RealTime OnScreen

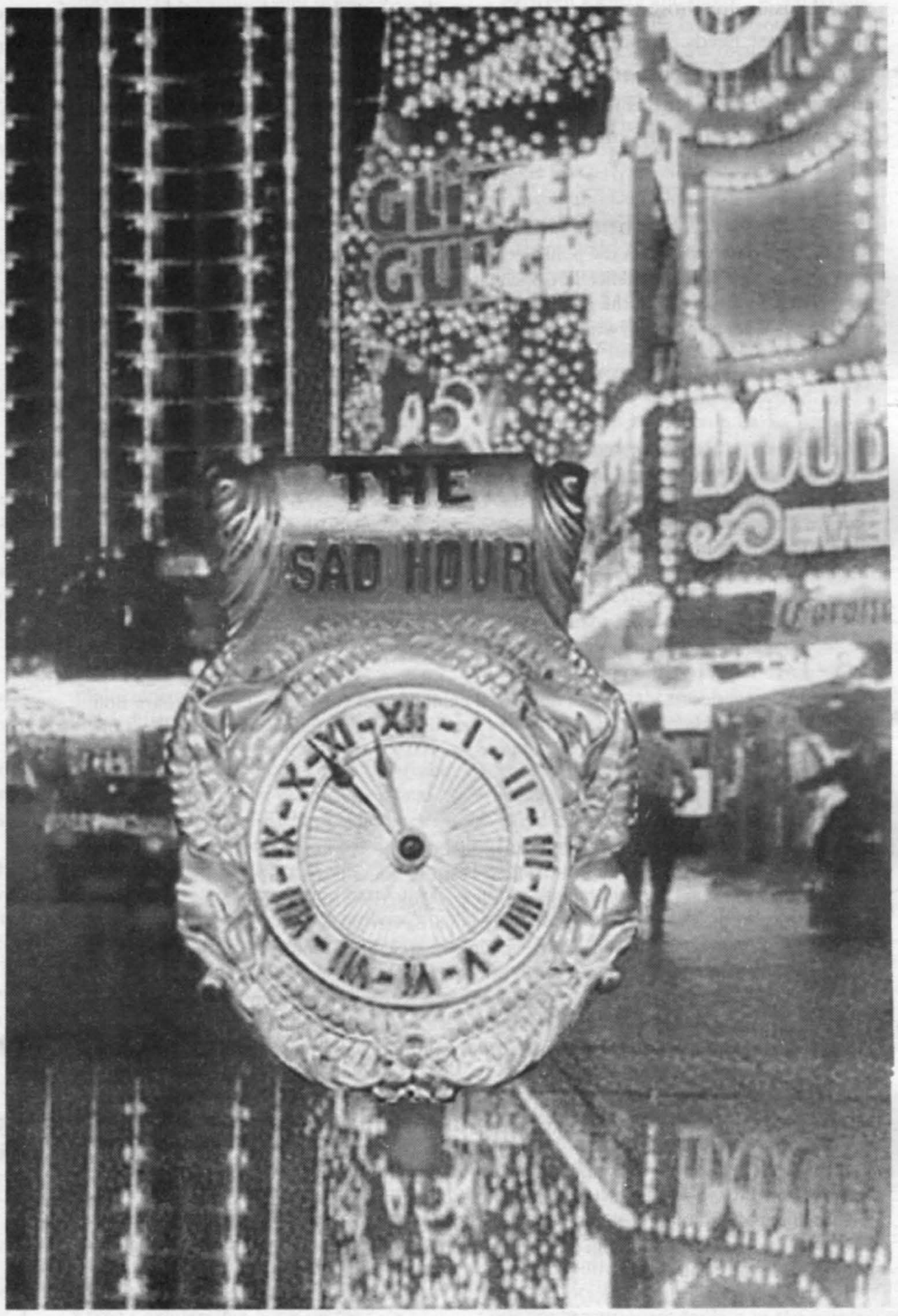
free

Performance and the national arts June–July 1996

Film Festivals

Sydney Melbourne Brisbane
Women on Women
Cantrills Tribute
Film West

Suzan-Lori Parkes
Jane Austen
Robotica
Film Reviews
Cybercultures
WA film policy
Burning the Interface



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Genty, Skylark, Burn Sonata, Tasmanian New Music Festival, SoundCulture, San Francisco, Momix Melbourne Comedy Festival, George Popperwell, Ballarat Opera Festival, Res Artis Conference Dublin National Indigenous Writers' and Playwrights' Conference, 100 Years of Cruelty, ISTA Conference Copenhagen, A Progressive Dinner Sydney, Stephen Lang, Cherry Herring Brisbane

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In *OnScreen*, we celebrate the film festival season with extensive previews and a tribute to Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, filmmakers and tireless promoters of experimental film through their *Cantrills' Film Notes*, published for 25 years. A retrospective of the Cantrills' film work will be seen at this year's Sydney Film festival.

While film festivals enjoy considerable, if hard won, public support, they are at a moment of change, as demographics shift, as screen media transform, as the Sydney and Melbourne festivals draw apart on the calendar and the Brisbane Festival builds its audience, as festivals across the board have to hard-sell themselves as giant parties celebrating issues and themes other than film itself.

The new interactive media saturated Sydney in recent weeks in conferences and exhibitions allowing an opportunity for immersion in theory and in the goods themselves. *RealTime* reports on the calibre of the events, the progress of ideas and on the complexities of experiencing new interactive spaces.

The election aftermath is about to be realised as federal budget day draws near. Nothing, save defence, seems likely to be insulated from cuts. Will the promise of a small increase in arts funding over the next three years, eg for regional areas, be kept? Will *Creative Nation* be maintained, as promised? How safe is the already well-whittled Australia Council, already semi-re-structured over the last year, from cuts to staff and funds? Senator Alston has been quietly non-committal about his arts portfolio. However, the anticipated cuts in tertiary education are already a sure threat to the next generation of artists, given that arts training is now largely the province of universities.

The good news from the Australia Council is that New Media Arts (formerly Hybrid Arts) has made it onto Council, will have its own funds, and is no longer tied to dance, theatre and music. While this will win instant approval from those working in sound, video, film and interactive technologies, there must be continued apprehension for those working at the outer limits of dance, theatre and music and, especially, across those forms. Hopefully, the new Performing Arts Forum will be alert to these needs. The allocation of funds to the new areas—fellowships and commissions—will be the first sign of how the recent restructuring will affect the traditional funding portions. Fears continue to escalate with the current Australia Council management and the new government both openly favouring infrastructure cuts to arts organisations in favour of the funding of individual artists. How are artists supposed to promote and administer their work without the support of carefully developed, specialist arts organisations? How long before we hear what Council and the government's intentions are?

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Cover: Laurens Tan, *Vegas of Death,* 1995-1996. Installation, mixed media, computer and electronic components. Two gaming cabinets each 150 by 70 by 60 cm. 16 Ash Pans each 30 by 25 by 25 cm. From *Death: Insights on Life, c*urated by Eileen Chanin, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney. Touring nationally August 2 1996-Jan 30 1997

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Just put your questions in this cardboard box

Hard-going for waterbearer Richard Murphet at the ISTA Conference, Copenhagen with the performance royalty Barba, Grotowski et al

Encountering a great deal of resistance to actually writing this article. From myself. Resisting anthropologising a conference on theatre anthropology—investigating, reducing, essentialising, categorising, trying to understand, logising the anthropos. Not that it didn't try to focus us on its essence (conferessence) many times—"Theatre Anthropology is the study of the pre-expressive scenic behaviour which is at the base of different genres, roles, and personal or collective traditions"—but of course it was about far more than that and most of the things it was about weren't planned. The formal processes of study were given the costume of scientific research. Eugenio Barba, convenor, founder of ISTA, director and founder of Odin Teater, proponent of theatre anthropology, theorist, author, arts industrialist extraordinaire etc, performed the role of artist/scientist.

But a summary wouldn't glimpse those tiny moments that had another life, a non-theatrical one, because the subjects were unaware of or uninterested in an audience? For example, Jerzy Grotowski crouched over a meal table, brown shawl around his blue suit and tie, shaggy beard and tired eyes lost in cigarette smoke, picking at a piece of white bread and drinking a jumbo Coke. For example, Richard Schechner falling asleep in Odin's performance, *Kaosmos*, and having his apt response praised by a Mexican director at the end because his rhythm of falling in and out of sleep were in sync with the show. For example, three Kabuki dancers, so seductive in performance a few nights before, remaining on their platform at the end of a 'community barter' performance somewhere in the wilds of Copenhagen suburbia. Other performances took over in other spaces in the huge community hall, but the Kabuki dancers sat politely as a photo opportunity for dozens of Europeans who 'did the Japanese' on them and clicked their lenses unashamedly. National Treasures become theatre hacks—reminiscent of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena touring the world in a cage in their performance piece *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*. Without the critical irony of course, but eliciting a similar thought to Coco Fusco's about their piece: "Trying to determine who really believed the fiction and who didn't became less significant for us...than figuring out what the audience's sense of the rules of the game and their role in it was". Punctums like the above let out a lot of the hot air and allowed me to breathe a bit.

By ISTA standards this 10th Symposium was large. The participant numbers over the past nine ISTAs has averaged about 95, and many had far less. 1996 had in excess of 250. I think it fair to say that the organisers couldn't really adapt to fit the crowd—or rather they did adapt but the genetic route was towards control and exclusion within a conceptual framework that promised much else besides. It is also only fair to say that for many of the inactive participants this was fine and was to be expected within the terms of the ISTA village. Many of these were participants who have attended previous ISTAs and who bought and understand the village idea. We were welcomed by Barba at the start to 'the ISTA village'. This was accompanied by a smile and the image operated as one of inclusion. As the days of passive watching slid by the smile disappeared to be replaced by the frown of exclusion. "We do not have time for any discussion from the delegates now (after another bout of Barba-talk), so just put your questions in this cardboard box". A sure way to kill off debate. It got so you started to begrudge coffee breaks—until on the second last day the freshly arrived Schechner, ever quick to pick up the frustrations, jumped onto the platform and demanded coffee be cancelled in favour of debate. It was almost over and it took a figure of Schechner's status to bring it about.

On a table in the foyers of the various meeting halls, the industrial wares of Odin and ISTA were on sale—books by Barba, books by academics about Odin and Barba, magazines, programs, posters, videos of shows and of work demonstrations by Odin and ISTA practitioners. Amongst these was the newly printed collection of reflections on ISTA, *The Performers' Village*. In it, the editor, Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup has written ana anthropological study of ISTA (how self-reflexive can you get?). Her analysis of the ISTA village's 'concentric and hierarchical' structure is fascinating and instructive—I wish I'd read it before I went. "At the centre itself is the paramount chief, Eugenio Barba...". Closest to him is the Council of Elders, consisting chiefly of Barba's Italian academic friends who helped him found ISTA and who together with the Odin actors form a formidable power bloc at the conference. The next circle is occupied by 'the Nobility', the master (sic) practitioners from various world cultures. Sanjukta Panigrahi and her Indian ensemble, Kanichi Hanayagi and his Japanese ensemble, I Made Djimat and his Balinese ensemble are the closest to royalty, Augusto Omolu and his Brazilian Indian ensemble are the Pretenders to the throne. Franca Rame and Dario Fo are the clown prince and princess. Mime Thomas Leabhardt and dancers Steve Paxton and Carolyn Carlson are new ring-ins—and anyway they are from the States and don't really count as nobility. The guru is of course Jerzy Grotowski, whose philosophy, metaphysics, example and presence permeated the conference. The next circle is of the aficionado theorists and academics for whom ISTA is both a fascinating object of research and bread and butter publication material. Hastrup quaintly calls these the Jesters, including herself amongst them. And finally there are the mass of fee paying inactive participants, 'the waterbearers', coming from far afield to replenish their buckets. We know not enough about the tradition to make significant contribution so we are expected to be quiet in the sessions and to talk over lunch. The shame, as one discovers is that the waterbearers comprise a fascinating array of experts in the field and there is no formal opportunity to share and debate.

Given one of the conference subtitles, "Theatre in a Multicultural Society", many of us were led to believe that the conference would be an occasion for cross-cultural discussion about these culturally turbulent times. Not so. The first half of the symposium was a Eurocentric study of mainly Oriental and South American traditional forms. At best it was an attempt to discover the possibilities for a multicultural theatre in society, which is quite different from looking at the role of theatre in a multicultural society. The second half consisted of lectures theorising theatre and describing practical personal histories. Only one—Richard Schechner's—really addressed what theatre has arisen out of the cultural turbulence in this case of North American theatre—and particularly, in the video of Gomez-Pena's brilliant *Border Brujo*, of the explosive situation in the Chicano America of southern California. And it was in Schechner's critique of the word 'multiculturalism' that I heard the clearest summary of my unease and occasional fury at ISTA's voyeurism of the 'true, authentic' cultures. Multiculturalism, he said, celebrates difference and distinction but it does so at a distance and it is controlled by what is not marked as multicultural, ie. white, male Protestantism. It is a utopian idea of equality which contains the dominance of the subservient by the unmarked. I heard in the conference no reference to Eugene van Erven's exhilarating book on the contemporary and nontraditional theatres of Asia and South East Asia. The fight by these people to get out from under the repressive aspects of the cultures represented by the very forms under analysis at ISTA gave the whole Copenhagen venture an unworldly feel, a gathering of acolytes in the north-west of the Eurasian continent—the seat of colonialism.

Within the conference there were some wonderful performances and some interesting demonstrations of work. If I have focused on the performance politics of the conference as a phenomenon this is both to do with how I experienced it and the fact that you will be able to get accounts of the proceedings from other sources.

As a whole however, the 10th ISTA was not a song. The words and the body were not in sync. For the most part, body was coupled only with performance and words were coupled only with analysis. Within the performance zone, words were not the focus and, by implication, were downplayed. This was to be expected given the conference subtitle, "The Performer's Bios", but the refusal within that to see verbal action as part of a performer's bios kept bringing us back to the increasingly irrelevant distinction between theatre and dance. When words did accompany the body action the interplay was never the focus of the sessions of demonstration/analysis—I think of Thomas Leabhardt's Decroux mime performance to an accompaniment sometimes spoken, mainly prerecorded, of texts by Gertrude Stein; I think of Steve Paxton and Lisa Nelson dancing to that hypnotic piano and recitative of Robert Ashley; and I think of Raghunath Panigrahi singing with the Indian ensemble as his wife Sanjukta danced her solo magic. From the later discussions by the artists, led strongly by Barba, you would think that we were deaf.

