great strength is in teaching its students through proposal development and practical activity to create autonomous theatre projects. As for the future, Watson hopes that this first one-off government contract sets a precedent for more. *Actors College of Theatre and Television* 02 212 6000 RT



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# Accessing the performing body

Julia Postle looks into Brisbane's Vulcana Women's Circus and the Hereford Sisters

The two groups that feature in this account share performance space in many ways: here, in my narration and reflections and, more significantly, in their common motivation to empower young women through physical activity. Both emerged within a year of each other and were the initiatives of spirited women committed to providing an avenue for the training and encouragement of female artists. Both manifest a respect for and valuing of women's experiences, feelings, and related women's issues, and both are Brisbane-based. It is because of these connections that the Hereford Sisters and Vulcana Women's Circus are considered here alongside (and in between and around) one another.

The Hereford Sisters began in 1993 through the then La Boite Youth Arts, now Backbone. Susan Ritcher grabbed the reigns and launched the process as she prefers to call it. A national survey conducted by the Gender Equity unit of the Queensland Department of Education in 1992 had revealed what many may have considered self-evident; that even though the majority of students participating in the arts in secondary schools and at a tertiary level were girls, in terms of employment, women weren't generally well-represented in the decision-making positions of management and control. Ritcher wanted to provide a means for young women to occupy those positions, instead of just doing the advocating, voluntary, and more low-profile work. In other words, she wanted employment in the arts to reflect the results of that survey. And so the Herefords were born.

Vulcana Women's Circus had a less explicit rationale. Antonella Casella, who

had performed with Rock 'n' Roll Circus and Street Arts, decided with Kareena Oates in 1994 to run circus classes. They proved phenomenally successful. Casella and Oates both considered circus a particularly expressive medium, but also recognised that there was a shortage of trained women in the industry. The enthusiastic response to the classes revealed that there were a lot of young women in Brisbane, from a variety of backgrounds, who were not only interested in the physicality of the circus but also the potential of the medium for exploring gendered performance. Essentially, then, the Herefords and Vulcana both manifest, from their inception, a validation of women's experiences and a celebration of women's presence in theatre; a presence which in these instances interrogates and challenges patriarchal representations of the performative female body.

At the first Vulcana training session for this year, Antonella leads the performers through a rigorous warm-up, followed by successive tumbles and balances. She is a highly skilled, strong and assertive artist, and as a teacher shows obvious respect for each individual; a quality which probably stems from her performance background. There's a sense of comfort and easiness to the group, despite the fact that they are rehearsing for the first time in a largely unfamiliar space—the Paint Factory—which is atmospherically miles away from the loved and lost Princess Theatre. Watching two women rehearsing their repertoire of balances, I am mesmerised by the fluid transitions between each seemingly precarious stasis, and the risk transcended by the fun they are having. The weight-

bearer is older; an experienced street and circus performer. Her partner is still at school but has similar performance ambitions. She throws herself into a difficult manoeuvre, balanced above the stronger woman momentarily and then turning rapidly to slide down her back for a dramatic landing. They can't get it quite right, and keep repeating the sequence of movements. Antonella supervises.

From my position as observer, the events seem to embody the spirit of the group; novice or veteran, every individual has the ability to master the skills to perform, and through the process of training, learning and sharing in a non-competitive environment comes possible—even probable—self-empowerment. But this is not necessarily celebratory 'all Woman' theatre of the earth mother, goddess, or wild woman; Vulcana is more a physical process which concentrates on women's experiences, and at the same time is neither unquestioning nor separatist in its philosophy.

This is an aspect also reflected in the Herefords' development. In their initial workshops, they examined different cultural rites of initiation and passage for young women, including initiations into feminism and the distance between academic and 'everyday' feminism, and also a perceived generational distance between older and young feminists. The physical theatre incorporated issues such as how girls occupy space, or how they are conditioned to (not) take up space as well as how women are represented in the mass media. Theory and practice were consolidated, in the sense that feminisms were accessed and interrogated through performance. Later there was *After Dark*, a

collaboration with SnotArts—a youth community cultural development organisation. Part of this cultural project was an exploration with several young Murri dancers, looking at issues for young women after dark.

Their most recent work, *Love My Arsenal: Young women, romance and weaponry*, significantly extended the Herefords' skills development. They worked with Wild Women—a group of young women with intellectual disabilities—under Susan Ritcher's artistic direction. Nik Hills from Expressions Dance Company shared movement skills and ideas, Antonella Casella extended their physical skills in a different direction, the Dream Poppies assisted in their musical development, Louise Gough worked with them as dramaturg. The Herefords gained a full understanding of these various forms and processes, including video and design, in keeping with Ritcher's incentive to provide young women with personal, practical skills to enter into the arts industry.

Since then the Herefords have moved into new stages, with the more experienced performers breaking off to establish their own framework for further exploration, called Glued. And as Glued has been formed, new young women have entered into the Hereford Sisters' process, with Louise Hollingworth and Backbone. At the same time, Vulcana is sharpening its focus to extend their community development wing; exploring the issue of young women and body image with women in the suburb Logan, as well as continuing the more skills-based vocational training. What seems obvious about both processes is their realisation of a need for increased attention, opportunities, training and support for young women in the arts. It will be interesting to follow their development and further impact upon the arts community here, for they have already enabled young women to move confidently out of/away from the traditional private sphere and into the public performative sphere.



Ross Bird

*Spitfire 1 2 3* "Despite great changes towards a more multicultural Australia, representations of the sensual and sexuality remain firmly Anglo Saxon. Over six years I am creating a series of works that focus on sensual immediacy and a sexual openness—an 'undoing' of sexual selection as Darwin described it."

Lyndal Jones' series of performances, video works, installations, films and sound works *From the Darwin Translations* began with the haunting *Room With Finches* (film, slides, sound and live finches) at the 1994 Adelaide Festival. The work later toured to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and to Banff in Canada where Lyndal was artist in residence. Second in the series, *Sexual Play in the Galapagos Islands*, a performance involving a room full of kissing couples and a three-monitor video work, was shown at the Canberra School of Art. Some of the everyday erotic fantasies featured in the radio adaptation last year on the ABC steamed up the windows of *The Listening Room*, and provoked a controversy that reached federal parliament. Predictably the accusations that were made were not about Jones' thesis (though, of course, they confirm its tenets), rather they invoked the threat of censorship. (Odd, then, to hear Senators Lee and, especially, Alston at the pre-election arts non-debate at the Museum

of Contemporary Art both deny any knowledge of the current wave of censoriousness and censorship despite considerable prodding from *Arts Today's* David Marr.)

Lyndal Jones is now presenting part 3 of the Darwin series in a new multimedia performance *Spitfire 1 2 3* at the Lonsdale Street Power Station, South Melbourne. The work features a set of interconnecting performances in four rooms and each performance incorporates three types of spitfire (the plane, the fiery woman and the fighting cat). Why Spitfires?

"An old family friend was a Spitfire pilot during WW2. There has always been enormous glamour surrounding him because he once flew Spitfires. He is now an embittered man whose life he regards as destroyed by that time between 19 and 24 when he spent 200 hours in the air shooting at people and avoiding bullets. The second reference is the one applied historically to a young woman with fiery temper (usually with long red hair). The third is to cats hissing or spitting, a reference to the natural world and animal sexuality.

"As a feminist I'm concerned that women need now to be free to voice the complexities of our sexual desires and fantasies. I also take personal delight in evoking a world that is in movement, where the viewer is implicated, involved, rather than witness, thus also experiences moving, a sense of the textural, of the intimacy of closeness, of 'dancing.'"

*Spitfire 1 2 3* features performers Deanne Flatley, Rhys Muldoon, Helen Hopkins, Milana Zirojevic, Bori Rotar, Jadja Costich, dancer Shelley Lasica, electronic guitarist Michael Sheridan with music by David Chesvorth and lighting by Margie Medlin. April 10-27. Information: 03-9685 5111



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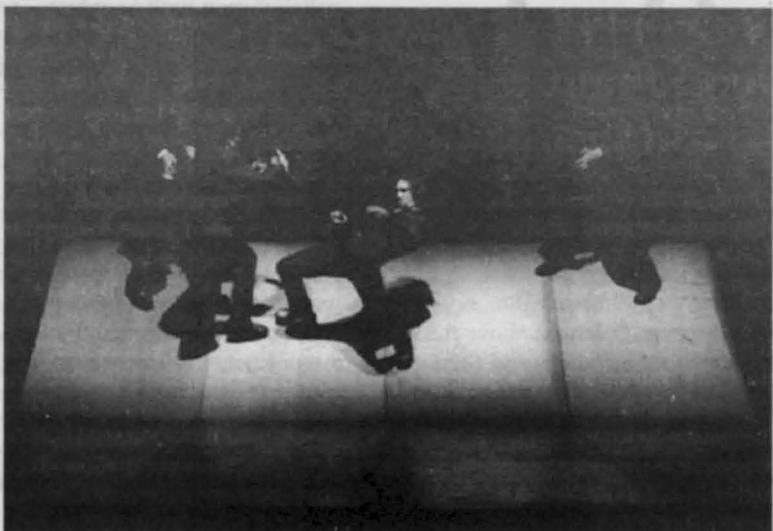
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Dave V

A man in a suit stands in The Performance Space courtyard—pink plastic sheets flapping about us—head bowed, moaning, muttering, beating his chest, a sad slow mea culpa. The object of his passionate grieving—an outsize door hovering above a neon glow just above the concrete floor. Another man in a suit enters sombrely with a monstrous trolley and gently wheels the door into the theatre, taking us with him into a closed world of men and doors, doors they dance with alone and in chorus, bury themselves in and under, doors they build with, doors they cherish and punish themselves with, control and lose control of. The world of order, of door twirling and risky manipulation, becomes pure contingency directly frightening and threatening the men and their audience. The doors live or are subject to some force beyond men.

*In the House of Skin* opens out many meanings, but in the world of ABC TV's *Naked*, Robert Gibson's *Video Fool for Love* and the masculine dimension of the Adelaide Festival, the performance resonates with male displacement of desire into the inanimate (timber, tools), the challenge of giving life to the barely malleable, the pleasures of construction...the humiliation of defeat. It's a humbling vision in which the performers turn endurance to grace.

Gravity Feed have developed astonishingly over four brief years, revealing again the power of training, of ensemble (Ari Ehrlich, Denis Beaubois, Tim Rushton, Jeff Stein, Alan Schacher) and of the collaborative team. Rik Rue's sound is an integral part of the company's work, a persistent sensual flow and an array of alarming motifs that the composer activates for each performance. Simon Wise's lighting matches the almost Japanese purity of design and lights the performers warmly instead of the conventionally expected expressionist glare. Artistic director Alan Schacher's persistence and vision for Gravity Feed have come to fruition in design and in performance. The significant silent partner, Schacher acknowledges, is performer and teacher of law William McClure working as assistant director, providing Schacher with the essential outside eye, pushing the lighting and the movement to a new level of cohesion and power.

For our own pleasure and Gravity Feed's great promise, we should all beg for a return season of *In the House of Skin*, not just to see it again, but to allow it to mature, for the choreography to complete itself, for the moments of simultaneous performance to find their mutual rhythms, to allow some solos not to look like covers for construction activity elsewhere. Gravity Feed have reached their apotheosis...and they're just beginning. Demand to see them. Gravity Feed, *In the House of Skin*, The Performance Space, Sydney, March 16-31

KG



Robert McFarlane

Sidetrack Performance Group's *Plane Truth* is strikingly site specific—a performance about the nightmare politics of flight paths produced in the company's Studio Theatre beneath a thundering flight path across Marrickville. Director Don Mamouny makes two intriguing observations, the first that this work is a synthesis of early (socially committed) and late Sidetrack (contemporary performance, the politics of theatre); the second that *Plane Truth* pays witness to "the death of

democracy" in Australia—the work "a comic requiem for democracy". Public protest and political lobbying have come to nothing over the flight path issue. Drawing on theorist Paul Virilio, Mamouny observes that the construction of the third runway was run like a military campaign—with the inevitable casualties. Mamouny even sympathises, to a degree, with the helplessness of politicians given the scale of the issues and what democracy has been subjected to—a massive public relations campaign that promoted tourism needs and discredited any opposition whatsoever. The campaign, initiated by the Greiner government, was taken up by the tourism industry, the airlines and related industries not only overriding democracy but discrediting it and people's suffering—90 decibels of noise was promoted as normal for living in the inner city. *Plane Truth*, says Mamouny, will be a shock, but a pleasant one with 'hard edged humour', a multimedia performance with a big cast, 'a comic requiem'. Protest with a smile? Hope?

KG



Corrie Anconé

## When you don't know what to say

Death Defying Theatre's *Noroc!* is a work created by five Australian artists. Aida Amirkhanian is a dancer and movement artist born in Armenia, who worked with Bejart in France and for thirteen years in Australia with companies such as Human Veins and in her own solo works. She speaks four languages. Terese Casu is a

physical performer with a circus background (Flying Fruitfly Circus, Circus Oz) who followed her interest in percussion to Africa and has recently begun to trace her Romanian heritage. Deborah Leiser is a movement artist who has worked independently and with Entr'acte. Her Jewish background took her to Israel to find 'home'. Back home in Australia she is drawn to and torn by the traditions of Jewish culture. Michelle St Anne is a relative newcomer to performance. She is Australian born but is often misread as an outsider because of her colour. Her father is Indian-Portuguese. Her mother is Indian-born but Michelle doesn't speak Hindi. Tanya Gerstle's background is in both text and non-text performance with an emphasis on cross art-form collaborations with companies like Sidetrack. She is Australian born and worked for a long time in Europe. The lives of these artists and all their languages (verbal, cultural, psychological and performative) and the gaps between them are the material of *Noroc!* (an all purpose Romanian word for hello, goodbye, cheers and when you don't know what to say). "What we've come up with", says director Tanya Gerstle, "is four individual journeys which from time to time synchronise. I chose the performers for their ability to combine forms, to be lateral and literal, because I wanted to create a work that gave equal place to all performance languages. The process has not been easy by any means. Working together we've encountered all the problems in communication that you would expect from such diversity. Hopefully, we've come up with a creation which represents the reality of that experience".

Each performer's journey navigates the theatre space (from proscenium to audience and the perimeter). There is space for interaction. Spoken sections are sometimes improvised. The work is based on the experience of the performers and the texts (physical and vocal) are written by them. Tanya Gerstle has helped to shape a landscape, a dream and memory space in which performers can dialogue with the audience and in which there are opportunities for their trajectories to intersect. "To some degree, all of us are lost in translation". The atmosphere is enhanced by a soundscape of voices, music and sounds by Liberty Kerr and design by Pierre Thibaudau using screens, projections and broken glass. Opening at The Performance Space April 3 and touring to Newcastle University and University of Western Sydney in April.

VB



Lyn Pool

*Kagome, kagome*  
the bird in the cage  
when will it meet/escape?  
the sun rises at midnight  
the crane and the tortoise slip.  
who is in front of behind?

Nadoya is a music and dance ensemble working in Melbourne since 1993. Musicians Peter Neville (percussion), Satsuki Odamura (koto/string instruments), Anne Norman (shakuhachi/wind instruments) and dancer/choreographers Yumi Umiumare, Tony Yap, Lynne Santos with Michael Hewes (bass guitar/interactive sound) are presenting a new work in May at Theatreworks. *Kagome*, is a theatre/dance/music/techno work involving both set and improvisational elements. In the creative process musicians and dancers collaborate continuously to generate the performance material using improvisation as the starting point. The roles of 'musician' and 'dancer' overlap—dancers use vocal sounding and musicians use spatial movement and physical interaction.

Historically 'Kagome' was the name given to a shamanistic ritual chant in a ceremony to communicate with God. Over time, it became a children's song. The lyrics are ambiguous and refer to a time when the gate to the supernatural world opens. In researching *Kagome*, Nadoya explores the world of children and their perception of God. 'Kago' is the Japanese word for woven basket and one kind of weaving is said to act as an amulet against evil. The visual image of the cage will be used as that which both imprisons and protects. A fear of the unknown permeates the performance language. 'Me' is the Japanese word for 'woman' so on another level the work follows the rites of passage of the female. *Kagome* opens at Theatreworks May 16. Season runs till May 25.

RT

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# Radio beaming

Rachel Fensham interviews Hybrid Arts Fellow Margaret Traill

Melbourne artist Margaret Traill, the first Hybrid Arts Fellow of the ABC (jointly funded by the ABC and the Australia Council), has just spent six months attached to The Listening Room. She chose to spend her time writing and producing a contemporary radio drama which went to air on 26 February as *Beaming Jesus to the Planet of Death*.

In the genre of cybermystery *Beaming Jesus* involved twelve actors around a microphone simulating life and death in the virtual spaces of a computer, an office, the heavens and a beach. After listening to this somewhat anarchic reconstruction of the Last Supper through sound, Rachel Fensham talked with Margaret about the project.

RF All of us make stories, but I was struck by the narrative flow of your tape.

MT I find myself adrift in work that is not structured in a narrative sense. So, I used the fellowship to learn about stories, in particular those from the Gospels. They are fantastic—fast-moving, so much going on. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are basically four different ways of telling the same story, sometimes they contradict each other and sometimes they create new stories.

There are no laborious transitions. They say, "...and then the sky became dark", "...and then the heavens parted", "...and then Christ was transfigured". I tried to keep as light as that in my narrative, encouraging the actors to go with it as well. I wanted them to assume that you can slip between worlds at once.

RF How does that form of storytelling connect with your script?

MT Recent science fiction has multiple narratives progressing at the same time. And cyberspace has been increasingly identified as a means of moving between worlds. Radio is a voice that slips between worlds, coming from somewhere into your living room...or into your walkman, some private space somewhere. It can be a voice of comfort or separation. When radio first began, the idea that you might hear the voices of dead people or that aliens might seize the airwaves was perceived as demonic. Today it seems cosy and dated and the net instead functions as the metaphor for our fears or desires. The disembodied voice, whether it comes from the radio or appears on your screen in aski text, can also reach out and comfort you, or underline your alienation.

I think these things correlate with our search through technological means for God. NASA used to send probes into space looking for intelligent life, and now the image of the web or the net seems to provide that same desire for meaning.

RF How else did you structure the script?

MT There were link moments mid-scene—"...said the Moon" or "Jesus stutters..."—in which different narrators appeared. There was also an interplay with scenes moving through time from present to flash-back and towards a future as well as into the different worlds of the story, the computer environment, which may or may not be a digital environment, may or may not be the dream world of the dead, the office, or the beach. Each of these worlds had its own set of rules and I kept ladling detail into them and looking at how one could move between them.

RF Why this Jesus story?

MT I wasn't brought up as a church-going person and wasn't familiar with the Bible

but I think it contains myths of great importance to our culture that are embedded in the Western psyche. It is a fruitful store of images and stories for reflection. I had to dispense with gender and difficult distinctions between the sheep-like followers and the Christ-like individual leader. I made Jesus one of the team and fairly fallible. I also got rid of the combative distinctions between good and evil.

But if you change the power and gender relationships there remains an extraordinary human story. Everything goes wrong, there is every indication that Jesus loses it badly in the last few days. My theory on the raising of Lazarus is that he acts out of fear and brings Lazarus back as a test of his own faith. The disciples were quite confused by this act and the Pharisees said, "This has gone too far, he has got to go". You can see it as a mistake, "Let's hope we can bring him back and that there is a soul we can resurrect". Jesus' faith is really tested; he says to the disciples "Just stay awake for an hour" and they all fall asleep. All this human crisis is the interest of the story and I wasn't interested in the Resurrection.

RF Okay, but why in relation to the technological myths of the present?

MT In science fiction writing, which is the place where the virtual world is being imagined and to which with extraordinary faithfulness we seem to turn, there seems to be a lack of morality and seriousness in dealing with ethical problems. We do that in the sphere of religion, even though it is completely devalued in our dominant culture. I believe we suppress it at our own peril.

There is every indication that if you believe life comprises what the rational mind can perceive and what your senses experience as pleasures, that you will leave aspects of the self submerged which might cause you damage. On a cultural scale, it is also important to be engaging with moral questions and giving value to the irrational and the unconscious.

RF So we need some other world?

MT In a culture which has turned its back on Christian narratives to explain the appearance of technological worlds, perhaps I am saying clumsily, remember these? These gawky somewhat irrelevant images of the angels, the monsters, the poisons and the heavens, remember them?

RF That is different from the Eastern metaphysics which many other performance artists take up.

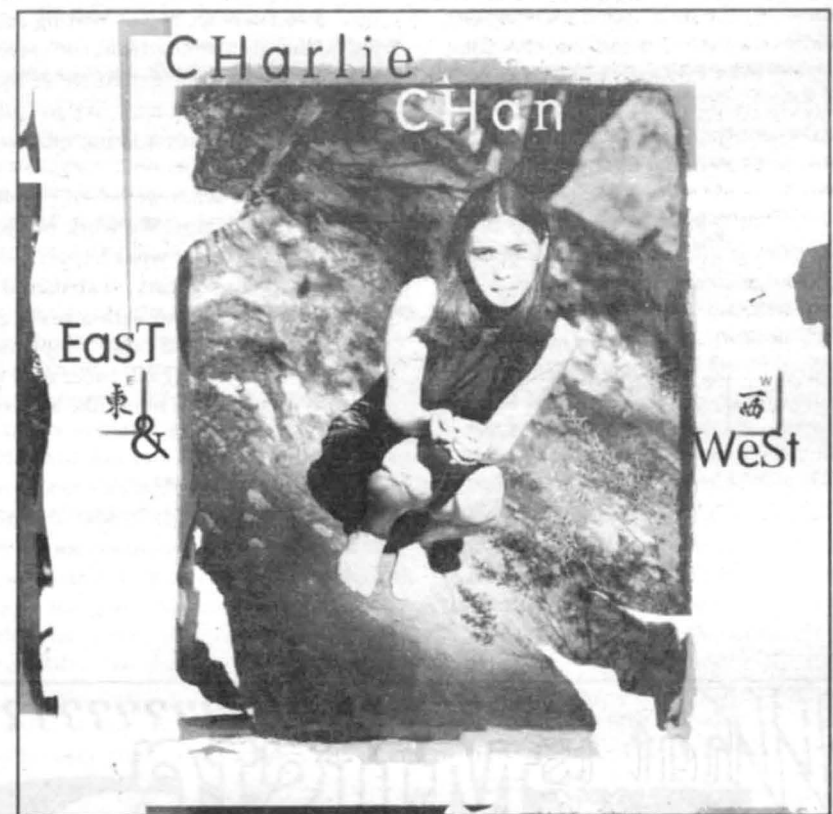
MT Of course, and these realms are hugely problematic, but I have been surprised—I mean people were worried when I locked myself in my room with pictures of Jesus and the little lambs and Mary all around the computer—at the amount of positive interest I have received from people about these stories. They deal with the agonising fact of being in a mortal body in a world in which everything changes. How do you get through when you lose everything? Whilst you can't condone the politics, they are the difficult and fundamental human questions.

RF So, where to now?

MT I was absolutely empty when I finished but I am starting to think about an installation which relates to images of navigation and the stars. It would be a shame if cyberspace became the only possible metaphor for other worlds and the favoured point of entry remained through the screen and fingertips.

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# Serious pop strings

Nicholas Gebhardt interviews Sydney's electric string quartet Fourplay

With the Beatles once again charting, the time seems right for a young string quartet, electric by nature, to step in and turn things around; to take on both the power of the quartet as the archetypal western musical formation and, recently, as the ultimate point of cross over between classical music and the pop scene. From band competitions to the Byron Bay Festival to supporting Ute, violinist Lara Goodridge, viola players Tim Hollo and Chris Emerson and cello player Peter Hollo, are carving out an unusual corner that ties in the general shift towards the dissolution of formal musical categories with an uncanny sense of the absurd. The latest addition to the world of electrified string quartets, Fourplay have leapt into pop music as the only string quartet with two violas that cover a Jeff Buckley song and play a Ross Edwards piece in the same set, hoping to mark out a different kind of musical event that swings as much as it swoons, jams as much as it jokes.

NG: *There are a lot of covers bands out there boring us all to tears, what can a string quartet do about this?*

PH: We listen to a lot of pop music and alternative music, it's what we listen to on the radio and go out and buy, and being

musicians we wanted to play that sort of stuff, but being string instrumentalists we had to invent a different form. And although we are not a Kronos or a Brodsky or a Balanescu quartet, there was probably some initiative from the things that these groups have done.

TH: One of the things we have in common is that we are trying to get the pop and alternative audience to listen to classical music and the classical audience to listen to pop music, because both have a lot to offer but unfortunately a lot of people think there is a distinct line between them, which there just isn't, at least not any more.

PH: We are actually trying to create our own direction. We're not writing art rock music but are coming from the classical field and so to some extent we've made it up as we've gone along. I like to call Fourplay a band not a string quartet.

LG: I suppose what we haven't done yet as a band is really jam. We work out parts, which is not always what happens in a band where a song gets created, and then you jam and come up with a really great part and it sticks and other people don't play the same thing each time. And we actually work much more like a classical

quartet with quite formal arrangements.

PH: We want to keep the sense of the quartet, but at the same time it ends up being a bit like a band. We've got the rhythm elements in that the cello acts as the bass and the drums and sometimes there are percussive effects in the viola. Or the violas generally play guitar solos or one of the instruments plays the voice. So we're really impressing the structure of a fairly straightforward rock group onto a string quartet.

NG: *At some point, the novelty of playing "Metallica" or "Purple Haze" becomes a parody of itself?*

LG: It's got a novelty thing about it, obviously. That's why I think the contemporary classical compositions are really interesting, the things people haven't heard, instead of it just being a covers band.