The analysis sessions led by/run by/dominated by Eugenio Barba, were, on the other hand, linguistic investigations of the codes of physical action. This presupposed that everything is planned as a code. And it worked fine occasionally—as in Barba's start/stop analysis of a performing Gennari Bogdanov (Biomechanics), which elicited some fascinating ways of seeing the units of theatre action; as in Sanjukta's self-analysis of her Odissi Indian dance style, a fascinating insight into not only the elements of a traditional form but also into how this individual performer constructs a new dance out of these elements. Sanjukta has been attending every ISTA since the start in 1980 and those performers attending for the first time found it much harder to get used to the limited parameters of Barba's pursuit and his obsessive style (in other words the ISTA house style). American European dancer, Carolyn Carlson after spending an hour trying playfully but determinedly to avoid his attempts to get her to explain her process (to logise it) resorted to the story of the caterpillar brought to inaction by the fox's inquiry as to how leg 23 moved in sync with leg 78. There is nothing more stimulating than vigorous verbal inquiry but the anthropological approach of (and belief in the worth of) linguistic definition and classification in the pursuit of structural essences and eternal truths was finally tiresome. It reached its apogee in Barba's request that all the practitioners explain in ten words or less what 'energy' was for them and then to show a brief physical example of it. It began as a throwaway idea towards the end of the first section of the conference. But then as was his wont, Barba pursued it beyond its welcome and beyond the patience of doers and watchers. As one would expect, the conglomeration of brief generalisations and quick gestures yielded no insights.

The 10th International Session of the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) in Copenhagen 3-12 May 1996

The moving of a nation

Wesley Enoch assesses the first National Indigenous Writers' and Playwrights' Conference and Workshop in Brisbane in the context of the Port Arthur massacre

Sunday April 28 will be a date remembered by Tasmanians and all Australians for some time to come. The extraordinary effect of the events of the day on the collective psyche of this country is palpable; a discernible shift in the way we see the world. It is a source of consternation for me as an indigenous Australian to see headlines like "Largest Australian Massacre" and "Worst Massacre Ever Seen In This Country". Though I am not trying to dismiss the enormity of the loss of lives at the hands of a heavily armed gunman, I am however reminded of the events of 1830 when 5000 British soldiers lined up across the island colony of Tasmania and systematically captured and shot a good part of the indigenous population of the island. I understand that the expansion of communication technologies means that news and community reaction are less separated by time and research, and that the rule of thumb is to sensationalise, but such a mass response based on the continuation of the Lie (which started with Terra Nullius and has still not been exorcised even after the Murrie Island/Mabo decision) is a telling reminder of whose story gets told and the failure of migrant (ie non-indigenous) Australia to come to grips with the indigenous history of this country.

The most powerful coverage of the Port Arthur tragedy by the broadcast media was that which relied on fact (the hard evidence, times, ages, people, numbers, places) and the personal accounts (the perspectives of those who had witnessed the event). The power of the personal storytelling, seeing the world through the eyes of those people, provided the best radio and television I have ever been audience to. Those who control the means to tell their story can powerfully represent their case; enough to move a nation.

April 28 1996 marked the first National Indigenous Writers' and Playwrights' Conference and Workshop—*Mogwi-Djan* (Stories of the Land). The conference was held in Brisbane and was the largest gathering of its kind ever seen. Previously, gatherings had been separated by artform practice with the Playwrights' Conferences (the last one being held in 1989 in Sydney) and Writers' Conferences (Brambuk, 1993). Conference organisers recorded the attendance of over 120 poets, novelists, journalists, illustrators, broadcasters, playwrights, actors, directors, video and film writers, storytellers, producers, publishers and so on. Though not as discernible a shift in the national psyche as the event at Port Arthur, it did parallel the need to come to terms with an injustice.

The Conference spanned one wet, Queensland week and was divided into a number of strands—playscript workshops, discussion groups and large forums. The Playwrights' component comprised the workshopping of scripts by indigenous writers such as Ray Kelly, Cathy Craigie, Rae Kelly (no relation), Roger Bennett, Jo-Ann Close, and discussion groups concerning issues as diverse as what theatre companies look for in a script, how to write a play/script, targeting your audience and editorial rights and control over your play. There seemed an ever-present tension between professional and emerging artists within the conference. Many delegates wanted practical skills-based sessions, growing irritated with the peer discussions and updates preferred by the professional artists present. This tension often meant that discussion was kept at a lowest common denominator. But, as at all conferences, much of the benefit of attendance was derived from social interaction.

Continuing the trend of the past few years, biographical and autobiographical work formed the majority of the scripts workshopped. This phenomenon is clearly a manifestation of the need to tell our stories and our histories from our perspective. In an environment where the dominant culture saturates the media with representations of their form, image and perspectives, the struggle to express a diverse indigenous experience is difficult. Delegates expressed concern at the expectation of an homogenous sense of style that is Indigenous Theatre. During the Conference there was controversy over an interview screened on ABC TV's *Review* program where Mudrooroo Narogin (who had not attended the conference) made comments on the notion of a black style of writing, implying that much of what is published in the name of indigenous writing is perhaps not in a black style. The assertion that there is a uniform Aboriginal experience that creates a unilaterally recognisable black style is damaging to the development of indigenous writing. There are as many styles of Aboriginal Theatre as there are different writers, clans, languages and histories. Though there are similarities perhaps in theme as we come to terms with the similarities of our histories, the differences are marked by the diversity of approaches and particulars of our stories. Only writers, through connection to their communities, can articulate their style as part of the indigenous cultural continuum.

The need for indigenous writers to control their forms of representation, was an informal theme of the conference, with playwrights arguing the diluting effect of having non-indigenous dramaturgs and/or directors at other such conferences. An environment in which intracultural issues could be discussed without the need to make excuses or be cast in the role of educator, seemed to be of high importance. The counter argument concerned the need for professional advice and the lack of skilled indigenous people in the areas of script and writer support. In the end, given that the workshopping of scripts was confined to one five-hour session and that very few writers, directors or actors had prior notice of the schedule, the attendance and commitment to this component of the conference was poor. The overall commitment of the delegates to any in-depth work was on the whole disappointing. Those sessions that did spark lively discussion seemed to many delegates to focus on an ever-present need to reiterate and reinforce arguments that are at the base of indigenous sovereignty—the injustice perpetrated, the continuation of cultural practices, the need for change and to remain strong in the face of adversity.

Ultimately the question arises, is this the best format to support emerging works or artists? The short term nature of such conferences means that artists and their work are thrown into a boiling vat of opinion where success is measured by your ability to ride above the need of people to assume your work is faulty and hence in need of them. This said, the benefit of hearing and seeing the script workshopped cannot be underestimated. But what use is the workshopping of scripts if they are ultimately not produced? The absence of producers at the event was an example of how such conferences can become an end in themselves.

The major recommendations to come out of the conference were based on issues of cultural protocols and connections to communities plus the need to have separate writers' and playwrights' conferences given the differences in practice; increased attendance of producers, actors and directors and the need to have such conferences more regularly (it was recommended that the next conference be held in Perth, dates to be worked out down the track). But who takes all this stuff on board? Though we as a community talk about the need to be self-determining in the creation and promotion of our works, we fell back into the trap of thinking that government must provide the answers to our problems. I agree that subsidy is needed to support the arts and that it is ludicrous to believe that support for the arts in its diversity can all come through corporate sponsorship, but I believe that institutions like the Australia Council must be kept responsive to artists and not necessarily be seen as leaders. Example: one of the calls from the conference was for the establishment of an indigenous publishing house. It was seen as a necessity for the government to set up this entity to benefit the black writers present as opposed to lobbying amongst the assembled talents to develop a proposal to take to funding agencies. Many recommendations were made but who is responsible for implementing, resourcing and monitoring them? From this conference everything goes back to the Australia Council, the major sponsors and instigators of the conference.

Mogwi-Djan must be viewed as part of the continuing development of indigenous writing and artists. The maturation of our identity within a contemporary context, the development of style and debate and the identified control over our representation are on-going issues for indigenous writers. The need to tell a story surfaces as a strategy to assert different perspectives; to see the world as if through other eyes; to move a nation; to affect the national psyche—in the belief that the story is more powerful than violence.

Wesley Enoch is the Artistic Director of Kooemba Jdarra based in Brisbane and the co-writer/director of The 7 Stages of Grieving *currently touring nationally.*

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Residencies, nomadism and the new internationalism

Nicholas Tsoutas tells Keith Gallasch about the inspiring Res Artis conference in Dublin

In his Artspace office in Woollomooloo, Sydney, director Nicholas Tsoutas picks deliberately through a box of catalogues, brochures, photographs and documents like a traveller with proof of rich and delicate discoveries. His is not the empty gesture of the returning soldiers in Jean Luc Godard's *Les Carabiniers* as they relentlessly fling down their trophies of colonial war—postcards, postcards and more postcards. Even if the issues do again turn out to be globalism and colonialism, Tsoutas' adventure, a last minute dash to the Res Artis conference in Dublin with the assistance of Museums Australia and the NSW Government, is a real adventure with potential rewards for Australian artists, not only in terms of awareness of and access to overseas residencies, but in how we think about artists' residencies in Australia.

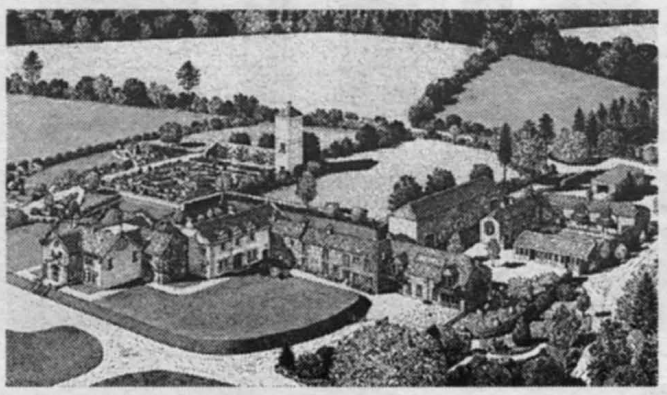
Tsoutas was attracted to the conference because of the dilemmas inherent in Artspace's own experience with its studio spaces and because the notion of residency is underdeveloped in Australia. What he was alerted to at the Dublin conference was the sheer variety of residencies available, of the means of operation, of genuine concern for the artist and for process over product.

"The conference", says Tsoutas, "was a clearing house of information and ideas. This was the first residency conference, aiming to get as many of these organisations as possible together to form a loose coalition to exchange information, ideas on practice and priorities. It was attended by some 70 participants from around the world, mostly residential centre directors, mostly from Europe—Austria, Portugal, Spain, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, the UK and Lithuania. Senegal, Kenya, India, Ecuador, Canada, Australia and the US were also represented.

"On the one hand it was a professional conference about making the centres more accessible and promoting them but also about looking at the future of art in the residential context—the fact that process is central to their existence—and how to work better with artists and to know what they need."

Tsoutas' excitement is heightened by his discovery of "an enormous generosity, a renaissance sense of the arts, of all the residential directors being there to facilitate art, to help artists, of operating beyond bureaucracy to privilege the artist's creation, not in an unproblematised way but in context".

This context ranges from the financial support the artist needs, including budgets for materials, to cultural conditions so that the artist is not disadvantaged at the moment when they're supposed to be privileged. The residencies in India and Ecuador entail introductions to their respective cultures. The Lithuanian centre worries at 'weather depression' in the winter working against the creativity of artists from the tropics. A residency has to be workable. The Fire Station Artists' Studio in a poorer part of Dublin, says Tsoutas, runs a residency program where the artist is likely to find themselves socially engaged. "The dilemma is who is to be privileged by the residency, the artist or the community. The centre's firebrand director says his aim is community betterment but work for artists is extremely draining—there's not much room for them to construct their own discourse and artistic enterprise. However, there was still an old socialist principle at work which does give you something important as an artist."



The Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig

A sense of context was furthered by UNESCO representation. "UNESCO is a great resource for emerging countries and it prompted the debate on the multicultural meanings of culture. Michael Haerdter, president of Res Artis and director of Künstlerhaus Bethanien, argued that art has always been an exchange beyond cultural specifics, a more mobile discourse. Residences, he said, are nomadic, facilitating cultural movement. Culture is exchangeable, it is not object-oriented. It invests in people and that's what residencies are about. Which is what our Artspace and NSW Ministry studios and residencies are about—spaces in which to think through, to work through something. The artist might be writing rather than making an object, or developing a film script."

"Ireland itself is a very good example of how residencies can work and quite differently from the Fire Station Artists' Studios. In County Monaghan there's the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, where the stables have been converted into live-in studios, some of which can take whole families. The focus appears to be on literature but the Guthrie Centre is open to all disciplines. You can choose a residency involving interaction between artists, or you can go into a retreat in private areas in a totally rural setting. The centre is beautiful, it has a lake, it's well-staffed for the management of the estate and for cooking. Artists are invited to complete projects or to do research, the expectations are minimal.

"At the Irish Museum in Dublin, the studios are in the former stables, again. Never the main house, always the stables and the gate houses for artists! But they're beautiful, come with a stipend, not huge but all costs are met and the residencies are international. The museum is not unlike our MCA in Sydney but the difference is in its commitment to process. The museum promotes Irishness but in an international context, a Chicano artist was resident at the time. The Irish Arts Council too has a very international program with an excellent deal with Aer Lingus—any Irish artist invited anywhere in the world has a free flight. Here we have to beg. There's also a lot of development money into Dublin coming through the EC and the rock band U2 invest heavily in the city. And so has Microsoft, in a centre called Arthouse.

"Arthouse is in Temple Bar the cultural district of Dublin. This place has the equal fastest ISDN link in all of Europe and offers a multimedia centre with artist access, it computer catalogues artists' works and it has an internet cafe. Microsoft came in and gave them everything, research and development facilities, production services. It's not a live-in residency, but you can go there and make your own work with total back up."

Speaking of sponsorship, Tsoutas reports that one of the more popular sessions was on fund raising and dealing with deficits. As usual it was clear that Australian artists operate without philanthropic support, quite unlike the US and Europe, where estates are bequeathed to the arts and castles can become residential art centres. The Eleanor Dark and Arthur Boyd bequests provide the rare exceptions in Australia. Res Artis is attempting to set up a data base, available on the internet, which notes individuals and families likely to venture into philanthropy, a kind of deceased estates register. Residencies in Europe have to fight for support but are still more likely to receive it even when they're supporting provocative young artists. In Australia, of course it's different, sponsorship going to major, conservative organisations, not to those offering artistic and political challenges.