TH: We've never intended to be a covers band, but it sort of happened that way. Each time we had to increase our repertoire, like with the Byron Festival, we've had to put it together in an enormous hurry. All of a sudden we've had to double our repertoire and it's much easier for us to find rock songs to cover than to get up a contemporary classical piece, given that they are often extremely difficult.

PH: I think we had a residual suspicion that it is playing the covers that gets people listening and it probably is. But interestingly, all the people who end up listening listen just

as open mindedly to the originals.

CE: It's funny, because you try and write a rock song and you come back to the classical structure. Because we've been trained classically, we try and write a verse then a chorus then a verse then a chorus, and it just doesn't work. It works out being ABA form or something from way back. You keep trying to make things interesting.

PH: Most of the music around is very conservative, but it is electronics, what I hate to call techno because people automatically think of House, where the most radical music is being made. The electronic manipulation of our sound is the way we'd like to go. Samples, a MIDI, would be very interesting. I'm really interested in groups like The Art of Noise or The Future Sound of London who use the studio as an instrument.

TH: We want to explore our potential as a string quartet fully before we add other things.

NG: *So how do you cut through the wash, how do you avoid being just another background effect?*

FOURPLAY: By being a string quartet, by being loud, by playing music which people recognise. We don't have a Fourplay manifesto or an attitude because it's really just about Fourplay in the end. We started as a joke and it's meant to shake up people's idea of music.

## Jazzwatch

Detroit pianist/composer Kirk Lightsey on tour

Who's that bare-chested man at the keyboards? That man in white with a red rose and a dangerous smile? A Detroit pianist with "a Bud Powell awareness, an Art Tatum styling, a bebop feeling and a pianistic approach". That's how Kirk Lightsey describes his musical self. He's played professionally since he was nineteen and his first real jazz gig included a young saxophonist named Joe Henderson.

Soon after, Lightsey played in R & B revues with singers Della Reese, T-Bone Walker and The Four Tops. In the 60s and 70s he worked with singers Damita Jo and O.C. Smith, while recording with Pharoah Sanders Bobby Hutcherson and Harold Land.

He played with Dexter Gordon for four years from 1979 and subsequently with Chet Baker. Some of his current playing is with The Leaders, one of the most popular groups on the European circuit with each musician a band leader, composer and virtuoso instrumentalist: saxophonists Chico Freeman, Arthur Blythe, Nathan Davis, trumpeter Lester Bowie, bassist Cecil Mc Bee and drummer Famoudou Don Moye. Lightsey will arrive in Australia immediately after a two week season with The Leaders at Ronnie Scott's in London.

With Kirk Lightsey on tour, hot on the heels of Gil Scott-Heron, the month of April promises a musically rich and mature autumn.

Kirk Lightsey: April 18, 23, 24 Strawberry Hills Hotel, Sydney; 19, 20 Bennetts Lane Melbourne; 21 Pinnacles Festival, Bass Note, Brisbane; 25 Southern Cross Club, Canberra; 26 Kiama Jazz Club; 27 Armidale Jazz Society

Singer Sheila Jordan likely touring nationally in June; Eureka Jazz Festival Ballarat April 5-7; Grafton Easter



International Jazz & Blues Festival, April 5-8; Thredbo Jazz Festival, May 2-5; Vintage Jazz at Wyndham Estate, Hunter Valley—April 28; Pinnacles Festival Brisbane, April 20-24—featured artists include Kirk Lightsey, Mike Nock Quartet, Scott Tinkler Trio, Graeme Norris Quartet and Jann Rutherford.

Renee Geyer and Bobby Gebbert Trio, Basement, Sydney, April 3; Gil Scott-Heron and the Amnesia Express, Metro, Sydney April 8-9; Sydney saxophonist Gai Bryant with Spare Parts Octet ends her regional NSW & Qld tour in early April.

24 Bay Street, Double Bay, new restaurant/supper club: Cathy Harley Band, Lily Dior Combo, African dance band Badema led by Malian master guitarist Moussa Diakite (ex Salif Keita)

Paul Grabowsky, Allan Browne, Gary Costello, Bennetts Lane, Melbourne, April 21; The Continental, Melbourne: CD Launch for the band Tip, April 14; Barney McAll Quartet, "Farewell" Gig, May 5

Vince Jones, April 14, Tommy Emmanuel, May 8-9, Fly By Night Club, Fremantle

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# CD reviews

Ornette Coleman & Prime Time  
*Tone Dialing*

1995 Harmolodic 527 483-2

It is a difficult time for contemporary music. Of course, there has never been so much 'new' music. Most of it, however, tends towards a homogenised sound environment where what is defined as musical is defined by what is accessible: by insipid cross-overs between Pop and the diet coke minimalists (whose main attribute is multi track rather than musical thought) by deciduous mysticism, or by the art of rehash, reissue or reinvestment. How then are we to invent a radical art of sounds? to give music a frame when it has been subjected to so much deregulation, when the sound continuum created by composers such as Varese and Cage has been dissolved into sound effects? As someone who could potentially reinvent a sound framing, Ornette Coleman is in an enviable position. As one of the liberators of jazz in the late 1950s, Coleman has moved from an 'absolute' harmonic, melodic and rhythmic freedom to a conception of musical transformation that resides in a continual divergence of musical elements within a series of formal structures: songs, dances, blues. Coleman's saxophone playing, as usual, is striking, marking out vigorous cross-rhythms, arhythmic blocks of sound, shaping melodies that expand and contract across the frenetic movement of the drums and electric guitar. This is the kind of musical thinking that Pierre Boulez might easily characterise as a "polyphony of polyphonies." Solos intertwine and then dissipate, creating great big disjunctive chunks of movement that rarely settle on anything, on anyone. Parodic bursts are filtered through dense improvised breaks as popular or dance tunes, funk and R & B are discharged, overturned by the systematic distortion of all the elements. In letting each melodic line live its own peculiar life, the miniature tunes on *Tone Dialing* gather element after element, sound after sound, piling them on top of each other, as though to compress the duration of each musical idea even as the time of their sounding is rendered immeasurable. NG

Jah Wobble  
*Heaven & Earth*

1995 Island Records CID 8044/524 168-2

There are two post-punk survival stories that stand out in musical terms. Malcolm McLaren has managed to build a career out of having been "there" (where?). Jah Wobble, ex-P.I.L., is doing slightly more interesting things with his time. Most recently, Wobble produced a collaboration with Brian Eno, *Spinner*, and this time brings us a collection of songs with a bunch of world music/ambient luminaries. World music, like ambient music (and the relation between the two is by no means accidental and needs proper investigation) is a dubious notion, and tends to confuse more than it describes. Historically, it's a marketing category that appeared in London in the late seventies to deal with pop music made by people (primarily from Africa) who didn't normally make pop music. Nowadays, it's become an aesthetic and political idea for music that defines itself through a combination of disparate "world" elements; a new musical form wrought from the traces of colonialism and commercialism that liberates not only the producer but the listener. Wobble's songs are heavily overwritten, awash with string and synth sounds and his unmistakable ska bass. And they're decidedly easy listening. This is music that is utterly compliant with the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic order of things, melding and dissolving the difference of Chinese or Arabic tonalities into an innocuous bed of (con)fusion. The presence of Pharaoh Saunders, Bill Laswell, Natacha Atlas, or Bernie Worrell means nothing and demonstrates the inherent conservatism of a musical form that markets itself on its difference, but ultimately reproduces all the lines of distribution and domination of multinational capitalism. NG

Richard Einhorn  
*Voices Of Light*

1995 Sony Classical SK 62006

Inspired by Carl Dreyer's 1928 film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Richard Einhorn's work is part of the recent drift towards a resurgent mysticism in late twentieth century composition that focuses on a fusion of minimalism and medieval liturgical music. The main progenitors so far have been Arvo Pärt and John Tavener, but the list is growing longer. Einhorn's writing is competent, but in a regressive sense. What is it about this kind of music that marks out a new direction for musical thought? Einhorn specifically asks us to set *Voices Of Light* apart from its cinematic context, suggesting that the work should stand on its own. And yet, the work as such, simply poses musical problems that were taken up and to some extent resolved by the early baroque composers. In this sense, the structure of the work functions somewhat like a museum, and a fairly boring museum in that it simply returns to a pedestrian tonalism. Even Stravinsky's unconvincing neo-classical works

grappled with certain questions of time, with a concept of composition that undertook a transformation of its materials. Furthermore, that *Voices of Light* also situates itself as a soundtrack to *The Passion of Joan of Arc* somehow undermines the strength of Dreyer's conception of an image freed from the constraints of a synchronised sound image. One gets a feeling that here is a composer who has given up thinking altogether for the sake of producing music as an effect—of history, of the visual image. NG

Jan Gabarek

*Visible World*

1996 ECM 1585

Jan Gabarek has one of the more beautiful soprano saxophone sounds you're likely to hear. Unfortunately, most of the pieces on *Visible World* are easy listening. You wish that someone of his talent would go back to Sidney Bechet and realise the degree to which this music deserves to end up in elevators that people can't wait to get out of. It makes you wonder: is the whole world turning into an easy listening soup or a gushing, incandescent after-dinner aperitif? The concept of ambience, in itself, has an interesting musical potential as a reconfiguration of listening, but it seems that music is now defined by the composition of space itself. This brings on the overdetermination of reverberation, of desultory echoes, of drifting synth., that creates the insipid wash of sheer sound surfaces. *Desolate Mountains I* and *II* are interesting for the delicacy of Gabarek's playing and the interplay of piano and percussion; they seem least bound by the excesses of the synthesizer background, and gather a series of little rhythmic diversions and ruptures in the movement between the different voicings. A subtlety of writing that reminds us of Gabarek's best work with Ralph Towner. The dominance of ECM producer Manfred Eicher's aesthetic, when the writing is lazy or uninspired, creates a sameness about the sound that is only overturned when the collaborations or the musicians have a musical conception that takes the ECM sound hostage and rebuilds its resonating forces. Gabarek does this falteringly, and his saxophone cries out for a more complex idea of the compositional plane. NG



Axel Poignant Ladies, Mangrove Creek

In 1951 Axel Poignant created a remarkable record of the community living on Mangrove Creek, a tributary of the Hawkesbury River. One of Australia's most significant photographers of the post-war period, Poignant's interest in both travel and communication found expression in this work. He had just acquired a new Rollei camera and the Mangrove Creek journey seemed an ideal opportunity to test it before a protracted stay in Arnhem Land. In the company of photographic assistant and wife, Roslyn Poignant, he spent a day with Jim White, the river postman, while he did his rounds. An Australian Centre for Photography touring exhibition. At Post Master Gallery, National Philatelic Centre Melbourne till April 28.



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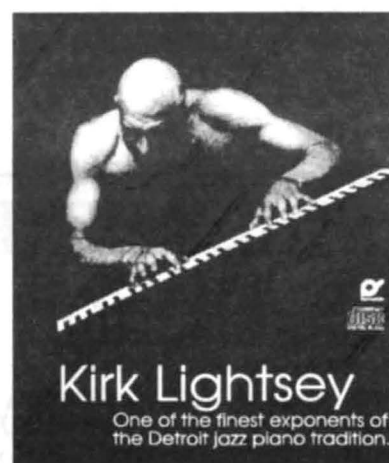
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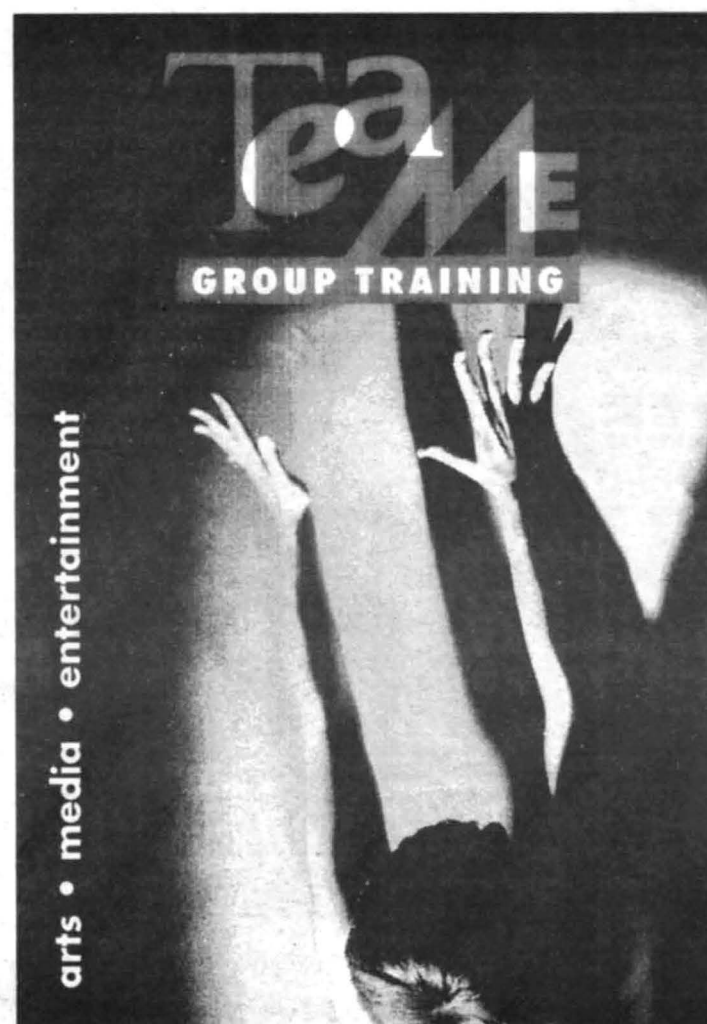
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# Quietly gothic

Edward Colless encounters  
*Mutiny on the Docks* in  
Hobart's Summer Festival

'Public art' in a postmodern age is an awkward thing. Almost a self-defeating idea for cultural policy, it opens itself to caricature like the famous old-fashioned Gallic jibe at British culture embodied in the joke that 'an English gentleman' is a contradiction in its own terms. These days there seems little enthusiasm or justification for discrete works of 'public art', precisely because both words mock each other. At least, that is to say, there is little around in the form of an art that not only wishes to address the greater public but that has the rhetorical command, patronage and purpose by which to do so. These prerequisites occur in social environments where money and power combine with taste in a spirit of civic identity, where power both advertises and emblazons itself through the living urban body. The vision behind the public monuments in pre-modern or even modern cityscapes has narrowed these days to the scope of community-oriented art: scaled down to sub-cultural orders, geared to tactics of intervention or advocacy, community art is a functionalist, de-mythologised form of ritual practice. What has been built on the ruin of 'public art' is another type of monument, no less powerful and artful but with a phoney sense of the city and civic pride: the theme park (a pseudo-city or pseudo-world).

Community art is a form of debased ritual, and yet its attempts to defy commerce (and the evident success of commerce in supplanting the ethical

dimension of the public sphere) founders on the spectacular form of ritual which is that art's inspiration and which relies on commerce: the festival. Perhaps because Hobart is a small city, and not just a parochial city but one still struggling with the imperatives of modernisation, the culture displayed and celebrated during its Summer Festival has the palpable residue of a rural harvest blessing. The foci of the Festival are the finish line theatrics of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and the food orgy called 'The Taste of Tasmania'. Both occur in the historic dock precincts, called Sullivans Cove. Sea and land merge symbolically in this arena, but the culture of this place is a physical culture developed by those who are surrounded by wild waters and who live off a land that is still, also, wild.

Late in 1995 the Hobart City Council in conjunction with the Salamanca Arts Centre proposed an exhibition of installation art, dotted around Sullivans Cove, as a component of this year's Festival. It was a commendable initiative. A good opportunity for local artists—who have very little in the way of public or commercial exhibition venues—to strut their stuff. In remarkably short time the curator, Dan Armstrong, assembled five artists and found five sites (no easy job in the week before Christmas). While compromises and hastiness showed up in the work and their sites, the outcome was interesting for the contradiction it posed to artists who, using a personal and gallery-oriented idiom, find themselves trying to answer the obligations of public art in a milieu that is defined as tourist traffic. Armstrong's task was difficult, too: to arrange, with a minimal budget, five works that would be thematically linked to the Festival, would be easily accessible to the quarter of million visitors strolling around the area, and which would be responsive to the sites they occupied without appealing to gallery decorum.

As it turned out, only two of the works

were placed in open public areas. Shelley Chick's sculpture has always shown a taste for adolescent grotesqueness: visceral, slimy, splatter-punk. *Cover, Smother, Other: Considered Drowned, No Body Recovered* was appropriately situated at the industrial end of the parkland strip of Salamanca Place, inside the grim compound of an electricity substation behind cyclone fencing, and cowering beneath a set of gigantic grain silos. Mounted on a bare concrete wall, her work was a life-size, lurid iridescent purple shark jutting menacingly at head height through an oval opening at the centre of a long perspex panel. This panel was made of two clear sheets that sandwiched a swirl of putrid, urine coloured oil. The effect—best at night when two diagonally placed ground lights threw fluoro bat-wing shadows off the shark's head—was of a frozen, phallic eruption from a vaginal sewer. A death mask of adolescent sex.

Across town, in the glassed-in ground floor foyer of the Hydro-Electricity Commission offices, Sid Caney installed his large spindly steel children's suburban swing, the seat of which was made of three softly glowing blue fluorescent tubes. This swing stood like an immense insect mother watching over her brood: over a hundred miniature swings, each one with a red Jaffa ball in its seat, were lined up in three files along the foyer and terminated at three more blue fluorescent tubes, standing like cricket stumps. Blood red cricket pads and gloves lay strewn along this "pitch", as if the game had turned into a deadly ritual. *Romeo is bleeding*, said the sign, and we suspect that this scene may be a pastoral of love become a melancholy graveyard.

The three other works were housed in areas of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Upstairs, in the 'Pacific Gallery' (devoted to indigenous art of the Pacific) Julie Gough's *Brown Sugar* was a billboard size piece showing a schematic map of a whaling voyage from 1825, rendered as if to resemble a *Treasure Island* children's game. Bags of Mauritian Demerara brown sugar were provided for the viewer to hurl murderously at three kitsch female Aboriginal heads, each one smiling out of a porthole. Gough is a fanatical archivist of things obscurely tangential to her own life, and this was a complex work which joked with the colonial implications of the Museum's collection as well as making difficult allusions to her own identity. One of Gough's distant ancestors was, apparently, an islander who is mentioned in the journal of such a whaling expedition, somehow linked to Mauritius: the pun in the work's title was the opening to a labyrinthine personal memorial.

Ward Knight's untitled installation was placed in the pebbled courtyard of the newly opened wing of the Museum, the refurbished Customs House. Brightly

painted driftwood and old gas cylinders were assembled with a folk art literalism to make a life-size image of a yellow decaying jetty with, forlornly attached at its end, the stripped down bright blue ribs of a dinghy. As with Gough's work, this was partly the expression of a private nostalgia, but whatever personal associations the image may have had for the artist, the picturesque effect of the materials suggested a skeletal hulk, beached dry by a devastating tidal drainage. This was another graveyard of the imagination, where blue water had turned into the flayed bones of a dead seafarer. Knight's was possible the most accessible of the works in this show: its public face was easily read. And yet for that reason, it was the most schematic work.

Perhaps the most intriguing work in this 'exhibition', on the other hand, was the one that initially least resembled a work of art at all. In a darkened room inside the area of the Customs House given over to educational scientific displays, Poonkhin Khut built a large camera obscura. The room faces directly onto the docks, across a major and busy street. Restricted from interfering with the existing heritage decor of the room, the artist draped the room completely in black and hung a rear-projection screen in the middle of the space to receive the inverted image of the outside world. Any camera obscura will have a magical quality, but Poonkhin Khut's had an almost indistinct, yet disturbing, added quality. He mounted special microphones to the window pane to amplify the vibration of the glass due to passing traffic. This was passed through a signal modifier to create a delayed and subtly altered version of the sound, which was then broadcast at a low level through concealed stereo speakers. The hidden window was both lens and diaphragm, dimly picturing the world and also turning its noise into an echo. Sound and image drifted apart, and the passing life outside floated upside down in a foggy veil within a claustrophobic tomb.

It is not so unusual to find a gothic edge to Tasmanian art, and one could detect this in varying degrees of intention and reflex throughout each of the works in *Mutiny on the Docks*. But it is a gothicism of memorials, not raging romanticism. Rebellion was hardly the motivating force in this exhibition. If there was a mutiny of any kind here, it was against the public use of the art: Poonkhin Khut's camera obscura captured the ironic nature of this when it turned the public spectacle of the docks during the Summer Festival into a ghostly dream.

*Mutiny on the Docks, Sullivans Cove precinct, Hobart, 28 December 1995 - 31 January 1996*



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# Making sense of the future

Suzanne Spinner on the new directions at The Museum & Art Gallery of NT

In 1993 a sperm whale was stranded on a Darwin beach and despite massive efforts, it died. The NT Museum buried the leviathan and eighteen months later it was exhumed.

*Museum staff rallied to the task and were overwhelmed by the level of voluntary community support in the sometimes gruesome task of recovering the skeleton.*

MAGNT Annual Report 1993-94

In October 1993, after years of inertia, months of uncertainty, barely controlled scandal and much speculation, Jackie Healy, formerly Director of Public Programs at the National Gallery of Victoria, was appointed as the new director of the NT Museum. Some years before Healy had lived and worked in the NT so local sceptics were confident she wouldn't go to water in her first Wet and when it was known she'd become a home owner and rate payer, anxieties lessened. People are both excited by and suspicious of outsiders, to wit Southerners, and high profile female CEOs bring their own worries. Two years later it is possible to look at the reforms and initiatives she has implemented.

Jackie Healy likes to tell the story that when she was asked by a colleague from Victoria what it was like living in a remote place, her disingenuous reply was that she had never lived in one. But he persisted. What was it like living in Darwin? Her answer was that "Darwin is closer to

everywhere in Asia than anywhere else in Australia and if that's not enough, it's also closer to Paris, London and Rome". Apparently he was nonplussed. Healy gave him one of her beatific smiles and went on to sell Darwin and the MAGNT to everyone around her.

Putting the pro in active and accenting the positive, Healy has seized on the unique geographical and spatial significance of the Territory and made competitive advantages of them in the market place. Under her direction, the Museum has turned around. When Healy was appointed she acknowledges, "the museum was under scrutiny...and did not have its act together...it was floundering, lacking direction". And direction it now has, in full on 90s style—a mission statement, a corporate plan, new positions, new priorities, a refurbished, renamed restaurant and if not quite a new front door, a new foyer incorporating a revamped bookshop.

In the creation of a corporate identity no detail has been overlooked; there's a new logo incorporating a Top End Aboriginal x-ray croc based on Arnhemland rock art and a sand painting dreaming image from the Centre, and all the relevant copyrights acknowledged, and underlining it, a winning slogan—"Making Sense of our Future". It has been a complete makeover with attendants in Aboriginal printed fabric uniforms which match the re-covered couches in the public areas and now every

major exhibition (even the local ones) is trumpeted on the facade by those smart banners that were first seen advertising the blockbuster shows at the NGV more than a decade ago.

Making a clean break with the past was essential. The pristine skeleton has emerged from beneath the rotting flesh. What Healy has been able to do is build on the obvious regional strengths—natural history, Aboriginal art and culture, South East Asian art and material culture and the Maritime collection. The NT history emphasis has been shifted from explorers, pastoral pioneers and WWII memorabilia (especially old trucks) to new exhibitions such as the Cyclone Tracy gallery which cross-references changes in tropical architecture. Many significant sites and buildings—the Old Gaol at Fannie Bay, BAT Lyons Cottage in Darwin and The Residency in Alice Springs—have been closed, assessed, stripped down in accordance with contemporary heritage guidelines. Rigorous heritage assessment of the myriad regional museums which come under the aegis of the MAGNT has also been undertaken.

The art gallery side which was sorely languishing has been revived with the appointment of Curators of Contemporary Art and Craft where previously there were none, and the creation of a designated Craft gallery. Major new sponsors have been won—Telstra for The National Aboriginal

Art Award, and the Army for the George Gittos national touring exhibition, *Realism of Peace*. The MAGNT is initiating significant national exhibitions and touring them within Australia and overseas, across a broad range—from the unexpected, Mambo's *Art Irritates Life* which was curated in Darwin, to the more predictable—the forthcoming Crocodile national blockbuster, and because of sponsorship, the best of The Aboriginal Art Award can now be toured around Australia.

In many ways a moribund institution has exploded in all directions. Healy talks of "setting a very high standard and a fast pace" and of the importance of welding a team from the "highly motivated individuals" on her staff who are part of the "resources activated". The power is the "synergy of the team", and "activity is the tool for generating results."

For museum consumers the results of "the activity level" are obvious and welcome. The only doubt is whether the pace can be sustained by the resources of the institution as these massive changes have happened without significant staff increases. The criticisms one hears of Jackie Healy's regime are classic—the pace is burning up her staff and she is never there/always away. To this Healy responds that this has been the set up stage and that now consolidation can happen because the framework is clear. A major priority has been to "spread the message out there that the Territory is not the received stereotype but a multi layered community and a place of opportunities. Now that the place has a great image, the public is coming back, attendances are up...people like being part of a successful organisation". Indeed they do!

## Book review

*Under a Hot Tin Roof: Art passion and politics at the Tin Sheds Art Workshop*  
by Therese Kenyon  
Power Publications 1995

Strangely enough, this book appears to be extremely timely, its publication roughly coinciding with the election of the first conservative federal government in Australia for 13 years, the first that most of the X generation would have seen in their adulthood. The book chronicles in the often breathless tones of the street activist the trials and triumphs of the Tin Sheds art workshop, which in its heyday was the epicentre of Sydney's oppositional poster art. Located on the grounds of Sydney University, the workshop was first established in response to the perceived need to provide the university's students of art history and theory with the opportunity to get their hands dirty in bona fide studio-based work. (What a delight to see a photo of art theorist Bruce Adams, then a fine arts student, mooching beside his impressive modernist assemblage in 1972). Remember, this was before the incorporation of art history and theory in visual arts courses, when the divide between artist and art writer/curator was well-nigh absolute.