"Overall," says Tsoutas, "the conference alerted me to the new internationalism and the mobility that can go with it. Of course, members were shocked when they found out how much it cost to send me to the conference—they can catch a train or drive across Europe. The conference also confirmed the Artspace commitment to process. We can't just be a site of production, which is the way funding bodies see us. We encourage debate through seminars and conferences, but we don't get funding for them. Resident artists get the studio but they subsidise their own presence, whereas many of the overseas residencies offer the studio, material and publication budgets, and some way to allow the artist to live properly. We aren't funded to do this and we can't get the sponsorship for it. "

Tsoutas got to speak at the plenary session, arguing for debate on the meanings of culture at the next conference (possibly at one of the French centres in 1997). He'd been troubled that the concerns of the conference had been pragmatic, not surprising given that it was a first meeting. "If anything connected us it was the diversity of cultures and that's what we should be looking at, at cultural diversity in an international context, at interculturalism, at how cultures talk to each other—and against each other—especially at a conference where everyone was speaking English but engaging through 20 other languages during the breaks. There are some major contributors to that debate who could attend but the emphasis should still be on the residency directors instead of privileging the intellectual heavyweights. The proposal was unanimously accepted. I've been invited to construct the premise for such an exchange. I also argued for a South-East Asian presence at the next conference and alerted participants to Australia's shift away from Eurocentrism and that it was not just an economic shift."

Tsoutas had a lot more in his traveller's store of treasures, especially about young Irish artists, provocative, innovative and internationally mobile. Perhaps he'll bring some of them to Australia. He'd also like to get back to Dublin to journey the new Samuel Beckett Walk, a pleasure his tight schedule did not allow.

Res Artis Conference, Dublin and Annaghmakerrig, May 1-5
Res Artis, the International Association of Residential Arts Centres and Networks, c/o Künstlerhaus, Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, D-10997 Berlin. Tel: +49 30 616 9030 Fax: +49 30 616 90 330

Copyrighting wrongs

Suzanne Spunner reports the issues raised by the *Copyrites* exhibition

At the opening of *Copyrites* in Darwin at the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT, Marcia Langton, Ranger Professor of Aboriginal Studies at the Northern Territory University spoke about the way that unauthorised reproductions "reduce the cultural power of Aboriginal art (which) provides for all Australians a set of icons and a set of meanings about the landscape and the people in the landscape on which they can rely for their humanity".

The concept of Terra Nullius erased the Aboriginal people from the land so that it could be occupied without treaty or reparation, and a similarly convenient fiction postulated that Aboriginal art was a body of non-specific ancient designs owned by an amorphous extinct collective. Moreover, the art itself couldn't be worth much as it was so simple and, in any case, Aboriginal people weren't interested in money. Versions of this attitude licensed a laissez faire approach to the use of Aboriginal imagery as if it were part of some clip art repository of Orthentic Orstraylyan imagery available to all genuine Australians.

It assumed that there were no living, practising Aboriginal artists or if there were, they were so traditional and living in such remote places that they would never come across the tea towel or T-shirt and what they didn't know couldn't hurt anyone. It assumed the art lacked any of the intrinsic qualities of western art which make it valuable, respected, revered. In short, wholesale appropriation was predicated on the art not being real art. Regarding the land and the art as empty of people and devoid of meaning made it easy to appropriate them.

The existence of Aboriginal copyright has been actively asserted by Aboriginal people in public for over twenty years. The great Yirrkala artist, Wandjuk Marika, the first chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board, put the issue on the arts agenda in 1974 after he saw a tea towel on sale in a souvenir shop in Cairns. The tea towel had his, his father's and his tribe's paintings on it.

"They thought they are just pleasure paintings...I was shocked and I lose my power to paint, lose my power for a number of years." For the loss was not economic but spiritual, and he asked, "Who's going to help stop this copyright stealing?" The first remedy sought was protection of authenticity as Aboriginal "folklore". It was only in the 1980s that it was successfully argued that Aboriginal art was art per se and therefore automatically protected by copyright.

Copyrites opened in February, appropriately in Cairns, the epicentre of international in-bound tourism whose souvenir industry has garnered a reputation as the Black Spot. It was the Cairns based company Flash Screen printers who were taken to court by Maningrida artist Johnny Bulun Bulun for the unauthorised reproduction of a number of his bark paintings on T-shirts. In the Federal Court in Darwin, Bulun Bulun won an injunction and an out of court settlement in 1989, and established the precedent that even the most traditional of Aboriginal artists would satisfy the legal requirements of originality. This test case involved thirteen other plaintiffs from seven Territory communities, all of whom had painted their own Dreamings.

The avowed intention of *Copyrites* is educational—it teaches and warns of the consequences of copyright infringement by detailing all the major cases. Its method is to exhibit the original art (or, ironically, an excellent copy) alongside its unauthorised application. In the case of the T-shirts the artistic gap between the art and the object is invariably blatant—there's something pathetic about seeing T-shirts and cheap printed sarongs hung on the wall.

The contrast between the paintings and the carpets is much more powerful and more subtle. The carpets are large and lushly made, and the similarity in scale and weight blurs the issue at first. To have gone to so much expense and trouble to produce the carpet, it seems inconceivable that permissions weren't sought. How did they ever imagine such an oversight would go unnoticed? The 1994 Carpet Case which involved eight Territory artists became known as the Mabo of Aboriginal Culture because the judge awarded the artists additional damages to reflect the cultural hurt and harm that had been done.

The House of Aboriginality from *Copyrites* catalogue

Copyrites also details other cases where good intentions went astray as in the notorious and embarrassing examples involving the Reserve Bank's apparent inability to learn from its mistake in the case of David Malangi and the one dollar note in 1966; in 1989 Terry Yumbulul, another NE Arnhemland artist took them to court over the depiction of his Morning Star Pole on the ten dollar note!

The formation and activities of NIAA (National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association) which include the development of an Authenticity mark should prevent transgressions in the future but it is equally important that copyright becomes a positive and enabling tool which disseminates appropriate Aboriginal-informed product and returns financial dividends to its owners and guides and educates consumers. An immediate response to *Copyrites* was the instigation in Central Australia of the first Copyright Forum which was held this month in conjunction with the exhibition in Alice Springs. The forum was organised by Desarts and the NT Office of the Arts and funded by ATSIC and brought together speakers from NIAA, the Arts Law Centre and VISCOPY to meet Centralian artists and art advisers.

Copyrites, Aboriginal Art in the Age of Reproductive Technologies, *curated by Vivien Johnson and undertaken by NIAA currently touring through the Visions of Australia program. Following Cairns, Darwin and Alice Springs, it appears at Tandanya, Adelaide June 7-July 7; Broken Hill City Art Gallery, July 16-August 11; Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 21-October 21.*
NIAA has published a detailed catalogue to accompany the Copyrites *exhibition. For information phone 02 281 2144*

True blue

29/4/96
Cira La Giola
IRAA Theatre

Dear Cira,

Thank you for your fax enquiring about why we hadn't reviewed IRAA's *The Blue Hour* in *Realtime#12*.

I saw the production in the Adelaide Festival and I was going to respond to it in *RealTime#12* but decided not to for the following reasons.

I was disappointed with *The Blue Hour*. Though an intended homage to Kantor, I found it derivative, in general, of Kantor's style and concerns.

Homage is fine, but not if it refuses to engage critically and aesthetically with Kantor's vision, and not if it lacks the precision and the sense of unfolding time and space of the master.

In addition, *The Blue Hour's* similarity to Kantor's *Wielopole-Wielopole* from props, to set, to characters, scenario and Kantor's role, was alarming.

This is a larger problem than mere imitation or postmodern appropriation.

Rather than write immediately in *RT#12* I decided to ask Renato Cuocolo to explain his actions.

This letter invites Renato Cuocolo to explain the overt affinity between *The Blue Hour* and *Wielopole-Wielopole*. Why did he decide to reproduce the characters, set, props, broad scenario and specific scenes from the original?

These dominate Cuocolo's production.

Yours sincerely,
Keith Gallasch
Publishing editor

To Keith Gallasch
RealTime

Melbourne 17 May 1996

The Blue Hour *is dedicated to and inspired by the theatre of Tadeusz Kantor. The great Polish artist who died in 1990, has been for me an unsurpassable master. I have tried to work on my memory of his theatre, in particular from* Wielopole-Wielopole. *Of this work I have used parts of the text, scenic elements and reproduced some scenes (the photograph, the wedding and the final table scene). My relationship with Kantor is based on the passion for theatre that his work inspired in me when I saw* Wielopole-Wielopole *in Florence in 1982.* The Blue Hour *is born from the desire to try to do theatre the way Kantor did and while doing this to penetrate the essence of his art and pay homage to his work".*

Renato Cuocolo.

I quote this paragraph from the list of credits for *The Blue Hour* which was distributed to audience members during the Melbourne season of the play. The answer to the question of why there is an affinity between *The Blue Hour* and *Wielopole-Wielopole* is there.

I wanted the play infused as a whole by a "Kantorian" style. *The Blue Hour* however is a work on migration and exile, these themes develop from a post war background which is the part where I draw from *Wielopole*, but then expand characters' development, images, texts, into another direction which is most relevant to my concerns, my own cultural background and the context where I now produce my work.

There are other, acknowledged, influences in the *The Blue Hour*, they are central to the way I have conceived the piece, and to the direction it departs from Kantor, these are primarily Danilo Kis and Chekov. The characters of the soldier and of the mother for instance, which are pivotal to the whole construction of the play, bear a very superficial, initial, resemblance to Kantor's, then depart substantially. For the parts in *The Blue Hour* which quote *Wielopole-Wielopole* to be recognised as Kantor's was integral to my declared intention of paying tribute to his work, of starting from his work to develop further themes and images which in the end do not belong to Kantor but to my own poetic world, style, themes.

To concentrate on Kantor in a way that ignores my stated intention and to go no further than that in the analysis of the play is a process that distorts the reality of my work and certainly I would have hoped for greater attention than that.

The style of acting, the physicality of it, the "staccato" rhythm intercalating very slow tempos with highly pitched ones are hallmarks of IRAA's style and they pervade the performance. As for my production lacking "the precision and the sense of unfolding time and space of the master", of all criticism one can do of my work and that of my actors, precision has never been in question, it is acknowledged even by my most destructive critics, who appear to be concentrating in Sydney.

I don't know how other people, who claim a deeper insight and knowledge of Kantor's work and call him master, "engage critically and aesthetically with his vision", for me this is the only way to use knowledge, I put it into practice, I verify its connection with my work. Then my work is there for people to see, the rest is opinions and on the subject there can be many.

In the end, I can only reflect on how far is all this from the concerns and the way of relating to theatre of normal audiences, where by "normal" I mean people who go to the theatre for their delight and enjoyment, who do not belong to the "industry", to the "peer's network" with the many overlapping concerns of their multiple functions which makes of them forever disappointed audience members, unless the theatre comes from overseas. Tadeusz Kantor was old when he started to be recognised and it was not long before he died that he was performing in the Edinburgh Fringe. I wonder, had he been Australian, how many supporters he would have had here, for how long, and, in the best of hypotheses, how his sense of unfolding time would have developed in four week rehearsals.

Thank you for inviting my point of view on *The Blue Hour*.

Renato Cuocolo

Can you hear me? What is sound art?

Nicholas Gebhardt is saturated with *SoundCulture* in San Francisco

Over ten days in early April, *SoundCulture,* the third trans-Pacific festival of sonic art and sound practice took place in and around San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Marin County, San Jose and Santa Cruz. While I haven't dealt with everything in the festival, I've tried to draw out some of the conceptual questions that emerged over what was a large and often diffuse event.

Events like *SoundCulture,* which capitalise on the massive expansion of both aesthetic theory, cultural analytics and technological invention, demonstrate the difficulty of locating (and organising) a specific concept of art in favour of a highly deregulated field of artistic production in which, ultimately, anything (and everything) goes. Hybridity was the dominant formula through which much of the work was rendered. Yet the attempt to draw together such apparently disparate elements as contemporary music, sculpture, screen-based art, sound design, radiophonic arts, performance, scientific research, philosophy and DJ culture into an argument about the encompassing nature of sound was bound to run into all sorts of conceptual, sensory and geographical problems.

That we are adrift among an infinite continuum of sounds is the underlying assumption circulating through a lot of musicology, cultural studies, historical studies and aesthetics. *SoundCulture,* as a combination of exhibitions, a symposium, performances, films, and radio broadcasts attempted to give a shape to this assumption, to propose a pedagogy of sound that rested on the idea. In light of this, several questions seemed consistently important. What could a pedagogy of sound do? What are its concepts? In what way could sound be understood as the material for art, for cultural analysis, for history and for thought? And how is this pedagogy different from musical thought?

After ten days of listening, of concentrated listening—to performances, to films, to talks, to radio—certain things became apparent: the appearance of sound is no longer tied to a concept of composition, but instead, resides in an endless process of remixing and sampling; the forms of sound are subject to a series of infinite electronic manipulations that increasingly combine what is heard with the object of our hearing; and the nature of sound is conditioned by the degree of our immersion in a given sound event. The sound event, in this case, was defined in the very *process* of amplification, through an infinite micrology or ecology of sounds that became the total amplitude or effect of the environment in which they were heard.

In this sense, composer Ron Kuivila's work at San Francisco's The Lab of Parsable, marked out a distinction between audibility and inaudibility based on localisation; that is, the distribution of frequencies in the space was dependent on *where* and *when* or *how* you were listening. Various electric charges become sonorous across a range of conductive materials (foil, wiring etc.) along with a surveillance system that tracks movement, as well as sunglasses suspended on wire that also track movement and pulse to 300bpm, and antennae that shake suspended keys whenever the sunglasses find someone moving in the room.

There was still, however, a movement or intensity between the various electrical timbres that set off qualitative shifts in the blocs of sound, that created a sense of the duration of the work: loud sparks, a rising and falling hum, the metrical calculation of the beats, the shimmering wall, the incessant rattling or jingling of the keys, tones that combined to reconfigure the compositional plane around acts of currency, around degrees of motion that, ultimately, pushed it towards the moment of indeterminacy.