The workshop hit its stride with the groundswell of political fervour triggered by the dismissal of the Whitlam Government and the election of the last conservative administration in 1975. Going by the current reversion to old style industrial confrontation and regressive social and environmental policy, it may be that the demand for old style street activism and the coalition of oppositional groups around civil disobedience events may yet lead to the resuscitation of activist art as embodied in the tradition of the Sheds. Dust off those marching boots?

Undoubtedly, and the tenor of the book betrays this, the Sheds forged its identity and reached its apogee during those turbulent times before post-modern discourse problematised traditional strategies of resistance and economic rationalism demoralised a generation. The Earthworks and Lucifol posters remain an important and vital contribution to Australian contemporary art. There is a tradition of wit and aesthetic pizzazz which we're still in dire need of. *Keep warm this winter—make trouble*, reads the caption as two renegades aim molotov cocktails at St Mary's

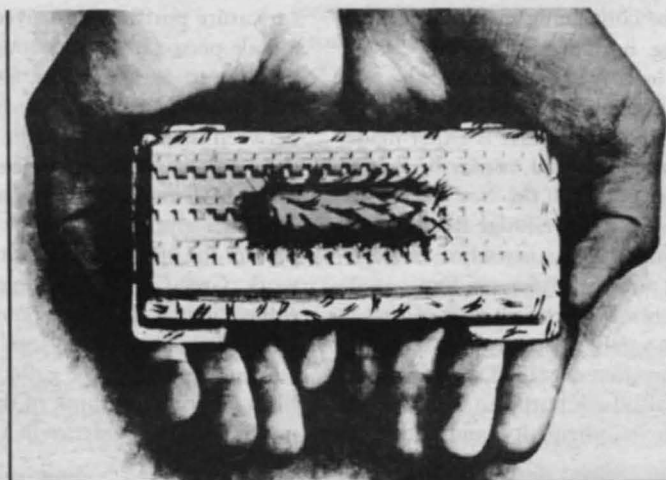
Cathedral; *A life not just a year*, reads Toni Robertson's poster for International Women's Year in 1975. The role the Sheds played in providing a focal point for the Women's Art Movement which contributed significantly to the propagation of feminist concerns and the cultivation of women artists is also well-documented here, including a very funny anecdote which succinctly highlights the differences between grandiose American-style feminism and our more sardonic home-grown variety. Marie McMahon and Frances Budden from the Sheds flew to the States to help out on Judy Chicago's feminist magnum opus, *The Dinner Party*, but were "quite appalled at the very hierarchical approach to the management of the project". As a sly little protest, they embroidered a d'oyley with *No Goddesses, No Mistresses*, and slipped it under another work in the hope that it would be discovered at a later date, only to be berated by Chicago for the furtive nature of their action and failure to "openly express their feelings".

When Kenyon moves on to the mid-eighties, the story becomes less interesting as the Sheds starts to lose its social currency and status as a grass-roots focal point. The action was now elsewhere, although the notorious 1988 Towers of Torture exhibition, curated around the nexus between fascism and architecture and inspired by the ascendancy of the Bond Corporation, did highlight some interesting institutional issues: in what proved to be a huge stroke of luck for the Sheds, Sydney University attempted to ban the exhibition after a little nudge from certain corporate heavies. The Sheds adroitly capitalised on the scandal, to briefly heave itself once more into the spotlight of cutting-edge activism. If the responsibility for astute political critique had lain with the work in the exhibition itself, however, sad to say the event would probably have disappeared without so much as a whimper.

Today, the Sheds maintains a fairly low profile, providing tuition in traditional photography and print-making techniques to Sydney University students and the general public, its gallery staging exhibitions of contemporary art, often with a community flavour. It is no longer a nerve centre for thinking through what a political art might look like, although who knows? Maybe March 2, 1996 is just what the Sheds needed!

JM

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False Liberation Alison Wright, photo: Victor France

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# The law and the arts: accomplices

Jacqueline Millner previews an intriguing exhibition at Melbourne's ACCA

We all like a good hoax...so long as we're not the ones being had. To be seduced by the lie for a second, but in the next to prove ourselves wise to the seduction. Needless to say, those not directly charged with sniffing out frauds have delighted in the recent rash of hoaxes in the Australian literary scene, while many of those others have manically sought any means possible to salvage their reputation for connoisseurship. Any means possible usually extends to that great punitive superego, the law. Let's appeal to reason, to solid ground, to escape the mind-boggling 'anything goes' of artistic activity. Let's establish the truth, once and for all, to show those other pretenders out there that crime doesn't pay. Let's get them for fraud, for impersonation, for breach of copyright, for false pretences.

But, can the law deliver this vindication and hungered-for absoluteness? How disparate really are art and the law? The two may be posited as antithetical, one authoritarian and final, the other endlessly playful and open to all possibilities. The law and its practitioners may be represented as the arbiters of reason, coolly following empirical method to ascertain the facts, and artists as precisely those who interrogate the legitimacy of reason and aim to create alternative fictional 'realities'. But, is the law really concerned more with fact and truth than art? Might it not share art's fascination with, indeed dependence on, artifice and fiction? The law and art might not be in dialectic so much as in complicity, accomplices, co-conspirators, aiding and abetting each other for mutual benefit. Even their apparent dichotomy might be all for show.

Perhaps the law is concerned not so much with truth, as with what *looks* like truth. It won't bother with exhaustive investigation and fact-finding if it can be convinced with a likely story. Similarly, art seeks to suspend the disbelief of its audience, to be convincing just long enough to be engaging. Both art and the law compel us to look for clues, to read the traces with suspicion, to check for inconsistencies, until the case is either made out or thrown out. Indeed, it may be that legal structures underpin the way we view works of art, the way we judge them, the way we look for that quality which singles out art in the popular understanding—a unique, authentic voice or creative spirit—before we can safely bestow our awe. Both the law and art are concerned with authenticity, although both can be satisfied with authentic inauthenticity, and both

decidedly lose their sense of humour if someone blows the whistle so that an endorsed veracity is suddenly revealed as perjury and fraud.

It is the relationship of authenticity to art and the law which the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's (ACCA) forthcoming exhibition, *How Say You?* takes as its point of departure. Curated by visiting Lithuanian scholar Dede Pol (with a little help from 'exhibition manager' Kevin D. Murray), the exhibition is a frolicsome take on fictional art, and the spin it can deal to art and law as a whole. The opening out of the discourse of art to cross-fertilisation by another discipline is always a welcome exercise, and can forge unexpected collusions and contextualisations. In this instance, Murray has actually invited members of the legal profession to participate directly in the project; these erstwhile solicitors and barristers will perform in a moot court—the Court of Fictional Entities set up in Melbourne's old magistrate's court—arguing the hypothetical case following the discovery of new works by Ern Malley which suggest that indeed the fraud was a fraud.

The exhibition comprises the work of eight artists, mostly painters and mostly from Melbourne, to explore these thematics. Kate Reeves deals with the issue of artistic identity, focusing on the assumption by Marie Lynette Moore—"notorious courtroom artist whose caricature portraits destroyed families"—of a male persona, and the courtroom's inability to deal with this. Sandra Bridie and Stephen Bram blur the boundaries between their work to make the location of their artistic identities impossible, while Fiona Hall emerges as anagrammed Lana H. Foil, stripped of her fame and success to ponder the effects of celebrity on an artist's work. Greg Creek's paintings, both in their subject matter and their rendering, appear to highlight the pseudo-legal judgement an audience brings to the gallery, and Stephen Bush compels a rethink of the very tools we use to read the evidence in a work of art.



Greg Creek Don Dunstan and the Elders (after Max Meldrum) / The Jury for Calumny oil on linen 1996

Peter Hill adds to the scandals of his Museum of Contemporary Ideas with his mystery novel, *The Art Fair Murders*, which "reminds us of the popular identification of artists with criminals".

The sole performance artist represented is Barbara Campbell, whose previous work with personae and historical personages makes her a logical inclusion here. Her performance, *Galatea*—after the sculpture made flesh in answer to sculptor Pygmalion's implorations to the gods—is partly informed by the predicament of Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*, who, after exhaustive training in the speech of the British aristocracy, fails to convince a European linguist for she speaks English too perfectly to be English herself.

*How Say You?* is an ingenious and well-devised ploy to cajole us into considering art and art works outside the confines of

self-referentiality. By opening the door to this interloper, the law, it successfully inflects some hackneyed questions about authenticity, identity, and celebrity in the arts with a welcome vitality.

**How Say You?**  
Fictional Art and the Law  
curated by Dede Pol (with assistance from Kevin D. Murray)  
ACCA April 1996 Touring to Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney and Hobart.  
The Court of Fictional Entities bears evidence on 23 April in Melbourne's Old Magistrate's Court.  
More information at:  
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# The death of (the) art (of) photography

The Art Gallery of Queensland's *The Power to Move*, moves Peter Anderson to ask some big questions

In his turn of the century treatise, *Picture-Making by Photography*, H.P. Robinson gave advice which might seem quite odd in today's world of the instant 'point and shoot' camera. He advised photographers who were going "in the field" to leave their camera at home. "A camera, if of any size, is but an encumbrance the first time you inspect an unknown district in search of subjects. A note-book and pencil are much more appropriate implements, and a view meter may be useful, but the camera is best left at home" (Robinson 1902). For many artists working with photography, this rule still seems to apply, only instead of going out in the field, these photographers make their pictures in the studio, the darkroom, and even the computer—for some of them, the camera now seems to be little more than a minor piece of out-dated technology, occasionally useful, but not central to the art-making process.

Similarly, for Robinson, photography that aspired to the status of art needed to be more than just a snapshot, more than a casually recorded moment. If a photograph was to be art, it must be a carefully staged aesthetic statement. While the world might be full of wild moments of beauty or sadness, these were not to be snatched at random—the photographer had to find a picture before it could be carefully taken. And to make this picture, a photographer required "an acquaintance with the rules of art". While, "a picture by one ignorant of these rules may come right and be effective...he must not expect a series of such accidents to occur".

What Robinson's discussion clearly demonstrates is that the idea of photography as art is not a new one. However, what it also shows us is that the notion of photography as art is not built on qualities inherent within the photographic medium, but on existing rules for making a good picture. These days, of course, most photographs that are taken do not have the pretensions of art—perhaps the photograph as art has always been a rarity. For while there may be photographs that fix "the perfect moment" and fall into the realm of art, for most who wield a camera—and anyone can these days—the more probable outcome is a "Kodak moment", the nostalgia of awkwardly framed "memories".

The problem of photography is not that it is so frequently excluded from the realms of art, but that any discussion of its inclusion usually focuses on the medium, rather than quite specific examples. "Is photography art?" rather than "is this photograph art?" For example, while it is possible to imagine a work of art that makes use of the mechanical system used for the production of ID cards, for most of us, these images seem to lack even the most rudimentary aesthetic qualities—more often than not, they don't even look like us. These are photographs that have a job to do, and in most cases they do it well. But who would want to claim them for art? Perhaps the notion that art necessarily has anything to do with pictures has had its day.

Whatever the status of photography as art, the collection of photographs by Australian art galleries is, in most cases, a relatively recent activity. At the Queensland Art Gallery, the bulk of the photography collection dates from the early eighties, with the first collecting occurring in the early seventies, with donations initially contributing significantly to holdings. In the catalogue for *The Power to Move*, which surveys the photograph as art through the holdings of the Queensland Art Gallery, the Gallery's curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Anne Kirker, notes that this period of active collecting—really only the

last twenty five years—coincides with "the period when photography became recognised as an artform appropriate to a culture searching for a democratic alternative to the traditionalism of painting and sculpture". But what she also notes is the rise of a new group of "artist-photographers", who were "a breed distinct from the commercial photographers who had largely dominated the medium for half a century".

Not surprisingly, *The Power to Move*, reflects a particular version of what photography is all about—perhaps a couple of versions. To a significant degree, the shape of the exhibition is a result of shifts in the use of photography within art practice, as much as any increasing acceptance of photography as art. For while photographs might enter into our lives on a daily basis, in the press, in advertising, on our security passes, in our police record, and as mementos of our personal relationships—these sort of photographs are mainly absent.

A substantial number of works in the exhibition, while they make use of the photographic medium, sit less within the tradition of "straight" photography, than within a notion of art as a critical social practice, as a commentary on the construction of our visual world. From the point of view of photography, there are certainly "interventions" that upset the conventions of the fine print, the perfectly framed shot. But it could equally be argued that many of these photographs are the residue of a more conceptually based art practice—an art practice which may well have more in common with all those other non-art uses of photography, and with

contemporary art that doesn't use photography at all. Work by artists such as Tracy Moffatt, Marian Drew, Julie Rrap, Bonita Ely, Josephene Starrs, Robyn Stacey, Lehan Ramsay, Anne Zahalka, Jacky Redgate, Geoff Kleem, Rose Farrell & George Parkin, Susan Fereday, and Jeff Gibson.

Photographs by artists involved in a sort of critical documentary process, such as Sue Ford, Micky Allan and Ponch Hawkes, seems to provide a link across into one of the other main threads running through the exhibition—the photographer as a sort of artist/ anthropologist. At its most simple, this sort of work almost slips into straight photo-journalism. In the Queensland Art Gallery's collection, this work is substantially represented by images drawn from the 1988 commissioned project *Journeys North*.

The exhibition also contains a fair number of works that fall within what might be seen as the tradition of 'art photography'—work by Max Dupain, David Moore, Olive Cotton, Ruby Spowart, and Doug Spowart.

At a seminar held in conjunction with the exhibition, much was made of the difficulty of maintaining a space for photography within the context of the art museum, as if photography still played a subordinate role to more traditional art media. And yet, so much of the more contemporary work in *The Power to Move* is clearly tied to debates in the artworld and the art museum. It could be argued that this work has been at the leading edge of contemporary art practice in recent times, rather than at the margins. The medium may be photography, but this is

work that first saw the light of day in the contemporary artspaces, and on the covers of contemporary art journals. Perhaps this is not photography as art, but art which uses photography—work made always with an eye to the art museum (as either reference point or final resting place).

Significantly, while *The Power to Move* generated some discussion of the place of photography in the art museum, it failed to engage with the other world of photography. Ironically, a major exhibition of commercial and magazine photography—the Fuji ACMP Australian Photographer's Collection—was held at the Brisbane City Gallery in the same month as the QAG show opened, with (I think) only one overlapping photographer (Doug Spowart).

While the art museum may well have accepted the noble traditions of the documentary and art photographer, and the technical and conceptual interventions of the avant-garde critical experimenter, those photographers who ply their trade producing images that might have the power to move product, must remain outside—in mass circulation magazines, newspapers, display stands and on giant billboards. And as for the rest, you'll find them crumpled and dog-eared in the experimental spaces of our back pockets, handbags, and shoe-boxes, or pristinely preserved on mantelpieces and in photo albums with "Our Wedding" on the cover.

*The Power to Move:*  
Aspects of Australian Photography,  
Queensland Art Gallery,  
February 16 - April 8



Louise Deleur of the Sydney Dance Company

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# The aesthetics of abuse and the power of representation: some questions

Barbara Bolt

## Situation 1: An Advertisement

A man hangs, amidst sides of beef, with a hook through his chest. It is a very 'clean' image, no blood, no evidence of pain or struggle, only a slight bruising where the hook has entered his chest. It is an advertisement for Bees Knees Piercing. I am reminded of Rembrandt's and Soutine's hung carcasses and Peter Greenaway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*. I can argue aesthetically for the advertisement in terms of its formal qualities and its art historical references. He looks dead, but of course we all know he has been paid to 'pose dead'. There is no ethical dilemma to be dealt with, and if you don't like it, the advertisement tells you that you can always get your piercing done elsewhere.

## Situation 2: An Exhibition

Paul O'Connor's invitation to his recent exhibition *Obsession* (Fremantle Arts Centre), features him stuffed in a bottle of Calvin Klein eau de toilette. The lid is firmly in place and O'Connor seems happy to smile through it all. Since I suffer from claustrophobia, I find this representation unsettling. I don't identify with O'Connor's cheerfulness at all.

Perhaps I am taking this image too literally. It is after all only a representation, a metaphor for the way consumers (in this case, gay) are obsessed by the images and icons of advertising. However, it could be argued that advertising has always operated on the principle that we can/will become the image of the products we consume. The text made flesh.

The belief in the transformative potential of consumer goods is somewhat at odds with those structuralist and post structuralist arguments that suggest a representation is only ever a sign. This advertising ethos suggests the possibility that we both shape and are shaped by representation; that representation has real bodily effects.

If this is so, what are the potential bodily effects of images such as Paul O'Connor's collages and manipulated images? The bottling of his own image and the collages of Kylie Minogue's head transplanted on to the bodies of male body builders present as Frankenstein's monster gone mad. There is obvious humour in the work and the hand stitched sutures which attach Kylie's head onto the male bodies suggests this is a playful and reverent transformation, but I wonder whether O'Connor would really want to be created in such a form. Does he really envisage this as an alternative conception for the human body?

Orlan's self transformations under the knife of plastic surgeons suggests that O'Connor's reworkings of the body do not just exist in the realms of play and fantasy. The question which it raises for me is an ethical one. If we shape and are shaped by representation, what responsibility do we have for the representations we make, whether it be as an artist or as a viewer? If we create Frankenstein's monster, do we have a responsibility for such creations, or is representation outside of responsibility.

## Situation 3: An Exhibition

The Bill Henson exhibition opened, at the Lawrence Wilson Gallery at the University of WA, amidst a blitz of publicity. The fact that Bill Henson represented Australia at the 46th Venice Biennale with the works in this exhibition,

and that 123,000 people visited the exhibition during the Biennale provided the necessary preconditions for this exhibition to be a success both in terms of visitor attendance and in the critical reviews which have followed.

The brochure tells me that the Venice Biennale is the most important visual arts event in the world. A comparison is made with Cannes Film festival. The gallery itself has been transformed for the event. The modernist white cube has been transformed into the black cube of cinema.

I enter a cinematic space via black out curtains and experience the dislocation of walking into a movie late. In the moments before my eyes adjust to the dimmed gallery space, all I can make out are large disjointed white shapes around the room. My eyes adjust. At this distance I can't 'read' the image, only the interplay of the jagged white shapes in a rectangular frame. These shapes cut into the dark bluish surface, working their way diagonally, across the large screens. They are photographs, but they read like paintings or cinematic projections. The formal connections in the work are most apparent, yet I have a sense of unease and I don't know why.

The light-trap entry propels me around the exhibition in an anti-clockwise fashion. I find myself in front of catalogue no. 6. The blurred image comes into focus. A young woman lies spread-eagled, blood running down her thighs, a cord around her neck, her head wrenched to the side. Behind her, stretches the floor of a pine forest littered with old car bodies and marked by the lengthening shadows of late afternoon. In the upper right hand corner, a naked child is carried by an adult. Their faces are blackened out and the adult carries something white or shiny in the same hand as that holding the child. The jagged white shapes traversing the cut screen are precisely cut, taped and pinned.

I had been told it was a 'wonderful' show, yet I feel unnerved by what I am seeing. The brochure tells me that what we view in that space ultimately depends on our individual sensibilities. My viewing of the work is mediated by my experience as a teenager in an Australian country town; of 'parking' in Toranas, FJ Holdens and Monaros in the bush with guys much older than me. I am reminded once again that seduction relies on a degree of complicity. Henson 'paints' a very Australian scene, both in terms of landscape and a specific cultural adolescent experience. Yet his representations move beyond complicity to elicit images of coercion. It evokes memories of the Birnie murders, of young women abducted, raped, murdered and dumped in the Gnarara pine plantations, north of Perth, amidst the burnt out bodies of stolen cars. It is this scene of violation and violence that frames my viewing of this image. But do I alone experience the image as violence and how do I speak of this?

In a second image, catalogue No. 12, a young woman is dragged along by her hair. In his slicing and reassemblage of the photographs, the artist has cut straight through her pubic area with his scalpel. In the opposite corner, another bloodied and soiled child/woman is being carried out of the scene. The backdrop for this and many of the other thirteen images, is a moody cool sunset reminiscent of romantic paintings.

The brochure and the catalogue claim that Bill Henson's figures remain "...essentially inviolate, apparently acting according to their own desires and

needs...". Through a process of identification, I experience abuse. The catalogue doesn't posit this as a possibility. It suggests that this is some Arcadia, some Romantic nether region between light and dark in which "young people...seem satiated often appearing to swoon in a semi-conscious state dazed by sex, sleep or too much life".

I see the collage elements in the images as violent and penetrating; others discuss the collage elements formally, how they operate in terms of the composition, the meaning of having the back of the photographic paper revealed. The work seems to have a life of its own, without reference to 'reality' and the figures in the work are, according to the brochure, expressing their own agency. Does Bill Henson have anything to do with it at all?

Of course I can refuse the positions presented in the flier and in the catalogue essays, just as I can refuse the claims of advertising. However there is something in the aesthetic discourse that puts work such as Henson's beyond or outside of real lived experiences, outside of responsibility. Art gets talked about in terms of itself, in terms of its history, not in terms of what representation does to real people living life in the world. How might the work be received if exhibited in a women's refuge, rather than at Lawrence Wilson Gallery?

It is the writing, the discourse that surrounds the Bill Henson exhibition that creates a world for the work outside of

lived experience. The reified debate that locates the work in art history, formally or in some dream world, allows it to operate beyond the debate of ethics and responsibility. An interesting comparison can be made between the framing of Bill Henson's exhibition and the framing of the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in mid 1995. At the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition specific warnings—This may offend—were required to be displayed. When I went to Bill Henson, I was caught unawares, beguiled by a discourse about the confronting beauty of the images.

The confronting nature of the exhibition and the debate that it has provoked could be taken as a sign that it is powerful ('good') art. The power of art, it has been argued, is in its ability to confront, to provoke, to make viewers question their own cultural assumptions. The issue for me was that, rather than confronting my cultural assumptions, Bill Henson's exhibition merely confirmed women's position in the world, as next to nature, as objects of men's or, in this case, Henson's desire.

Even in this ruined Arcadia, the men remain active, the women passive and rather than abandoning their social selves, they appear to rework a narrative that seems to have been played before. In looking at these images, I feel a complicit actor in this 'untold' narrative, this story of abuse, which like all such stories involves a silencing or gagging.

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(and difficult) concepts and techniques (often misunderstood) of deconstruction... I doubt there is another work dealing with these topics and issues... that can equal this one for its combined intellectual authority, conceptual subtlety, and literary elegance."

Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Duke University



# An issue of scale

Eleanor Brickhill takes a close look at One Extra's *The Antwatchers*

At the beginning of *The Antwatchers* rehearsal process, I asked Graeme Watson about both the issues he wanted to deal with and the way he chose to treat them (RT11). The notions of surveillance he addressed then touched on a fundamental debate in a very personal way: Why are we, as individuals living in society, the way we are? Evidently the starting premise in the work is an image of humanity, caged, isolated and distorted, the boundaries we live within only marginally compatible with personal integrity. This distortion shapes the very basis of our interaction, inevitably requiring our sensual selves to compromise on an intensely intimate level: confined, stared at, smelled, watched, touched, held, not held, laughed at, listened to, criticised, bullied and humiliated into becoming beings whose integrity depends on learning to perpetrate these horrors for ourselves.

From birth we are held captive by dual expressions of love and power. A mother is bound to her child in ways she is compelled to acknowledge, whether it's loving

attentiveness or critical scrutiny. A child is likewise bound in confinement or security. How these bonds are lived out shapes self-esteem, aspiration and achievement, from notions of what to wear, what to look like, what to see, hear and feel, to what we take to be the very nature of reality. We are all moulded to the marrow by the seismic strength of both private and public scrutiny.

It's a big project which Watson has chosen to approach in quite literal, physical terms. The set consists of a series of cages, either babies' playpens for the dancers or a huge central three storey tower caging the musicians and their electronic equipment. We see the dancers through bars, curled up, embryonic. Crucially, the musicians also see us, as we watch them. An intense wash of sound exerts its impact tangibly, through vibrating floor and seats. A central character sits at the bottom of the tower, spider-like, turning ominously, observing the proceedings. Searchlights and floods pick up selected areas of the cavernous space.

There's measured success in the story being told. Six women dancers portray horror and confused confinement, reconstruct attitudes of naivete and sophistication in true classical tradition. The movement that unfolds begins tentatively; caged animals discovering their plight. It develops from a gestural basis, an abstracted mimicry, a non-human scale. Their acts of fear and self protection literally become behavioural norms. We see a ballet doll character with huge pink bow and whalebone petticoat, learning her repertoire via imitation and bullying, and we see an ensemble of mothers with prams, bound to their life task with a compliance generated by anxiety. All wear black harnesses suggesting slavery, spiders-web, S & M, sky-diving, or corsets.

As central features of the work, these ideas are not as compelling as some smaller glimpses of subtle insight. At one point we see several dancers lying on the floor, rocking their babies gently on their bellies, an attitude articulating more about maternal bonds than histrionic anxiety ever could. After a fast sequence in which the dancers deliberately use as much effort as they can, the audience is invited to take their pulses. Either they need urgent tangible proof of life, or just another test of

their own physical bounds. The closing image is a tortured silhouette lashed with camera flashlight, more like gunshots than snapshots.

Inventive talent and imagination in developing movement vocabulary was evident, but subtlety seemed buried in the huge space, selective lighting and enveloping sound. I wanted to be closer, to see people not "dancers", meaningful movement not dim, narrowly articulate tableaux. There was a disquieting conflict between the grandness of the sound and visual designs and the intimacy of the human body. Although you could say that's what it was about, aesthetic intentions seemed sometimes at cross purposes. Perhaps Watson's vision might have been for something smaller, closer than the other designers had in mind.