Another work which confronted similar problems of how to transform the materials of violence and oppression into a sensation, to give it an affective and perceptive form, was Nigel Helyer's *Silent Forest,* augmented since it was shown at the Annandale Galleries earlier this year. Helyer's attention to an extreme clarity of design (metallic, glass and copper surfaces) using all manner of scientific and military references (metallic structures, glass beakers, air raid sirens etc.) to develop a motif of cultural, vegetal and sonic silence amongst the traces of war and colonialism in Vietnam, produced an unsettling series of structures. The political contortions and the military invasions that have produced such violence were, however, smothered beneath the fetishism of the large, metallic and glass objects and a mystification of the work's sonorous plane.

Silent Forest's sheer surfaces and heightened attention to the detail of solid line overwhelmed the ambient noise and sounds coming from the speakers and ultimately led you back to the seductive power of the forces that have the technological and economic capacity to transform a forest into a biological war zone or turn an opera house into a military headquarters. The sounds had that eerie sense that air raid sirens never fail to produce (it's a fine line between affective sound and aural cliché, a sound effect), but the other references to opera and forest sounds were lost in the size of the structures. Rather than creating the problem of silence as a potential limit of or relation to noise and organised sounds, the sonorities functioned more as a massive abstraction, a sound effect that disappeared into the formal properties of the design.

The tendency towards sound as an effect—of space, of a visual image, of informatics, of technology—dominated a lot of the festival's events. A concert at Mills College featured a range of musical performances that used live electronics and samples. The various compositions emphasised the problems facing composers and artists who use sound: how to find a way out of the potential chaos in a post-Cagean sound world. By opening music to all sounds, to all events, there's the possibility that in the end all you do is reproduce the same event over and over, or what is left is a sheer surface that prevents anything from happening at all.

The *Sheer Frost Orchestra,* an all-female electric guitar orchestra in which the guitars were laid end to end on a stage and then played using a range of movements generated by the glass bottoms of nail polish bottles, attempted to carve out a different musical cartography around the electric guitar. Different overtones are produced by the meeting of glass and string and the timbral variation is controlled by the players and the various bottle shapes. There was no consistency however, no attempt to extract from the guitar a different movement, a different affective force. Simplistic references in the program notes to overturning the iconography of the guitar failed to compensate for a musical plane that only ever worked in relation to the inventions of Jimmy Hendrix, Prince, Freddie Green etc. Its form was primarily reactive (performers responding to other performers) and depended on a nominal improvised quality that marked out its own impossibility very quickly.

Ikue Mori, famous for her work with the New York New Wave band *DNA* and her improvisations with John Zorn, Fred Frith and others at the Knitting Factory in the eighties, offered several pieces for drum machines. To play several drum machines requires an extraordinary invention along a musical plane. By itself, however, it was a display of sound effects, more like a demonstration of what a drum machine could do. The rest of the concert included more traditional electronic compositions by John Bishoff, Kenneth Atchley, Maggi Payne and Chris Brown that pointed to the infinite potential for a non-chromatic sound field to become reified in space as a question of volume, and that collapsed the differentiation of the sonorous material into a projection of the matter in space as the essence of that space.

So we moved around the city, from electroacoustic music to plunderphonics and on to DJ culture. Mostly, sound was reduced to a representation of a soundscape, a sign of something else—a landscape, a reproductive force (hence the preference for sampling and mixing as method). It got to the point where all the sonic properties were dissolved into their environment, appeared as manifestations of that environment, and finally, acted as the aural limits of any/all space. The problem with this image of sound is that it sets in motion a logic of resemblance, either of perceptible forms (in the case of analogy) or of intelligible structures (in the case of digital processes) that pass from digitised analogy to amplified environment—a doubling up of nature and informatics based on a massive confusion of science and art where one is constantly trying to become the other; a movement which creates, in Deleuze's terms, neither sensation nor concept.

And yet, the concept of silence kept turning up everywhere despite the usual attempts to suppress it as the negative of environment, of space, of immersion, of life. Yuji Sone directly confronted this question in his work *What Is Sound Art?*, raising the problem of the translation, the movement between types of silence, between words that sound and sounds that mark out the systematic forms of cultural lexicon. Silence was internalised as a passing between things, the rhythmic relation between a type, a genus, a form, an image, and a people, rather than a point of entropy, a black hole into which sound slides when it is no longer heard (or, in this case, understood). Sone put an infinite series to work as each new mishearing / misunderstanding undermined the formal logic of intercultural or informatic exchange.

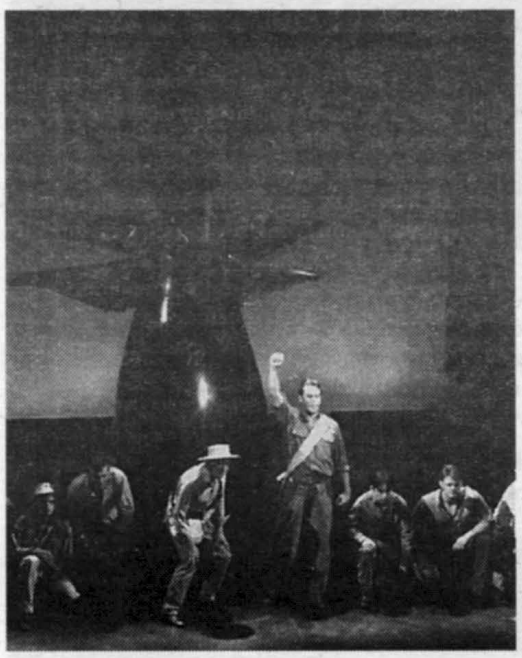
The compositional imperatives that run through an event like this, even as the connections to musical thought are twisted and shifted and confronted, mean that the question of what sound art is in relation to a presupposed culture of sound is continually turning back on the question of music itself (which seems to me to be of more importance and in a sense more interesting). The performance of *PHFFF* by the Dutch composer Trimpin along with composer and musician Beth Custer produced a formidable consolidation of wind, of digital processes, of movement and of improvisation that demonstrated the necessity of a compositional plane that does more than reproduce the logic of communications technologies and the market. Trimpin's installation opened the elemental forces of the wind (through a collection of large pitched pipes, reeds, flutes, and whistles) to the forces of robotics (the computer), but in such a way as to create a consistency of harmonic relations that made the room spin even as the improvised lines of Beth Custer's bass clarinet and saxophone cut a melodic path through the tempered air flows.

Over the course of *SoundCulture* the power of indeterminacy and deregulation to dissolve distinctions, to render boundaries incomplete, to make of art simply an expression of life, made it difficult to move further than the vague categories of novelty, experience and freedom as the basis for an understanding of sound. More than anyone, Trimpin's installation and the performance with Beth Custer marked out an inventive phase for thinking about sound that moved away from sound as simply an effect of technological space or as the encompassing representation of a landscape. The difficulty for *SoundCulture* now lies in creating or inventing blocs or compounds of sensation that do more than replicate the laws of technology and the market, that break through the mould of those communications systems that place sound as both a sign of life and the end of thought.

Opera lost and found

Ewart Shaw enjoys a Villa Lobos at the Ballarat Opera Festival

Someone obviously looked at Her Majesty's in Ballarat and said "This looks like a great place for an opera festival". They were pretty close. Ballarat's got great gold rush architecture, more public sculpture than any other comparable city, a strong local musical culture centred on the South Street Eisteddfod, good restaurants, and a theatre bar that serves half bottles of champagne for $5. It also has on offer a festival with two operas, some concerts and a weekend away—the sort of thing we should all do more often. The real treat promised to be Heitor Villa-Lobos' only musical comedy *Magdalena*.



Martin Lane as Pedro in *Magdalena*

There are a series of mysteries around this *Magdalena*. For a start, there isn't a character in the show called Magdalena. Secondly, why should any entrepreneur want Heitor Villa Lobos to write a musical comedy and then give him a plot that Offenbach (had he lived) would have delighted in? The people behind this curious alliance were the guys responsible for *Song of Norway* (music of Greig) and *Kismet* (tunes of Borodin). At least Villa Lobos was alive at the time. The answer to its appearance at the Ballarat Opera Festival is that this work contains a lot of fine music, an interesting set of characters, some great theatrical possibilities and it hasn't been done here before. So rare are performances of the opera that the score we heard was reconstructed by a young American conductor, Evans Haile, who has seen the resurrection of *Magdalena* as a personal crusade. There are no big tunes in this show, just the opportunity for big impressions. Some of them were made and some of them missed. The story: a gourmand general holidaying in Paris has to return home to his banana split republic to quell the unrest at the emerald mines fomented by a handsome young rogue who is in love with the heroine whose Christian duty is to prevent bloodshed at all costs even to the extent of marrying said gourmand general. This enrages the gourmand general's French chef mistress so that she kills him with kindness, feeding him to death. Very Monty Anaconda.

David Chisholm's direction was cleanest when the chorus was off-stage. He hasn't got the hang of faking fiestas yet, or developing religious rituals that look as if anything means anything to anyone: the totem toucan was passed around like a baby's toy. Christiana Plitzko's Botero influenced designs were suitably suitable, witty, stylish, complete with an expanding bus (the hero is a bus driver). There was a major miscalculation in the use of the inflatable set, pieces which probably cost a great deal and amused the stage crew, but added no impact to the show. The theft of the Madonna, a six foot high cross between a beach ball and a bowling pin, was rendered more ridiculous than sacrilegious, as the guerrillas had to pull out its plug and jump up and down on it to get the thing flat enough to roll up.

The stage pictures drawing clear contrasts between the two worlds in which the action takes place were fine; the initial vision of Paris had a Magritte surreality that contrasted effectively with the warmer colours of the Amazon scenes. Evans Haile worked hard to establish an identity for this unfamiliar work and to communicate to the players the exoticism of its tonal palette.

The percussion-enhanced Chamber Orchestra of Geelong, overflowing the small pit of the venerable theatre, surged through the exotic colours of the Villa-Lobos score. The chorus of locals in fancy dress who played the chorus of locals in fancy dress sang strongly. Many of them were on stage for the first time, always a bit of a risk in a festival, but Constance Coward Lemke, the chorus master (that's what she's called in the program) and Evans Haile got good things from them.

It's the women who save this one: two strong and clearly focussed sopranos pouring out an opulence of sound. Lisa Russell looked far too pink and blonde to be the hereditary jefa of any tribe except perhaps Frieslanders, but was touching and sincere enough that red blooded persons would want to whip out their machetes to clear a path to her door. However, wicked women are always much more fun. Roxane Hislop sank her teeth into the role of Madame Teresa, and hampered only by a costume that looked as if it had been cut from a vinyl table cloth last used for a game of chess, rampaged, roared and revenged herself with the sort of gusto that suggests a healthy appetite and a remarkably secure vocal technique.

As Pedro, the leader of the local resistance Martin Lane sang with his profile. He looked great, a sort of tough Guy Pearce, but he hadn't the voice for the venue, faint in solos and almost inaudible in the love duets and ensembles. Lewis Fiander, who has international credits longer than most good wine lists, wandered through the non-singing role of General Carabaña but managed not to be fat enough, or greasy enough to be really dislikeable. When he suggested marriage to the heroine it seemed like a good career move on her part. The politics of it, slavery in the emerald mines, low deeds in high places, cholesterol abuse, are sketched in.

The glance of the redeeming Madonna was crucial to the other opera in the Festival, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* by Massenet, so obviously the composer's attempt to sneak into heaven after all those operas about fallen women—Thais, Manon, Herodias. In France, according to one woman I overheard, it's done in schools. This production, at least, had a real statue of the Madonna and I couldn't help feeling that they could have used it for both operas. On the same stage Eileen Hannan, accompanied by Greg Roberts, gave an eccentrically programmed recital featuring brief excerpts from *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Katya Kabanova*, communicated with a direct authority that would have taught every member of both opera casts some very important lessons. She then sang *My Funny Valentine* with the same engagement, and that was a lesson in itself.

Ewart Shaw is an opera critic for The Adelaide Advertiser *and a long time staff member of Radio 5UV at the University of Adelaide.*

The Ballarat Opera Festival, Her Majesty's Theatre, Ballarat, March

Visual eats

Jacqueline Millner relishes *A Progressive Dinner*

Food lends itself easily to levity, particularly when it's in abundance. And levity was one of the abiding characteristics of the works which formed the visual arts component of *A Progressive Dinner*, The Performance Space's conference event this year. From monstrous lamingtons, to a wry but sumptuous take on cannibalism, these works celebrated the sensuality and atavistic nature of our relationship to food.

Fiona Hall, *The Social Fabric* photo: Heidrun Löhr

A certain asceticism was also struck, however, in a relatively solemn exhibition of still life paintings and photography, and the crisp, Spartan installation by Jackie Dunn. And sobriety and excess met rather starkly at the interface between dead serious legal professionals and putrefying art objects in the showcase windows of the local courts building in the city.

Installations in public places are difficult to pull off, especially when the connection between the thematic of an exhibition and its public context is not immediate. Many of the works in the Downing Centre vitrines failed to zing, perhaps swallowed up by the drab pinstripes and pumps of legal traffic. Able to cut right through its surroundings, however, was the outstanding piece of this group, Fiona Hall's moving portrait of her father, naked underneath a shroud woven from recyclable aluminium cans. Entitled *The Social Fabric*, this life-size cibachrome hung to the left of the main entrance to the building, unavoidable and confronting. The old man's naked vulnerability and open gaze contrasted with the impenetrability of business attire, his blanket at once a

Linda Sang, *Autophagy* photo: Heidrun Löhr

mockery of warmth and comfort and of protective mail. The social fabric may be nothing more than our shared partaking of consumer culture, and yet this old man's imploring directness reminds us of some more fundamental connection.

Austerity and method marked Jackie Dunn's installation at First Draft gallery, *Sift*, a behind-the-scenes look at the repressed aspects of food preparation. A cavernous space strewn with sawdust, a single exposed bulb hung low, the persistent drone of a huge ice box, and on the walls, an alphabetical litany of culinary exhortations: batter, braise, clarify, macerate, poach... the words an incantation, the refrigerator a reminder of the politics of perishability. What is at stake in what we eat? What vestiges lie hidden within the cool lines of this ice box? The space is clean and crisp, but no less heavy with a sense of butchery.

This weight provided apt ballast for the levity of the adjacent gallery space: an overgrown icon of Australian childhood, filling the room with its cloying sweetness and self-satisfied grin. Helen Hyatt-Johnston and Jane Polkinghorne collaborated to create an enormous lamington which squeezes the viewers to the edges of the room, a monument to appetite and self-indulgence titled *I'll have my cake and eat yours too*. With its overweening dimensions and minimalist line, this piece cannot but aver to high modernist sculpture, but with tongue firmly in cheek as traditional plaster gives way to icing sugar and cocoa. In affirming feminine greed and feminist interventions in the history of modernism—particularly through the strategic deployment of humour—this piece is a welcome breather from the inscrutable abstraction still in vogue around the traps. The spoof on the high modernist oeuvre extended to a 'mockumentary' on the process of constructing this piece and its reception on opening night, when a film crew stalked hapless attendees for their reactions.

Humour and the grotesque met also in Linda Sang's 'performance', *Autophagy*, which attracted a multitude of revellers on the opening night of the visual arts program to The Performance Space Studio. Clamouring around a Gothic table setting with silver candelabra aglow, the crowd greedily indulged in the feast before them—the artist's body, cast in its entirety in rice, vegetables and ricotta cheese, adorned with artichokes, pomegranates, and other exotic fruit. The cornucopia set a tone of celebration, but at the same time the ingestion of a woman's naked body, with its attendant metaphors, invited the audience to play at a debauchery verging on the sadistic—an amusing if disturbing experience.

Striking a more sober note in the Performance Space gallery was Isobel Johnston's studiously curated *Still Life*, comprising a range of Australian works from recent years with food as their central subject. The exhibition contrasted different cultural approaches to representing food within the format of still life painting—or still life photography aspiring to a painting aesthetic—with the selection of works arising from Koori, European and Asian traditions. This juxtaposition did evoke some illuminating distinctions, not least between, say, the fairly heavy-handed irony of Matthys Gerber and the delicate, spiritual compositions of Savanhdary Vongpoothorn.

Such a rich and all-embracing subject matter as the relationship between food and culture was bound to elicit an almost overwhelming diversity of artistic responses, many of which could not be covered here. While this diversity overload may have given the overall event a fragmented quality, certain individual works wrought full impact from the cacophony.

A Progressive Dinner, *Visual arts program, exhibited at The Performance Space, First Draft, Downing Centre, April 18-28*

A thousand words

Virginia Baxter and photographer Heidrun Löhr select from the feast of performance, discussion and ingestion that made up The Performance Space's *A Progressive Dinner,* April 18-28

1 At *The Beggar's Banquet* Rod Nash relives the futility and frustration of a broken jaw by strapping on petrol-powered mechanical Gladiator jaws and getting stuck into a bowl of carrots.

2 Alicia Rios, dinner guest from Spain, welcomes the audience to her *Mediterranean Symphony of the Senses* with a request that they don't consume the edible Athena until the end when everyone has had a chance to see her. A hundred people garland their heads and shoulders with ivy and sweet-smelling herbs and make their way through a room full of smells from kitchens, bedrooms and hillsides, the sounds of streets and forests, water, crowds, colours and textures of sand, stones, cloth, small painted objects. But first they do devour the effigy of the Goddess in sausage, basil, bread, pimentos and nougat. The organisers get out the ropes and put a barricade around *Heartfelt,* Mishka Borowski's meringue sculpture on the wall. In a frenzy of oral fixation, people have started to steal tastes of that too. *A Progressive Dinner* is underway and the crowd is hungry. Let's hope it's for art. At the end of the *Symphony* a group of flamenco dancers in red raises the dust and invites the audience to join them. Alicia Rios opens ten days of generosity and celebration of the possibilities of food by dismantling the whole exhibition and throwing it to the crowd. They devour the room.

3 In *Promiscuous Spaces: Table Talk,* Open City take to conversation with knives, forks, anything they can get their hands on— everything from personal dinner memories, food jokes to quotes from conference guest Margaret Visser's *Rituals of Dinner* to Richard Preston's gruesome viral predictions in *The Hot Zone*. This post-modern semi-improvised dinner theatre has the audience eating a three course meal made by Richard Byrne while the performers (Keith Gallasch, Jai McHenry, Dina Panozzo, Virginia Baxter) move through courses of conversation watched in close-up by Peter Oldham's video camera. Meanwhile, at the tables beyond the performers' hearing, the audience plays in their own promiscuous space.

4 Dina Panozzo enters the labyrinth at the *Symphony of the Senses,* opens a little box of flowers, sniffs and suddenly remembers her home town in northern Italy.

5 Sinologist, sensualist and writer Linda *(Eat Me)* Jaivin spits her own words to the bass accompaniment of Jonathan Nix.

6 Human pavlova Anna Kortschak (in *Fluffy)* lowers herself into a bath of eggwhite and offers the audience the eggbeaters at *The Beggars' Banquet.*

7 Richard Byrne from the Metronome Cafe, while whipping up cream for his dessert of one hundred stripey pears (*Promiscuous Spaces: Table Talk*) to the score for Hitchcock's *North by North West,* remembers his mother's white sugar sandwiches.

8 Festival guest Margaret Visser (*The Rituals of Dinner, Much Depends on Dinner*) speaks dialectically about Vegetarianism as nutritionally and morally inadequate but also as a prophetic movement, one that tells us about the structures of modern thinking about food.

9 Among the rude food at *The Last Aussie Barbecue,* members of the Fat Women's Collective (Sarah Goffman, Beth Eldridge) take to Hansel and Gretel in *we've eaten the boy.*

10 Anne Oliver and Sunday Hopkins *Dressed to Eat* (large colour photographs of women wearing chocolate and toffee dresses) have moved to the windows of Ariel Booksellers. The Performance Space Studio is now a laboratory where Regina Heilmann, Caitlin Newton-Broad, Gail Priest and Megan Elliott challenge the hygienic sterility of kitchen and bathroom. Four identical refrigerators, bath, scrubbed floor, audience in white rubber gloves.

11 In Penny Thwaite's *Art Class* at First Draft, children are welcome. Chewing and spitting are permissible, even preferable as the audience paints from a personal palette of foodstuffs.

12 The theatre fills with new smells, textures and tastes in *Makanan Upacara Adat,* an afternoon of Indonesian food rituals including a wedding ceremony from West Sumatra, a ceremony of seven-months of pregnancy from Java and a name giving ceremony from South Kalimantan and Borneo.

13 Catherine Fargher in satin, lolling on velvet tries to talk seriously about female sexuality and the sticky stuff in *Sugar Sugar.*

14 As the audience begin to gather in the park among Anne Graham's tent city installation for *The Beggars' Banquet,* Gay Bilson is worried she won't have enough to feed everyone. Two hundred people have turned up. It crosses my mind as I get closer to the table, watching her wielding the chopsticks, deftly assembling each bowl of her 'upstart gruel', "Why 'upstart'?" She fills my bowl with congee, fishballs, tofu, pickled cabbage, sambal, nuts, sesame oil. "Because Australia's is an upstart cuisine, don't you think?" At the end of the evening two hundred upstarts will blow a collective kiss to the cook who has provided so generously for each one of them. Gay Bilson takes a beer from Christopher Snee, an artist who's quality home-brew we've sampled through the night of food and performance, and sits down on the grass to catch the last few minutes of the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup.*

15 Another highlight among many at this supremely celebratory event, *This Most Wicked Body.* At one end of the table, sits ubiquitous food commentator Alan Saunders who knows how to behave when he comes across a difficult diner—no eye contact, just keep eating.

16 At the other end of the table, Nigel Kellaway attempts to seduce and cajole his silent dinner guest with a menacing monologue. The audience is the one seduced.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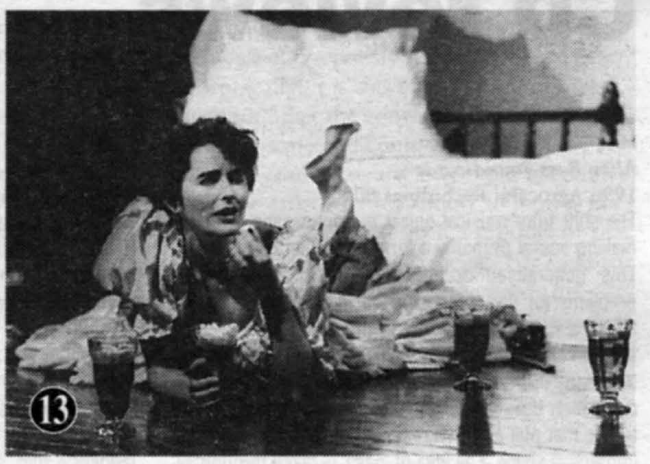
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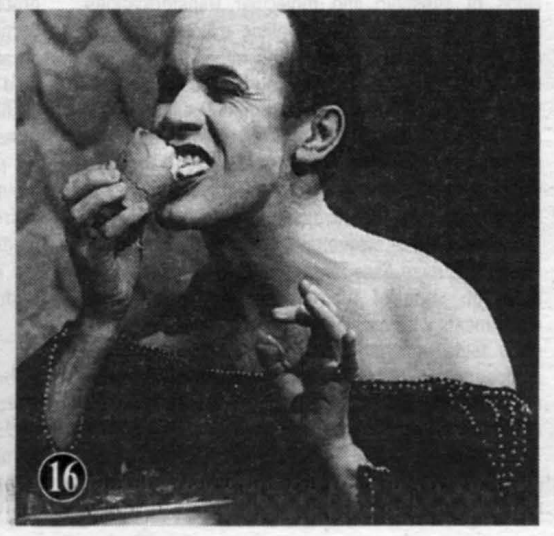
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Pleasures and sung paradoxes

Performer Carolyn Connors at New Music Tasmania, Australia's latest festival of contemporary music

What's new in music? Is your new my contemporary? Is my innovation a rehash, haven't improvisers heard of long notes, and why did the fringe and festival clubs retreat to endless African rhythms on the final Saturday night? Why didn't Hobart have a summer this year? Why do Tasmanian cabaret groups attempt so many scene changes? Why didn't anyone listen to community choir Sisongke's guerilla performance in the festival club foyer, and why did I hear a Bach and a Bruckner?

THE ORCHESTRAL

The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra began the festival with a concert of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, pleasing the enthusiastic audience which packed the Conservatorium Recital Hall. The *New Ways* concert premiered Dutch composer Hans Cox's *Green Face Suite*. This was followed by Elena Kats-Chernin's rhythmically insistent and energetic orchestra and tape piece *Clocks*. Gordon Kerry's *Nocturne* divides the ensemble in two and plays its stereo effects, though not oppositionally or comparatively. Phrases have unanticipated middles and endings or have and-another-thing! done to them. The concert concluded with Lutoslawski's stunning *Venetian Games*. The final orchestral concert *Minimalist Connections* started with John Adams' *Grand Pianola Music*, a shimmering and gushing Rachmaninov meets Terry Riley with too many inaccuracies to be considered a good performance. *On the Passing of Time* (world premiere) by Ray Marcellino blends composition and improvisation. The soloists—trombone, marimba and cello—present as distinct personalities with an occasional Hollywood Latin feel. The final piece was an exciting and edgy Australian premiere of Andriessen's *De Staat*, a relentless romp with serious intent. A minimalist piece can knock a confident singer off her perch without a moment's notice. Despite a rigorous practice period, each time I walked on stage to rehearse or perform the Adams I had no idea whether I could actually do it properly. Caught in a paradox of having to hear yet risking a fatal detour if seduced to listen, the performer is forced to create an internal isolation and a militaristic enunciation of her own part. The Adams did strange things to my brain, my understanding of performing, and my understanding of music.

THE IMPROVISERS

Artisans Workshop (Elliot Dalgleish, John Rogers, Adrian Sheriff, Jon Dimond and Ken Edie) contrasted any combination of pairs with larger ensemble work. These experienced and competent improvisers presented material whose unfolding journey was a pleasure to hear.

Stuart Campbell's and David Tolley's work preparation began from the time of their arrival in Hobart. Sharing a hotel suite, they sniffed each other out while coffeeing, strolling and concerting like an old married couple. Their performance was stunning. They employed an 'anything goes, the doors to our hearts and brains are open' approach. Materials included bubblewrap, teacups and an iron in the piano, lots of physical movement around the stage, spitting, guest Simone de Haan (festival artistic director) immobilised in a headlock, and enthusiastic jumping which made the lights on Tolley's equipment sway like a plane landing in a cyclone. The music was spontaneous, with Tolley's whimsical vocals and tasteful bass playing mixing well with Campbell's frenetic hit and run musical references and tangential vocal and piano work. They maintained their individual integrity throughout while their combined energy created a whole infinitely greater than the separate parts. They continued this energy the following evening with Pipeline, sometimes overshadowing fellow musicians de Haan and Daryl Pratt. Machine for Making Sense members Chris Mann (text, voice), Rik Rue (analogue and digital tape manipulations) and Jim Denley (winds, vocals) were joined by David Watson (guitar) and me, Carolyn Connors (voice). Machine is sonically speedy. Denley and I exist in similar time, thought and frequency bands: my aesthetic is sometimes closer to that of an instrumentalist and Denley has a refreshing absence of virtuosic duelling 19th century romantic saxophone jazz heroism—a combination that led to some unusual performance outcomes.

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY

After ten intensive days with Tasmanian and visiting instrumentalists, the National Academy presented two concerts. Driven by energetic enthusiasm and a clarity of intent, 'Chamber Ensembles' performed works by Benjamin, Ligeti and Meale. The Spring Quartet's performance of Ligeti's first string quartet displayed strong ensemble work and attention to detail. De Haan's conducting of Ligeti's *Chamber Concerto for 13 Instrumentalists* encouraged broad and dramatic gestures. The concert for trombone octet was less satisfying. The repertoire seems limited and I'm not convinced that it should be encouraged to expand.

THE CHAMBER RECITALS

Each concert in the Twilight Master Artists series was in an intimate, chamber music-sized venue. At the Playhouse, a cute little theatre, Gerald English sang a program of Britten, tastefully accompanied by Ian Munro (piano) and Marshall McGuire (harp). English is a mature gentleman with an air of relaxed professionalism. The most recent of the pieces was composed in 1976, the year of Britten's death. Although the songs encompassed a variety of moods and texts (Robert Burns, T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden) and English mostly managed to get where he wanted, I found the material and the concert a little tired, a little twee.

Jane Manning's concert was at the Synagogue. Manning sports impressive vocal control, an intelligent approach to song, is an entertaining performer, and gets Brownie points for singing directly under that chandelier. Her varied repertoire was well selected. Some of it had been written for her, including works for voice and tape and voice and prepared piano. Ultimately, however, I learnt little new about voice.