*The One Extra Company, The Antwatchers; choreography, Graeme Watson; design, Eamon D'Arcy; lighting, Rory Dempster; musical director, Antony Partos; costumes, Jacques Tchong; dancers, Felice Burns, Alison Dredge, Taryn Drummond, Lisa Ffrench, Charlotte Moar, Rachel Roberts*

# Writing dancing right

Julia Postle reviews a new collection of essays on dance

*Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*  
edited by Susan Leigh Foster, Routledge 1995

As the author of *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Choreography* (1986), Susan Leigh Foster established herself as a new voice in dance studies. Now, in *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*, Foster acknowledges multiple, heterogeneous new voices from her position as editor of this Routledge anthology. This is a mixed bag in the best possible way, but a common grounding for each of the ten chapters is the body as site, or in Foster's words, "physicality as a site of meaning-making". For the reader, this is a fluctuating, fragmented journey through history, memory, gender and theory. Moving bodies are everywhere here, reworked and redefined in many different ways and through many different methodologies. Ten individuals have contributed to the collection, seven of whom are Foster's fellow University of California academics. In this brief 'tasting' I examine a selection of the texts; some exist in familiar territory, some are, for me, entirely new experiences.

Foster re-turns to an interpretation and analysis of the 'gendered bodies' of the Romantic ballet in her opening essay, "The ballerina's phallic pointe". By fixing her understanding of the politics of performing desire in its cultural context—that is, the expansion of Western capitalism and associated marketing strategies—Foster creates 'corporeal' connections between history and theory. She contends that even in contemporary avant-garde ballet the female dancer is still inscribed as the subject of the male gaze and male desire; the pointe shoe is the enduring symbol, enacting a particular, imbalanced male-female relationship. I would have been interested in an extension of these ideas to include a focus on artists such as Michael Clark, Karole Armitage or Maurice Bejart. Gender is a more ambiguous, problematised issue in the 'postmodern ballet' which these choreographers have inspired.

In another examination of gender—and particularly femaleness—Linda J. Tomko follows the origin and development of park fetes in New York City, events in which fifty thousand girls were involved by 1916.

"Gender, 'folk-dance', and progressive-era ideals in New York City" is a fascinating analysis of the significance of folk-dancing at those park fetes. The Girls' Branch, the educational association which initiated the fetes, used folk-dance as a physical embodiment of ideals such as co-operation, female naturalisation, health, and, Tomko posits, American nationalism. Tomko raises the issue of the 'authenticity' of the Girls' Branch folk-dance, and the fact that while the original dances were present in an identifiable form, the Girls' Branch interpretations also reconstructed those dances, creating new forms.

In Heidi Gilpin's "Lifelessness in movement, or how do the dead move?", the ephemeral nature of movement, the inability to grasp it, the mystery of the body "in passage from presence to absence" are the focus. Rather than romanticising the transient quality of performance, Gilpin explores the act of disappearance from an hermeneutic perspective. The body in Gilpin's analysis is at once real and tangible, and in continual disappearance. Her framework for the question, "How can absence be performed?" is the work of the late Tadeusz Kantor. Because Kantor was usually on-stage with his company, his work *Today is my Birthday*—performed after his death, even though he had taken part in rehearsals—holds particular significance for Gilpin. The actors and the audience were both intensely aware of Kantor's absence, so that in effect Kantor, through his death, had actuated a process of performing absence; the concepts of absence and presence were then brought closer together.

Funnily enough, it was Peggy Phelan who discussed the enigma of present absence in her 1993 text, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge). However in *Corporealities* Phelan examines "Dance and the History of Hysteria", discussing the significance of dance and movement in Breuer and Freud's pivotal psychoanalytic work, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). In particular, it is Phelan's explanation of Anna O.'s condition which is most illuminating, as she identifies connections between psychic health and the body from the notion of "psychoanalysis as a mode of psychic choreography". So rather than representing psychoanalysis as a

concern only of the mind, distinct from the physical, Phelan reconstructs a "psychoanalytic body" while also reconsidering the relationship between femininity, the body, and psychoanalysis.

Marta E. Savigliano's essay, "Fragments for a story of tango bodies (on Choreocritics and the memory of power)" is probably the most interesting work in the collection structurally. Savigliano moves in and out of history, narrative, song, legend and analysis. The "tango bodies" are 'latina', dancing before/for the male gaze and the bourgeois French, British, and American. They dance "Desire, Passion, Fate", with the female role that of the exotic and 'la Otra'—Other. Choreography, theory and criticism are interwoven here, with Savigliano interrogating traditional understandings of each by contemplating the tango body as a performance of sociohistorical and cultural specificity.

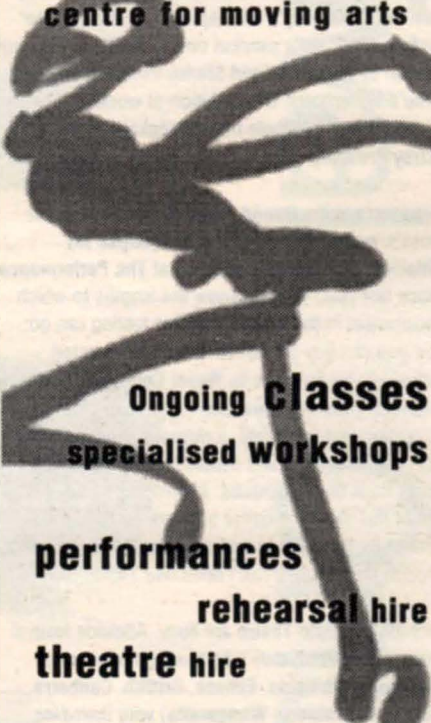
In "Dancing in the field: notes from memory", Sally Ann Ness takes a thoroughly different tack on this notion of the cultural specificity of dancing bodies. She begins by describing in detail two experiences—two dance lessons in Bali and the Philippines respectively—and follows these narratives with an ethnographic dialogue between the lived experience, memory, and the "writerly body". Ness "says 'no' to the document", and yet seems trapped by her own declaration. She proposes a new memory and fieldwork-based document for the text, but ultimately creates another authoritative 'document', warning the reader about supposedly complex narrative and advising the reader to re-read the opening statements as concluding ones. Ness does create new spaces though; spaces in which ethnography and the memoir are merged.

Other contributions include Mark Franko's "History/theory—criticism/practice", an examination of Graham's *Dark Meadow* (1946) and critical responses to the work, particularly those of the "first dance critic", John Martin. Lena Hammergren embarks on a quest for Swedish body politics of the 1930s in "The re-turn of the flaneuse", and chooses to centre her investigations around the 1930 Stockholm Exposition of functionalist trends. Randy Martin looks "towards a narrative of context in dance" in "Overreading *The Promised Land*". Focusing on the 1990 production by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company of *The Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land*, Martin engages in a dialogue between the right and the left, ultimately rewriting the left through bodily practice. In "Antique

longings" Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter extends the dance history/theory discussion with reference to Delsartean performance.

With so many diverse and innovative writings on dance, *Corporealities* propels dance into new domains where the body and theory share conceptual and physical space. Bodies are not just appropriated and interpreted here. Their significance within cultural experience is acknowledged and extended, for as Foster suggests, "bodies always gesture towards other fields of meaning".

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**The Tasmanian Poetry and Dance Festival 1996** is also calling for proposals from dancers and artists in dance, theatre, performance art, music, film/video and hybrid arts to participate in a showcase alongside **Tasdance** company members and poets from across Australia and overseas. The festival offers an opportunity for artists to premiere their work under the umbrella of an innovative festival and with support from both the Tasmanian Poetry and Dance Festival and Tasdance who will produce the event over two weeks in October. The company will provide venue, technical support, publicity. Artists will be responsible for creating their own works (no longer than 15 minutes) and bringing them finished to professional standard and ready to perform in the program. Information Joanna Pollitt 003 31 6644 or Fax 003 31 5522

For those who remember the provocative work of **Nightshift** at the **Pram Factory** in the 70s or heard tell of their subsequent work in New York, an opportunity to see the work of **Lindzee Smith** directing: *The Local Stigmata* by **Heathcote Williams** and **Brecht's The Beggar and the Dead Dog** at **St Stephen's Hall**, 191 Church St, **Newtown**. April 18-May 5. Information 02 557 1466 after 3pm. Look out for a **Marguerite Duras** season later this year.

**Zound Poetri's** April program at **La Mama** features Unamunos Quorum, Graeme Cutts, Kelli Dipple, Peter Murphy, Javant Biarujia and Peter Gleeson presented by **Axle Poetry Group**, a collection of visual, concrete, sound, screen and action poets formed in 1994. The performance on Tuesday April 9 is the first of four at La Mama this year.

**Fremantle Arts Centre** is showing three exhibitions from the **Kimberley's** until April 21 *Scratching the Surface*, Chris Hill's satirical view of tourism; *Warmun Women* by Mabel Juli and Shirley Purdie and Jila & Jumu's *Waterholes*, an exhibition of works on the subject of the waterhole from **Mangkaja Arts** in **Fitzroy Crossing**.

If you were at the **Round Table** to sample Andrew Gross's 'performance' hosted by **Synapse Art Initiatives** during their residency at **The Performance Space** last year, you will know the lengths to which discernment in the matter of coffee tasting can go. Now you can buy the coffee. **Blend 96** (roasted exclusively for Synapse by **Regal Coffee**) is the result of several convivial conversations, debates on perception and the palate, a rigorous program of testing and toasting and debate among a panel of artists from three countries. All proceeds from the sale of this excellent coffee support the thoughtful work of Synapse Art Initiatives. Enquiries and orders through the Synapse Fax/Phone 043 74 1276.

Adelaide's **Doppio Teatro** are busy. Adelaide festival season completed, they'll be touring the country (**Stonyfell**, **Robinvale**, **Echuca**, **Griffith**, **Canberra**, **Newcastle**, **Lismore**, **Wangaratta**) with their *Una Festa di Nozze*, a bilingual performance plus wedding feast incorporating courtship stories drawn from Adelaide's Italo-Australian community. Then in June, they'll appear at the **Singapore Arts Festival**.

**Sydney Dance Company** are hosting a tour by American contemporary dance company **Momix** at the **Sydney Opera House** May 2-9. Momix was created by choreographer Moses Pendleton in 1981 and today is a company of dancer illusionists, celebrated for their ability to conjure surrealist images using objects, light, shadow and the human body. For the Sydney season they're presenting two full length works by Pendleton, *Baseball* and *Passion*.

**Death Defying Theatre's** multi media *Hipopera* keeps happening. Some of the crews have been touring the show (including a performance at **Minda Juvenile Justice Centre** where the rapper on the

inside Chris Amtuani performed through the miracle of audio and video technology), others are writing for DDT's school show *Danger*—a soundtrack performance with director Gail Kelly. Meanwhile, Vlahid Vahed and Sean Curran have cut together a compilation of the show as well as a 15 minute documentary. Screenings are being negotiated with TV and film & video festivals.

**polar.Mad Love** is a new artist-run contemporary art space in **Adelaide**. It is housed in the **Mad Love Centre** in the heart of the city, with the **Performance Laboratory**, **The New Music Venue** and **The Electronic Writing Research Ensemble**. polar.Mad Love facilitates and supports contemporary projects both within the space and off-site. The committee is inviting proposals from artists for its 1996 program. The opening exhibition (24 April—8 May) will show work by Katie Moore, Lee Salomone, Geoffrey Parslow (SA), Lisa Beilby (NT) and Ruth McDougall (Qld). A preliminary viewing of the space (3 April) will feature *It was a slow journey back* by Hewson/Walker. For further information contact Sonja Porcaro on 08 211 7022

**Northern Rivers Writers' Centre**, based in **Lismore**, recently launched its 1996 program and will see visits to the Far North Coast by Helen Garner, Robert Drew and David Malouf, amongst others. For more details phone 066 223 599.

**The Australian Centre for Photography** re-opened March 22 with *Inheritance* an exhibition curated by ten photographers who have had a connection with the Centre over its 20 year history (Sandy Edwards, Fiona Hall, Bill Henson, David Moore, Debra Phillips, Jon Rhodes, Lynne Roberts-Goodwin, David Stephenon, Les Walkling and Anne Zahalka). They in turn nominated two other artists or works to show in addition to their own. For some there has been a key figure who provided a model or set a benchmark against which their own work has been measured; Two have produced collaborative pieces with their nominated photographer/s while other selected the work of a peer which has in some way resonated for them. Artists chosen include Dan Armstrong, Destiny Deacon, Walker Evans, Heather Fernon, Carol Jerrems, Staefhen Marcus, Susan Nakamarra Boko, Sandy Nicholson, Lyndall Phelps, Paul Saint and Danielle Thompson. The exhibition includes books and magazines along with anonymous nineteenth century photography and the work of painters. The new look ACP gallery is open Tuesdays to Saturdays 12 to 6 pm. With Stills and Byron Mapp, this completes Paddington's photo mile.