In contrast, Alain Trudel's solo trombone concert at the Penitentiary Chapel and Criminal Court made me sit up in my pew. This young Canadian is a virtuoso and his repertoire by Rabe, Scelsi, Stockhausen, Marcellino, Trudel and Dusapin enabled him to display his wonderful artistry. He plays with a warm, clear tone, has remarkable control and flexibility, and the facility to alter the trombone's tone colour by changing harmonic emphasis. Gorgeous multiphonics were shown off in *Basta* by Folke Rabe; the challenging Marcellino piece *Una Selva Selvaggia* had surprising results: the section with mute sounded like a bowed saw. Trudel's playing made me love all the works. I'm a sucker for virtuosity with at least half an idea, and Trudel truly delivered. Ah!

THE INSTALLATIONS

Iain Mott and Marc Raszewski's *Talking Chair* is an interactive environment which silently waits for a bum on its seat. Then it successfully pulls you into its orbit to take on the activities of conducting, performing, sounding and listening.

The floor space is entirely covered by Joan Brassil's *Randomly—Now and Then*. A brick path weaves through a field of gravel which is sprouting suspended rock cores. Vibrating quietly at their natural frequencies the rock cores look like a strange dangling fruit. Despite the fixed hardness of the materials, Brassil works magic by creating gentleness and softness. Wavy lines painted on the walls extend the room outward, suggesting flight, sine waves, water.

The television is on in Julie Gough's *Disturbed Nature—the Sound of Two Sticks Tapping*. We see some of Tasmania's far from extinct Aboriginal people as a song about them is sung. The television is in a very small room made of vertically placed sticks. There is a door but everyone I observed watched from the outside through the cracks—prisoner on the outside, eavesdropper and voyeur. Closeness, separateness, barriers. The sound reaches out through the sticks.

Enchainment by Leigh Hobba and Wendy Morrow is a spinal chord of televisions strung, standing and twisting in the centre of the U-shaped staircase. Leigh Hobba's subtle soundtrack accompanies the dancers' movements as the teles accompany the viewer's journey from one floor to another.

Carolyn Connors is a Melbourne based vocal performer and composer.
New Music Tasmania, International Festival of Contemporary Music, *Hobart, April 12-21*

CD reviews

Hiss
Alien Bass Soundscapes
1996 Agrocalm Recordings 001

The shift from musical object to soundscape involves making sound primarily a form of oscillation in space. This generalised archetonics raises all kinds of problems for the composer, but in particular, how to invent a musical plane that is more than an effect of space. Five 'soundscapes' by Hiss waver on that line between immersive soundscapes that make no distinction between the ear and the world, and jagged forces that pull apart this illusion of a homogenous or immersive space. The idea of 'bass' is taken through all kinds of subsonic and molecular transformations, angled against a rising and falling melodic 'zone' or compound as a potential motion rather than a given beat. *Ameliak* is the most rigorous, a crushing wall of static and interference that is increasingly folded across running water without giving way to the smooth potential of the water. The pulse moves randomly, undermining any possibility for a coherent surface to appear and each strand pushes up against the core block, creating a discontinuous force of movement. Elsewhere, *Alien Bass Soundscapes* encompasses the spirit of some of the early Darmstadt School's experiments with oscillation, as *Spacebass* builds fold upon folds of synthetic washes through which an endless series of bleeps, pips, whooshes, and bass motion dissolve the consistency of the surface in a multitude of directions. NG

Sean Wayland
Fangin'
1996 Seed Music 001

The combined spirits of Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock hang heavily over acoustic keyboard playing in general. Sydney pianist Sean Wayland has created a beautiful if undeniably conventional (straight ahead?) "tribute" to the power of these inventors. Wayland's trio is delicate and swings easily. In this sense, the tunes on *Fangin'* are a collection of "original" standards that confirm the centrality of the *sound* of post-World War II jazz to defining the core of what jazz *is*, a tendency that simultaneously manages to pose the problem of what jazz might also be becoming. As with Barney Mcall, Wayland has a sweet, funky turn of phrase that lays the changes bare, threading a sparse, fluid line through the leaps and bounds of his rhythm section of Nick McBride (drums) and Adam Armstrong (bass). There's a liveness, a calculated certainty, about the playing that is both appealing and constricted; as though the structures of each tune are so heavily overdetermined by historical imperatives that the momentum of the sound is devolved into a certain skill for manipulation and rearrangement rather than a profound conceptual movement. NG

Labradford
Prazision LP
1995 Flying Nun Records FNCD342

Some forms of 'elevator' music are just not going to go away. Labradford are a conventional mixture of art rock, ambience and spoken word: distorted guitar with plenty of reverb, barely audible vocals, jingly keyboards reminiscent of David Sylvian's solo work, and a large dose of what you might call Enophony. The tracks that stand out are *Listening In Depth* and *Experience The Gated Oscillator* which both move towards a more conceptual understanding of ambient sound rather than the innocuous 'dinner party music' that works to homogenise our audible life. I'm sure the recently revealed return to retro-cocktail loungamania will revel in this sort of pseudolistening event. After all, the penchant for ambient backing tracks to accompany every untextured moment of urban life marks out the banal limits of a narcissistic immersion in a 'world of sound' that is really nothing more than the sound of the listener's own voice overpowering everything, incorporating everything, annihilating difference, making everything equal everything else. Blah! NG

Bang On A Can
Cheating Lying Stealing
1996 Sony Classical SK62254

Bang On A Can never fail to reorganise your musical palette. This recent collection of new works from the All-Stars (the group that features at the heart of the Bang On A Can festival in New York) finds them developing the minimalist drive of last year's *Industry* (Sony SK66483) with playing that marks them as one of the most exciting and challenging music groups in the world. The works that appear here invent new edges for the fearsome cybernetic apparatus that emerged from Bang On A Can's relation to Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, creating a more lyrical and yet no less consistent image of musical thought. The question facing most groups and composers is how to reconcile the energy released by pop music into musical production, with the invention of an active compositional plane. With the title track *Cheating Lying Stealing*, composer David Lang (also a Bang On A Can founding person) sets a series of cross rhythms colliding, but in such a way as to prevent any sense of metre emerging, creating a solid row of accents that fragment into the flowing string lines. With each new work, Lang seems to be turning the sheer surface of minimalism back in on itself, somehow releasing the potentiality of melodic invention from each jarring rhythmic figure through a torrent of irrational beats and discontinuous tempos. Annie Gosfield's *The Manufacturing of Tangled Ivory* overturns the expectations of keyboard technique and tonality in much the same fashion as John Cage's prepared piano, but with a frenzied force and an electronic distortion that only finds relief in tiny moments of parodic oompa. Likewise, the other five works on *Cheating Lying Stealing* introduce a longed-for temporal disorder into the general drift toward banal soundscapes that do nothing but affect the space of their amplification. Bang On A Can, through their extraordinary playing and their commitment to pushing composers into collaborative invention, continually force composition into an active encounter with technology, science and thought, but never at the expense of musical ideas, of the problem of musicality. NG

To do more than stare

James Moss on the liberating demands of George Popperwell's art

My eyes failed me and I couldn't speak.
T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

The experience of being confronted with work of striking and seemingly profound formal characteristics, while simultaneously having no understanding as to its meaning is an experience not unfamiliar to viewers of contemporary visual art. Indeed for some this is an experience more familiar than not: as if it's a natural condition of the spectatorial gaze that one must negotiate significant levels of ambiguity with most art on a first viewing. And, more often than not, understanding comes not in the form of comprehension, but in the shock recognition that one doesn't know and cannot see what is there before one's eyes.

It was Emmanuel Kant who maintained that we can only know appearances; how objects (phenomena) appear as we perceive them via our senses. Noumena, Kant's term for the conceptual entities that transcend experience, can never be known because they result from thoughts that arise independent of the perceptual mechanics of our senses.

And yet (due to the perceptual bias granted to sight in the visual arts) there remains a convention based on the notion that if we look long enough and/or hard (?) enough then, what even the most difficult art refers to will become apparent. Thus we will use our vision to encode the surface phenomena, and this intense interrogatory gaze, riddled as it is with a self-conscious paranoid uncertainty (what has been referred to as "the sado-masochistic dialectic of the look" in Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes, The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*), is the primary vehicle of interpretation in any reading of art: the gaze or the glance is the conduit of a first order experience of visual art.

On first contact, *Region...* presents as a sublime cryptic puzzle. On six pallet bases, 120cm x 240cm, are what appears to be, at first glance, the components of a scale model reconstruction of a fragment of an ancient city site, Pompeii perhaps or even Solomon's temple. The second simultaneous impact of the work is that it's constructed entirely from raw plywood. These two components of the sign *Region...* vie with each other for visual dominance in one's initial split-second reading of the work.

The beautifully finished surfaces of the modelling invite a formalist response that suggests the appearance of art's physical shape is incidental to any intent that may be invoked. This Kantian reading is reinforced by the work's title that alludes directly to a painting by Barnett Newman—*Who's afraid of Red,Yellow, Blue etc.*—referencing Newman's concerns with the metaphysical nature of colour, and his attempts to realise a new sublime.

Yet the deliberate avoidance of any colour in *Region...*(other than in the title) casts the interpretative eye back onto the physical, architectonic nature of the work, formed as it is from a construction material that was never designed to be seen.

While there is a conscious modelling of what could be buildings here, some sort of habitation, this implication is snatched away by the aesthetic improbability of it all (the surface blandness).

It is then that ambiguity sets in. On closer inspection of the modelling there is only one clearly defined building-like structure evident; the other five pertain to some degree of functional usage—what appears to be a trough, a tunnel, some sort of bunker, a shallow rectangular container, and a box out of the top of which protrudes a drawer. So, while the overall appearance of a compound is retained with its ordered grid, each of the six aspects has its own discreet scale and apparent meaning within the overall context.

The floor pieces are boarded on two sides; on the one is a partition showing a recurring image (the only non-plywood aspect of the work), on the other side is an array of flat panels of various sizes and configurations leaning up against each other, all of them drilled through in parts with holes making them appear like shooting gallery targets or bullet-riddled signs on a country back-road.

Once the realisation sinks in that any easy familiarity with the signified has been lost, the shock of the material presence of the piece becomes profound. The indeterminacy of the formal features is compounded by the oppressive conformity of the plywood, its clean precise modelling and the characteristic ubiquity of its marbled grain-pattern providing a simultaneous visual contradiction of liquid unreality and bland ordinariness.

Suddenly, one can't see past the surface; one can't see the 'would' for the ply. The awe (and the terror) of incomprehension fuelled by things familiar and unfamiliar, hints and contradictions, engenders a recognition of the impotence of sight, and is a potent reminder of the unreliability of western art's paradoxical insistence on a vision centred interpretation of meaning.

One sees the plywood shapes and their geometric/isometric play of mass, plane and line; one reads the dialectics of function/dysfunction; and the appearance of what could be. With blindness came incoherence: "My eyes failed me and I couldn't speak".

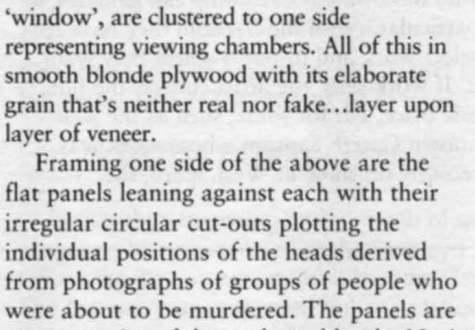


photo Cruickshank

But one can hear...talk...rumours. In the self-conscious space of the gallery, silence compounds an inability to see; one becomes the object of one's own gaze. Silence conspires with the unknown, the uncertain, and in this particular spatial context, silence, as a communication system, is distinctly overrated.

In the end (in the case of this reviewer) I heard what it was that I was trying to see; *Region...* is, among other things, representations of aspects of a concentration camp. Auschwitz. (There's a hesitancy, a reluctance in this rumour as though it's revealing the ending of a film).

Within the ordered grid of pallets there are the barracks that have a Roman look (hence the feeling of antiquity), and the entrance to an underground tunnel or mine. There are troughs and self-draining enclosures, and (more figuratively) ovens with oven trays and ash receptacles. Rectangular boxes (like box Brownie cameras) each with a circular 'window', are clustered to one side representing viewing chambers. All of this in smooth blonde plywood with its elaborate grain that's neither real nor fake...layer upon layer of veneer.

Framing one side of the above are the flat panels leaning against each with their irregular circular cut-outs plotting the individual positions of the heads derived from photographs of groups of people who were about to be murdered. The panels are representative of the art looted by the Nazis from their victims.

Facing this is the other panel on which is simply reproduced a recurring image of prisoner identification badges showing an insignia reproduced in grey-scale, but, what was in fact colour coded—red, blue, green etc., signifying the ethnic background of the prisoners.

For those of us who can only witness the Holocaust through photographic and filmic

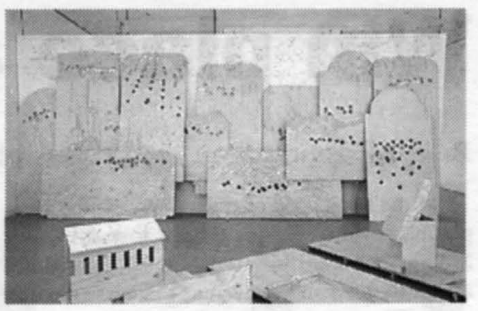


photo Cruickshank

documentation, colour is foreign to our comprehension of this nightmare. These camps are renowned in the history of inhumanity as places of dreadful deprivation and unspeakable horrors, and yet the overriding impressions of the documentary evidence generally available to us speak of a drab grey world of apparent anonymity and routine boredom lacking in the meanest of aesthetic comforts: a hell of sameness in shades of grey, devoid of even the simple optimism of colour.

As a final humiliation, the victims were stripped and led naked to their fate. Brightly lit and devoid of any aesthetic delectation and 'filling in', the undressed plywood flesh of *Region...* evokes a similar vulnerability. Its historical point of reference and its placement in the art space conflating with its precise and yet abstract representation of the unpresentable and the unspeakable, endow *Region...* with a 'convulsive beauty' that is somehow foreign to the cool ironies of much postmodern art practice.

It's trite to say that *Region...* is something of a watershed for the artist (for all art represents something of a departure for all artists), however this work is a kind of exorcism that comes only infrequently, fabricated, as in this case, from a strong and lasting residual desire. The Holocaust is a part of George Popperwell's heritage and as such it will be never laid to rest, and yet perhaps the same can be said of his artistic heritage which has hinged largely on the enigmatic existence of art since Duchamp.