**Rehearsal Workshop Retreat** in the bush. Big space, swimming and live in. Information Annabel 02 560 6745.

## Sport

### TOOTH AND CLAW with Jack Rufus

The time is right for big changes to Australian sport. A new Government in Canberra, anxious to slash and burn; the code of Rugby League in disarray. Here's how we fix things. Everyone knows sport is a substitute for warfare—so why not bring it into the open? A new Superministry of Defence and Sport is called for, headed by Bronwyn Bishop.

Next, new rules for the beleaguered League. Wingers should be licensed to carry pistols, roaming out wide and searching for a gap in the opposition defence. For the heavy-duty action in the middle of the ruck: armoured vehicles. The full-back, last line of defence, will be equipped with bazookas, picking off any tank that may break through the front line.

Why stop there? The winners of the Grand Final would go on to represent Australia in military manoeuvres. First, war games to intimidate New Zealand. Then, send our champions to the Gulf, dazzling Saddam's forces with crisp backline moves and a concerted forward push. With sponsorship by Smith & Wesson, Canon and Armourgard, the new technosport interface will be the boost to the economy this country so badly needs.

**RealTime** is distributed at the following points. If you have trouble finding a copy—and they disappear quickly from popular venues—please consider subscribing. Call Lynne Mitchell (02) 358 6759 or use the form on page 40

**NSW:** Hayden Orpheum Cinema, Prego, Moscraft Books, Shearers Books, SBS TV, Deanes Art, Aust. Film & TV School, Walker St. Cinema, Tyrells Books, Brays Books, Pentimento. Balmain College of ART, Balmain Library, Ralph's Deli, Lepoca, Leichhardt Library, Bar Italia, Nelson Street Cellars, Annandale Galleries, Stanmore Theatre, Slatterys, Gleebooks, Ray's Records, Valhalla Cinema, Half a Cow Books, Co-op Books, ABC Ultimo, Powerhouse Museum, Abbeys Books, Co-op Books, Conservatorium, Hyde Park Barracks, Museum of Contemporary Art, Birdland Records, State Library Shop, Dendy Cinema, Dendy Cinema, St Laurence Arts Centre, ABC Shop QVB, Mandolin Cinema, Australian Film Commission, Artspace, Sydney Dance Company, Wharf Theatre, Arts Council of NSW, Australian Music Centre, Rocks Visitors' Centre, Ariel Books, Doyle & Daughters, New Edition Books, City Art Institute (COFA), Chauvel Cinema (AFI), Hogarth Gallery, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Rosslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sherman Galleries, Byron Mapp Gallery, Pandas Coffee Shop, Holdsworth Gallery, Goethe Institut, Lesley Mackay Books, Oxford Art Supplies, Baraza Bar (Riley St.), The Bookshop, Tropicana Cafe, Academy Twin and Verona Cinemas, King St on Burton, Cafe Hernandez, Archtext Bookshop, Centre for Perf. Studies/Union, Union Shop, Bob Gould's Books, Cornstalk Bookshop, The Bookshop, Performing Arts High School, Corelli's Cafe, Green Iguana Cafe, King Street Deli, PACT Theatre, NSW Writers' Centre, Manly Library, Manly Library, Marrickville Library, Passion Du Fruit, Rustic Cafe, Red Star Cafe, Belvoir Street Theatre, Best Cellars, Cafe, Actors Centre, Encore Theatre, Tin Sheds Gallery, Watters Gallery, Martin Smith Books, Bondi Pavillion, Book & Cranny, Art Affair, Australia Council, The Performance Space, First Draft Gallery, International Theatre Institute, Performing Lines, Media & Entertainment Alliance, Seymour Centre, NIDA, Theatre & Film Studies Uni of NSW, Pine Street Leisure Centre. Powerhouse Regional Arts Centre, Casula; Street Level Theatre, Blacktown; Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, Penrith; Q Theatre, Penrith; Bookoccino, Avalon Beach; Northern Rivers Writers Centre, Caddie's Coffee Co., Lismore. Regional Art Gallery, Southern Cross University, Byron Bay Community Centre, Wollongong City Gallery, University of Wollongong School of Creative Arts, Southern Highlands Regional Gallery, Mossvale; Fairfield Arts Centre, Campbelltown City Gallery, Illawong Community Centre, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, University of New England, Armidale (Centre for Music & Drama)

**VICTORIA:** Next Wave Festival, Universal Theatre, Open Channel, Tolamo Gallery, Handspan Theatre, Gertrude Street Gallery, Chamber Made Opera, Brunswick Street Books, Polyester Records, Polyester Books, Hares & Hyenas, Blue Moon Records, Ruby's Restaurant, Rhumbarellas Cafe, Bakers Restaurant, Black Art Cafe, Sister Ray Records, Pamaroma Cinema/Cafe, Roar Studios/Gallery, Fitzroy Community Arts Network, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne Film Festival Office, Victorian Writers Centre, 200 Gertrude St Gallery, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Ethel Ohnetitel Gallery, Soul Food, Cafe Bohemio, Australian Galleries, Cinema Nova, Carlton Movie House, Readings Books, Melbourne University, Melbourne State College, La Mama, Courthouse, Kino Cinemas, Flinders Lane Gallery, Gabrielle Prizzi Gallery, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Lumiere Cinemas, State Film Theatre, Pellegrini's Cafe, Raoul Records, Missing Link Records, Gaslight Records, Virgin Records, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Peril 305 Records, Collectors Corner, RMIT, ACCA, Mary Martins Books, Mary Martins Books (ii), Jam Factory, Longford Cinema, Readings Books, Como Cinemas, Hares & Hyenas, AFI, Arts Access, Emerald City Books, Napier Street Theatre, Victorian Arts Centre, Victorian College of the Arts, Music, Dance, Photography, Sculpture, Print; Australian Ballet, National Gallery of Victoria, Malthouse, Victorian Ministry for the Arts, Melbourne Theatre Company, Gasworks, Fringe Network, Ensemble Theatre, Veluca Restaurant, Espresso Cafe, Tolarnos, George Cinemas, Greasy Joe's Restaurant, Galleon Restaurant, Cosmos Books, Mary Martins Bookshop, Discurio Records, Wild Rice Restaurant, Catani's Restaurant, St Martin's Theatre, National Theatre, Linden Gallery, Community Arts Network, Victorian Writers Centre, Victorian State Opera, Brighton Bay Cinema, Dendy Cinema, Astor Theatre, Continental Cafe, Feedwell Cafe, Vicious Fish Cafe, Cafe Blupols, Greville Books, Greville Records, Leggets Cafe, Kill City Books, Valhalla Cinema, Alphabet City, Three Sisters, Elli Fink Bookshop, Arts Bookshop, Heide Gallery, Caulfield Arts Complex, Theatre Studies La Trobe, Perf Studios VUT, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Swinburne Campus, Readings Books, Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Geelong Art Gallery

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA:** Art Gallery of WA Administration, Art Gallery of WA Shop, Art Gallery of WA Cafe Vitesse, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), PICA Cafe, Cinema Paradiso, Northbridge Cafes, Photography Gallery, The Maltings, Department for the Arts, Arcane Bookshop, Alexander Library Info Centre, Community Arts Network, Art on the Move, Artrage Office, Artshouse, Ausdance, Monkey Music, LSD, WA School of Art & Design (Perth TAFE), Court Hotel, His Majesty's Theatre, Lumiere Cinemas, House of Wax, Perth Theatre Co, Crafts Council, 78s Records, Hay St, Black Swan - St George's Tce, Boans Warehouse - East Perth, Dada Records, Cafes: King Street, The New Merchant, Cafe 54, Delaney Galleries, Black Plastic - Oxford St, Oxford Cinema, Luna Twin Cinema, Cafe strip, Astor Cinema, WA Academy of Performing Arts, Beaufort St Cafes, Planet Video, UWA Art & Theatre Depts, Lawrence Wilson Gallery, Festival of Perth Office, RTR FM, Sommerville Theatre (Dec/Mar), Hole in the Wall Theatre, Subiaco, Fremantle Arts Centre, Freo Art Bookshop/Door Gallery, New Editions Bookshop, Deck Chair Theatre, Cafe Strip, Freo Galleries, Film & TV Institute, Mills Record Bar, Fly by Night Club, Galerie Dusseldorf, Murdoch University, Theatre & Communications, Curtin University Art & Theatre, Metropolitan and Regional Public Libraries, Broome Musicians.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA:** Picadilly Cinema, Carclew, Festival Centre, Lion Arts Centre, Imprints Bookshop, Radio Three D, College of Performing Arts, Meryl Tankard's A.D.T., Community Arts Network, Minim's Cafe, Red Shed Theatre, W.E.A., Tandanya, Mad Love Inc, Mindfield Bookshop, B. Sharp Records, Tapas, Vego and Lovin' It, S.A. Writers' Centre, Dept of the Arts, Radio SUV, S.A. Art Gallery, El Conquistadore Cafe, State Library, Women's Information Switchboard, University of Adelaide, University of S.A.: Flinders University, Red House Gallery, Hendon Film Studios, Cafe Paradiso, Kino Video, Murphy Sisters Bookshop, Back Pages Bookshop, Chelsea Cinema, Trak Cinema, Metropolitan Public Libraries.

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY:** ANU Refectory, ANU Ressies, ANU Arts Centre, ANU Arts Faculty, ANU Menzies Library, God's Cafe, Tossolini's, Arts & Special Events, Antigo's, Civic Library, Electric Shadows Bookshop, Gus's, Cafe Della Piazza, The Wedge, Mama's Trattoria, Park Royal, Ticketek, ABC Bookshop, Info Centre, Canberra Theatre Box Office, Admin Office, Playhouse, Cafe Valentini, Street Theatre, Gorman House Front office, Gorman House Cafe/Youth Theatre, Tourist Information Centre, ABC, Tilleys, Belconnen Community Ctre Theatre, UCAN Refectory, Belconnen Library, Tuggeranong Arts Centre, Narrabundah College, Kingston ArtsSpace, A Girls Own Gallery, Kingston Library, Queanbeyan - School of Arts Cafe, Australian National Gallery.

**QUEENSLAND:** Metropolitan: La Boite Theatre, Arts Theatre, Park Road Coffee Shops, Community Arts Network, Street Arts Community Theatre, Rock'n Roll Circus, Cafe Tempo, Frankos Cafe, Emma's Bookshop, King Ahiram's Lebanese, Thomas Dixon Centre, (Queensland Ballet), Metro Arts, Arts Workers' Alliance, Arts Queensland, Expressions, MEAA, The Bookshop, Koomba Jdarra, Classic Cinema, Schanell, Coffee Shop, German Bakery, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane Independent Filmmakers, 4ZZZ, Valley Coffee Shops, Qld Theatre Co, Qld Performing Arts Centre Bookshop, Qld Art Gallery Bookshop, State Library, University Campuses, University of Qld St. Lucia, QUT Kelvin Grove, Griffith University Nathan, Griffith Artworks, QUT City, Queensland College of Art Morningside, Isn't Studio, The Rest Cafe, King Tuts, Red Chair Cafe (Paddington), BEMAC (Kangaroo Point), Folio Books, The Booknook, Skinnys Records, Rockinghorse Records, Queensland Writers' Centre, Princess Theatre (Woolloongabba), Chalice Cafe (South Brisbane), Women's Bookshop (Highgate Hill), Dendy Cinema (George St), New Farm cafes/bars, St Lucia cafes, Metropolitan and Regional Public Libraries, Gold Coast College, Griffith University, Cold Coast Arts Centre Gallery, Umbrella Studios, Townsville, Townsville Civic Theatre, Cairns Civic Theatre, Mt. Isa Civic Centre.

**TASMANIA:** Hobart: Kaos Cafe, Couch Culture, Tas Museum and Art Gallery, Entrepot, Salamanca Arts Centre, Rapid Eye Books, University of Tasmania, Conservatorium of Music, Launceston: TasDance

**NORTHERN TERRITORY:** Darwin Performing Arts Centre, Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre, Browns Mart, Darwin; 24 Hour Art, Parap; Swingers Cafe, Alice Springs, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs

### TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Since the depressing outcome of the thirteen-years-is-a-long-time election, pundits have been desperately seeking clues to the likely regimen of the new arts groundsman Richard Alston. Doing the rounds of the greens this month, I caught him nodding approvingly at the wry comments of Kirsten Tomas, Artistic Director of Hotel Pro Forma who enjoys the lifelong support of the Danish Government. An Australian National Living Treasures Scheme to replace the Keatings? The crowd at *Burning the Interface* CD-ROM show at the MCA showed him the proper respect by gossiping over his speech and applauding wildly when it ended. Teeing off at Australia Green and Pleasant last week, however, the atmosphere seemed more gloomy. "There'll be gravel in the bunkers and sharks in the watertraps! Workplace agreements for the caddies will take them back to a dollar a day and all they can eat! No secondary strikes—you get one hit and that's it! The putting arm's length will get shorter and shorter!" "Fore!!!" I said and played calmly through. A mandate to rule does not mean the game is over for the rest of us. This is not the end of democracy as we know it. Just remember that almost half of us didn't vote for the bastards and, on any day, there is always more than one winner on the golf course.