Popperwell's modus operandi has been in tune with a dialectical current in western art practice, usually traced to Duchamp, that has deliberately critiqued the dominance of retinal habits which respond favourably to aesthetic 'filling in', in favour of conceptual encodings that are engendered in the nuances and (de)construction of language and linguistic associations via puns and double entendres. In particular Popperwell's focus (which is evident in *Region...*) reflects Duchamp's penchant for mechanical drawing as a process of representation devoid of taste. Indeed, Popperwell's creative need to exorcise the Holocaust is married to a critical desire to make art that is free from the aesthetic baggage of good taste, that same good taste that can (and has) so readily transposed into prejudice and repression of its supposed other.

Ironically, it is this tendency to sabotage and contradict the conventions of meaning that obfuscate and confuse a secure, coherent reading in any first order encounter with this artist's work. Simply to look is not enough, as sight is as much a product of habit as it is a process of seeing. For sight to become understanding it often needs (to paraphrase Merleau-Ponty) to be imbricated with the other senses in order for us to make sense of our experience of the world.

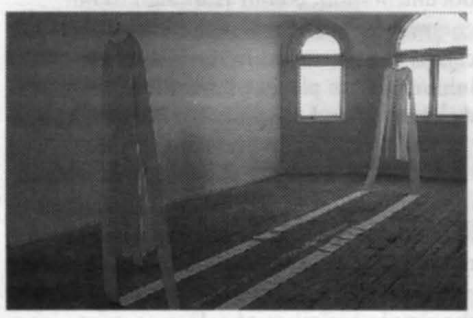
In retrospect *Region...* is a work that grows exponentially in its levels of accessibility once the key has been turned in the lock, but in this reviewer's experience of George Popperwell's work the key is not to be found in any obvious place. In respect to this artist's work, to look means having to do more than to stare, and to see requires more than a physical or metaphysical enterprise. To engage here requires the opposite of the silent gaze; it requires a series of inquiring, discursive and corporeal 'glances'. This art work requires of the viewer to work in return, and in turn one will truly be made free.

George Popperwell, Region: who's afraid of Red, Blue, Green, Yellow, Pink, Violet, *the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, February 1996.*

Win place and show

Adrian Montana on the success of Melbourne's independent galleries

At the beginning of the 1990s, exhibition prospects were perhaps at their lowest in Melbourne, a city where it is hard for young artists to get a show, even at the best of times. Three artist-initiated visual art spaces, independent of commercial galleries and

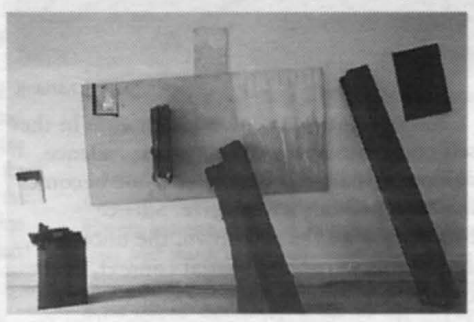


West Space —Rosslynd Piggott

government funding, emerged during this period. They were established during Melbourne's 'hard times' when the art market was flat and long-standing commercial galleries were cracking under the pressure of a dulled interest in collecting. A number of commercial galleries closed their doors, spilling established artists out on to the street. Young graduates could have reacted by making more commercial work but instead some set up exhibition spaces that survive because they are lean and self-motivated. Today those independent galleries are thriving.

West Space, ether ohnetitel and Temple Studio are independent galleries that provide more than just a good exhibition space in reach of most artists. Philosophically these galleries are similar. They have placed artists at the centre of the equation, not just as exhibitors but also as viewers. Each gallery has a solid band of supporters, including culture groupies and a string of young hopefuls ready to exhibit. Regular publications such as *Temple Studio News* and West Space's *Dialogue,* stimulate discourse among artist-visitors. For many young artists, the independent galleries have more credibility than commercial galleries. They are watched closely by writers, curators and theorists who in turn influence the grant decision-makers and educational institutions. Considering about 50% of exhibition proposals are turned down each year, competition remains high. Ironically, older and more established artists are also being drawn to the independent galleries. So what do these spaces offer?

West Space has been successful in attracting broad interest. Located in central Footscray, Melbourne's inner western industrial suburb, West Space occupies an Edwardian double-storey office. It receives no grants but rents its two medium sized rooms at $130 each a week; not an unreasonable amount. "Artists don't just get given the key", says Brett Jones, one of the co-ordinators of West Space, "Support is provided with publicity, mail-outs and in some cases the production of artist cards which augment the gallery's concern to find alternative sites for the making and display



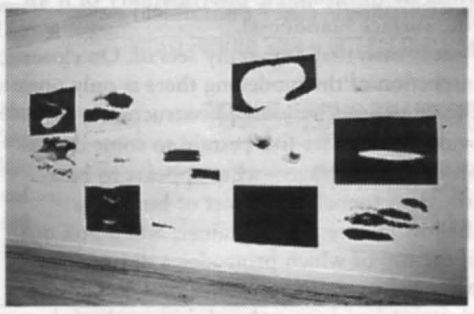
West Space —Phil Edwards

of an artist's work". *Dialogue,* the gallery's recently revamped publication, stimulates discourse among the gallery's following with articles on artists' studios, the 'micro and macro' in contemporary art practice and artists working in collaboration. Like ether ohnetitel, West Space is run by a committee including seven artists and a lawyer who meet frequently. They encourage work in a variety of styles and media.

Gallery co-ordinators agree that artists appreciate the control they have over the presentation of their exhibitions. Those who have shown in commercial galleries, in particular, relish the freedom they have to select work and to put it where they want it. If work sells, the artist collects the full sale price, but for some, such as the well-known Gareth Sansom whose work was recently on show at West Space, the independent gallery offers an opportunity to concentrate on process rather than a finished commercial product. Sansom, a former dean of painting at the Victorian College of the Arts, did not consider his exhibition as taking opportunities away from younger artists, but rather saw himself encouraging them to take risks; after all, his work was vetted by West Space's selection committee which consists of a number of his ex-students. Sansom's exhibition marked a return to a space in the western suburbs, an area in which he lived and worked in his youth.

Independent gallery co-ordinators are keen to keep their audience-base broad. Mark Perkins from ether ohnetitel knows keeping a high gallery profile will attract reviews in the daily press, encourage artists to exhibit in the space and hopefully precipitate purchases. ether ohnetitel fosters a reputation as funky, cheeky and on the cutting edge. Even the name ether ohnetitel (meaning 'ether untitled', in German), was invented to parody chic galleries with exotic names in downtown Melbourne. "Naturally", says Jones, "the commercial galleries feel a little threatened when they see media attention on our shows." Curators from the state art gallery have followed the development of independent spaces and work has been purchased.

Artist and Temple Studio co-ordinator Greg Creek says that artist-run spaces should not be considered merely a stepping stone into the public and private gallery system. They are not at "the avant garde bottom, above which sits, in turn (the formally avant



West Space —Jane Hall

garde) public spaces, (the sometimes avant garde) commercial galleries and the (never avant garde) museums!" Jones likewise believes independent spaces provide the balance necessary in the contemporary visual art arena. "They offer a place to show work without the pressure of commercial interests

West Space —Gareth Sansom

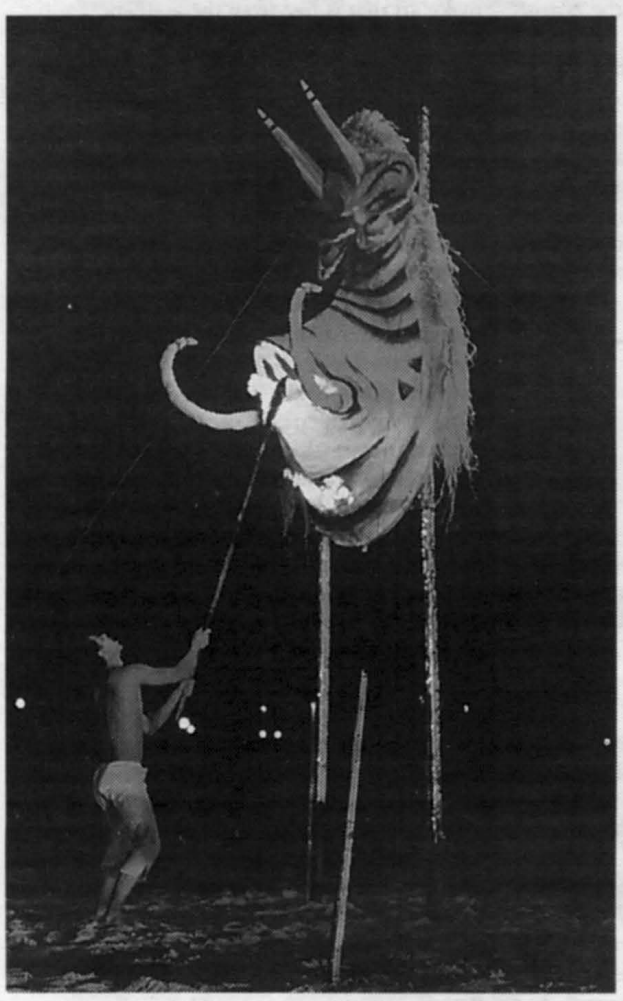
bearing down on conceptual or explorative concerns." Independent spaces offer a support network which is co-operative and egalitarian, a feature not found in the commercial 'stable' where the pecking order dominates relationships and the more sales you make, the more the gallery director pays attention to your work.

Does co-ordinating a gallery leave artists with enough time for their own practice? Rod McLeish, a co-ordinator from Temple Studio, balances his art practice with gallery administration. "It has given me a place to show my work, a vital point of connection with the art community and has honed my organisational skills—all points that should not be underestimated," he says. Artist-run spaces do require energy. They have to continually reinvent themselves. "New blood coming through helps," says McLeish, "but the battle remains maintaining finances and energy over the years". New work in video, film and performance has a place in the reinvention process, as do collaborative projects such as West Space's eight installations during May. These involved over thirty people including artists, vets, urban designers, a landscape architect, teachers, a former director of the National Gallery of Victoria, actors and writers. They explored work and skills between generations and different occupations. Jones, like McLeish, does not get paid for his efforts, but for this new generation of gallery co-ordinators art, administration and pleasure offers the right blend. As Perkins says "You could spend 30 hours a week washing dishes or doing bar work but I'd rather get passionate about a space and make my own art".

Adrian Montana is a museum education and public programs consultant currently attached to the Post Master Gallery, Melbourne and the Geelong Art Gallery.

Going for the burn

Barbara Bolt at Perth's Multicultural Festival of Fire



Multicultural Festival of Fire photo: Melanie Grogan

I got stuck in a traffic jam in Perth, on a Sunday evening at 9.00pm, after the first *Multicultural Festival of Fire* at Hillarys Boat Harbour. To some it may seem inconceivable that traffic jams could occur in Perth, but experience shows this is not the case. Involve fire and fireworks in a cultural event and 'Perth' will converge for the spectacle, then all attempt to leave simultaneously, blocking the roads for miles around.

The lines of lanterns snaking in from the sand hills, the dance performances along the jetty, the ritual burning of towering paper sculptures and the fireworks were spectacular against the backdrop of the harbour. But despite the invitation from the organisers for us to stay and party on, as soon as the last fireworks dissipated most of us packed up our rugs and eskies and headed for home...And the band played on, to a small party of the faithful.

Fire is spectacular, but how does an event such as *Festival of Fire* bridge the gap between 'show/spectacle' and 'festival', between spectatorship and audience participation, or indeed, does it have to bridge this gap? Isn't it enough to be a blob and enjoy the spectacle of the event? Chances are, if you want to be involved in the show, you'll get involved in the production of it...if not this year, then next.

Participation has tended to be viewed in terms of community involvement in the organisation and staging of the festival. The festival was the result of a collaboration between the Multicultural Arts Centre of WA and the Ran Dan Club, a group committed to large outdoor processional based performance work. The project was hatched in a large warehouse in East Perth and developed in a series of workshops involving local community groups (Filipino, Latin American, Indian, Vietnamese, Samoan, African and European), professional artists and other volunteers who blew in because they liked the idea. Dance rehearsals ran side by side with the production of large scale sculptural works and small scale lanterns. The fact that the sculptures end up burning seemed somehow to engender cooperation rather than competition. There isn't the same sense of ownership. It is a real 'community thing' watching hours and days of shared labour burn. As performer Gabby Mazalevskis observes, "You build these lovely beautiful images and then they're gone. You really get to enjoy that. You build it and you wait for that".

But what of audience participation? Hillarys Boat Harbour is a place to go to hang out, to eat, drink and browse. *The Multicultural Festival of Fire* caught this unsuspecting audience in its wake. Others went prepared for a picnic in the twilight and a night's entertainment. The little boy next to me had his sparklers ready to light; we all sat patiently on our rugs, eating fish and chips out of newsprint and talked quietly in muted voices waiting for the show to begin. The organisers had hoped to cross the barrier between a 'show' and a 'festival', but I guess this aspiration begs the question of what defines 'a festival' and what is participation anyway? Ran Dan Club's Caroline O'Neill answers, "Everybody watches a fire and listens to a story and is mesmerised by flames".

Thanks to Caroline O'Neill and Gabby Mazalevskis.

OnScreen

film, media & techno-arts

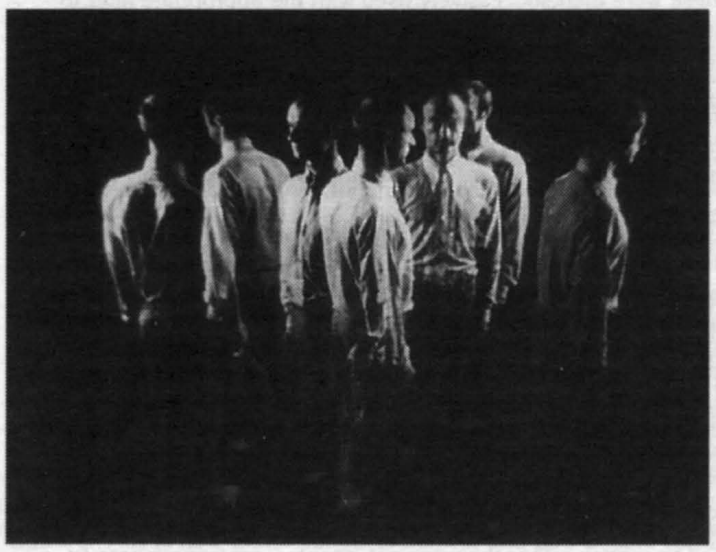
Feature

The art of matter

Brian Doherty surveys the Cantrills' contribution to Australian experimental film

One of the special events at this year's Sydney Film Festival will be a tribute to the continuing collaboration between Australian film artists Arthur and Corinne Cantrill.

Against all odds the Cantrills have maintained, for the last 36 years, a successful international film art practice resulting in more than 150 films including seven feature length films. This would be an extraordinary achievement anywhere in the world and is particularly impressive in Australia given this country's relative lack of institutional development in the area of film art. However, this publicly recognised artistic achievement is matched by what I would consider a more personal achievement within the art of their lives—the personal generosity exhibited in the Cantrills' recognition and promotion of other people's contributions in the fields of film and art. This has been evident in their films and public activities but most obviously in their publication of *Cantrills Filmnotes*. 1996 marks 25 years of self publishing this international journal of film, video, and more recently electronic art, dedicated to carrying the words, thoughts and images of artists themselves rather than the interpretations of critics. Anyone who has ever tried to publish a journal will appreciate that 25 years of self publishing is a task that most of us could not endure.



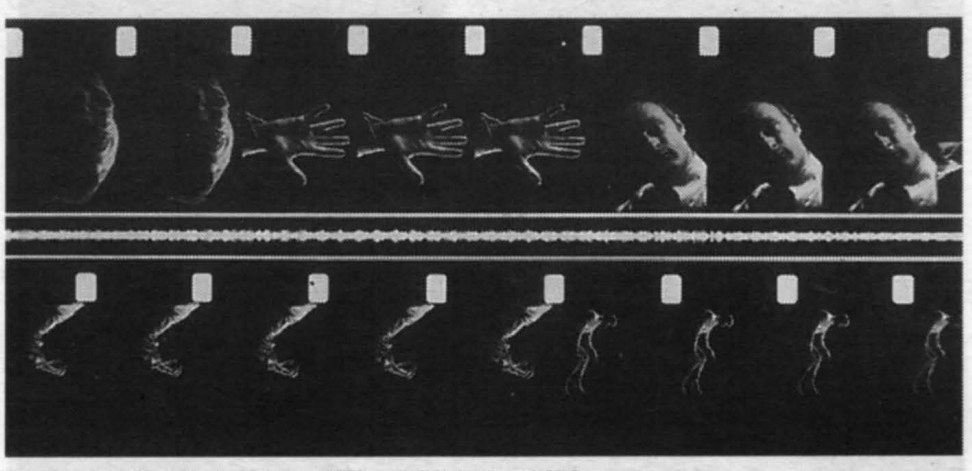
Moving Statics, 1969, with Dutch mime, Will Spoor

To call the Cantrills' films 'art' begs questions concerning definition and legitimation—a teasing out of differences between film art and art film, the status of film as an art, the divisions between amateurs and professionals, art and commerce, personal and public. In the context of the Sydney Film Festival these are all potentially interesting topics since they motivate much of its existence both now and historically. Personally I think these terms do not signal any essential divisions—rather, they suggest discursive ones. What interests me more is that the Cantrills, through their various film, publishing and social practices, have consistently attempted to make real the possibility of the discursive arena of 'film art' in a largely indifferent environment. What we have to celebrate in this tribute is that these spaces have been created and therefore allow for a range of film practices—different ways of making and circulating, and different viewing and audience relations.

Unfortunately it is this diversity that is so often misunderstood by audiences and funding bodies alike. It is simply not appropriate to expect the same types of entertainment experiences or production conventions across these spaces. The fact that these cinematic forms usually have to exist in the same physical space—a commercial cinema—no doubt adds to the confusion. As does the general lack of opportunity to sample the pleasures of this diversity.

In March 1971 the first issue of *Cantrills Filmnotes* marked out a space for the Cantrills' cinematic project. Their terrain was explicitly opposed to the type of humanist literary discourses associated with the documentary and art cinema that have been the staple of events like the Sydney Film Festival. Their "very own CINEMA MANIFESTO written early in 1970 for a weekend school on the history of experimental film to indicate some new attitudes to cinema" argues:

WE'VE EXHAUSTED THE HUMAN SITUATION as film material—we've seen a million love affairs, intrigues, socially committed films, anti-war films; we're not interested in who's up who and who's paying any longer. We've been sated by countless films on Man and his confrontation with life (mainly from East Europe—it didn't get them very far). Freud and Marx are dead. All we want now is the film experience—the optical and aural stimulation it can give. We want to be intellectually involved with the film form.



Two film strips from *Moving Statics*, 1969, with Dutch mime, Will Spoor

Concerned with the matter of film, rather than its content. (The greatest films are those in which the form is the content, as in music.)

LOVE MATTER TO DEATH, LET IT FEEL YOUR BREATH—Hooton

Rather than focussing on the depth of work in a particular area, the two 100 minute programs being presented at the Sydney Film Festival attempt to provide a sampling across the diverse explorations that the Cantrills have undertaken in their chosen terrain. The first program is themed *moving statics* and draws attention to their engagement with the 'material' of film and film form generally. At the heart of film form is the one essential 'trick' of cinema—the impression of movement based on stasis. Or as Gregory Markopoulos put it in the December 1972 issue of *Cantrills Filmnotes* "Is it not interesting to theorise that the frames lost between the frames captured are the winged conscience of total reality?"

The classic recognition of editing or montage as the basis of cinema certainly points in this direction and Arthur's employment in the 1960s for ABC TV and then the BBC in London (the *24 hours* program and a documentary series *One Pair of Eyes*) provided a solid training in conventional editing. However, the films presented in the *moving statics* program play with and push beyond our conventional ideas of montage, and they do this in quite different ways. For instance the first film, *4000 Frames, an Eye Opener Film* (1970, 3 min, b/w, sound) reduces the montage cell—usually considered as a scene to be linked or opposed to another scene—down to the individual image cell; a single film frame. This shift creates a continually evolving collage as the human optical apparatus layers each image onto the next. This is an effect we have more recently become accustomed to in advertising and music clip genres. But what we so often overlook in our casual viewing habits is that this type of montage does not produce a totally chaotic film indistinguishable from others using the same technique.

What makes *4000 Frames* a delightful and interesting film is not its novelty (it was not the first of its kind) but the way that this seemingly restrictive form has been cleverly and poetically treated. Many films of this type stay close to the animation effect, building up rhythms through similarities between images. In this film, however, the Cantrills specifically chose each image to avoid as far as possible this effect. We are asked to open our eyes and register each image rather than simply their cumulative transformation (the absent movement that we see in most cinema). This process of seeing is both the form and content of the film. It starts with the individual images emerging between black frames. Here the individual images are identifiable. The black frames are gradually reduced, building an ever more complex continually changing collage of images that threatens but never quite manages to obliterate them. Then white frames, which gradually 'bleach' out the images to a pure white light, are introduced. This content of seeing mediated by the materiality of film is referenced with images of film technology and film frames. The metaphor is extended in the formal structure of the film as a play from shadow to light—the material condition of the cinema.

None of the other films in the first program are so explicitly formal and abstract but each provides a reward if we are prepared to sit back, open our eyes, and see more than

• **continued page 16**

Feature

The art of matter

• *from page 15*

surface narrative. There is not the space in this preview to provide detail on all of the films but some brief notes on the other films will help to point the way.

Myself When Fourteen (1989,19 min, col, sd) uses a complex rhythmic editing style to progressively re-work a deceptively simple image of the Cantrills' son, Ivor, running to a wall then back to the camera and another image of him circling the camera. Ivor is autistic and for this film he hand-animated thousands of frames from projected negative images—working and re-working his own reversed image which in the film is seen to run towards and touch its own cast shadow on the wall and then return to circle the camera. This shadow play has so many resonances! Part of the soundtrack is Ivor's interrogation of these images of himself filmed when he was much younger. An awareness of filmic time builds through all these rhythms and repetitions.

Moving Statics (1969, 28 min, b/w, sd) was made as a collaboration with the Dutch abstract mime artist Will Spoor at The Arts Lab in London. This is not a documentary so much as a document. Will Spoor and the Cantrills work together to extend/transform body forms and movements through techniques such as stop frame animation and multiple in-camera superimpositions.

Mirror Self-Portrait of Arthur & Corrine Cantrill, 1984, also Still from *In This Life's Body*

Earth Message (1970, 23 min, col, sd) is an example of the Cantrills' engagement with landscape as the subject of filmmaking. Given the importance of landscape in the mythic construction of Australia it is surprising how few filmmakers have seriously explored its possibilities as foreground content. While the Cantrills undoubtedly share many of these myths their visions of landscape are far from clichés. Corinne Cantrill's early training in botany is evident in the detail of observation, and again there is a fascination with formal possibilities of filmic interpretation. This film requires a relaxed attention where you can surrender the mythic landscape you thought you knew and let an altogether different and marvellous landscape enter your senses.

Waterfall (1984, 18 min, col, sd) is also a landscape film but the subject is equally the materiality of film and its process of revealing movement in time. Dissatisfied with the available colour film stocks, the Cantrills started to experiment, from the mid 1970s, with systems based on some of the early historical attempts to record and project colour images. This involved recording three black and white fine grain negatives shot with red, green and blue filters. These were then successively used with the appropriate filter to make a combined colour print. The effect is a fine grain print that allows a great deal of colour control (for naturalistic or manipulated effects), and original footage that is not subject to colour fading. However if there is movement in the image or change in the light intensity between the three successive filtered shots the final print reveals this as a colour tone. The Cantrills used this process of colour separation along with variations of focus and exposure to render in colour the time-movement of the falling water—a kaleidoscopic revelation.

The second program has the theme 'tributes' and points to the Cantrills' generosity as facilitators of other artists' work. They have produced a number of interpretive documentaries/collaborations with a preference for first person voice over. Together with a very formally treated tribute to their own filmmaking, this program includes one of their very early studies of a Robert Klippel sculpture from 1965. However the feature of the program is *Harry Hooton* (1970, 83 min, col, sd).

Harry Hooton is probably remembered today as a poet/philosopher associated with the libertarian group known as the Sydney Push. Corinne Cantrill was introduced to Hooton by Robert Klippel in the early 1950s and her first experience of publishing came from helping Hooton produce the literary journal *21st Century*.

Hooton's ideas of anarcho-technocracy—a leaderless technological state where one's energies are applied to matter rather than against people—are appropriate to Robert Klippel's sculptures and strongly influenced the Cantrills' own preoccupation with addressing the materiality of film. Hooton made a number of tape recordings before his death from cancer in 1961, and when the Cantrills returned to Australia to take up a Creative Fellowship at ANU in 1969 they used these to construct their tribute to him. The film was worked on for fifteen months and represents the Cantrills' evolving attitudes towards film over this period. The result is a tour de force and a stunningly energetic visual interpretation of Hooton's words—passion and energy applied to the materiality of film.

Unfortunately there is much that these two screenings omit, most notably recent works which are mostly on Super 8, and the extensive experimentation with multiscreen and expanded cinema. Australia sorely needs a national circuit that can show this type of filmmaking on a regular basis. Now that most state art galleries have cinemas this should be relatively easy to implement if there is the will. After one hundred years it is certainly about time the art institutions opened their doors to film.

Brian Doherty is a filmlover and was coordinator of Sydney Intermedia Network from 1989 to 1995. He has recently written a Masters paper on the emergence of underground film in Australia and co-curated a retrospective of the work of Australian experimental filmmaker Paul Winkler at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, in 1995.

The Sydney Film Festival tribute to the Cantrills will be on Tuesday-Wednesday, June 11-12. Contact the Festival on (02) 9660 3844. In September and October the National Cinematheque will be showing a different program of the Cantrills' work in Melbourne and Hobart. In Melbourne contact (03) 9650 2565 and in Hobart (002) 346318. For subscriptions and back issues of Cantrills Filmnotes: *Box 1295L, GPO Melbourne Vic 3001 or fax (03) 9380 6416.*

Feature

Austenticity

David Matthews explores the re-visioning of Jane Austen

I have been among blushing cheeks and trembling lips. Tear-filled eyes, widened eyes and downcast eyes. Flared nostrils and heaving bosoms. A world in which a series of bodily metonyms takes the place of emotions, but which is also strangely non-physical: no one touches anyone (except in the closing kiss), no one raises so much as a hand in anger, and the extremes of emotion result not in physicality but complete bodily collapse. I have been in the strange world of the screen adaptations of Jane Austen's novels.

The near-simultaneous appearance of *Sense and Sensibility, Persuasion,* and *Pride and Prejudice* has provoked two sets of questions. Why Austen, why now? Which is the most "authentic," most true to "Austen"? When Berlei, the bra manufacturer, announced that the Bennet sisters' secret was the Wonderbra (ladies, you too can heave like a fictional heroine), a slightly aggrieved-sounding BBC (according to *The Australian,* 1/5/96) explained that the costumes in question were entirely historically accurate, down to corsets and Empire line ties. The special claim of *Pride and Prejudice* on realism was that even the bits you can't see are authentic.

In another respect, though, *Persuasion* makes a strong bid for authenticity, with its filthy dirty realism: streets filled with horse shit and farmyard animals, and an unglamourised hero who clearly shaves by candlelight with a bluntish razor, and doesn't discard a decent riding coat just because it's ingrained with mud and falling apart. But this more reflects ideas about the early nineteenth century than anything to be found in Austen.

No, the obvious answer, the truly authentic Austen film, must be *Clueless.* Very loosely based on *Emma*, this is the story of a rich and spoilt girl (Cher), shopping, partying and matchmaking in modern Los Angeles. At times—as when Cher tries to line up her dowdy friend with a man she later realises she loves herself—the story is not utterly unlike that of Austen's novel. What is so brilliantly Austen-like about it, what makes the story of an otherwise painful person so amusing, is the ironic distance the script sets up by its use of Cher's voice-over narration.

The internal monologue this allows gives a strong sense of the interior world of the main character, an aspect of narration crucial in Austen, but very difficult to do on film. Cher's is an intimate monologue, addressed to the viewer: "That's my mother," she tells us when the camera lands on a painting of a beautiful woman; "she died tragically during a routine liposuction." All completely deadpan, completely without self-knowledge. The film's turning point comes when Cher is walking down a shopping boulevard, meditating on the way in which all her plans seem to have gone wrong. It dawns on her that she might not be clever, but "totally clueless," a moment of introspection immediately crowned when she walks past a shop window: "Ohh! I wonder if they've got that in my size."

Not a lot happens in *Clueless*: girl meets boy, boy turns out to be not quite what girl thought, girl realises other, better boy has been under her nose all along. But then not a lot happens in Austen, either. *Waiting for Godot*, famously, is a play in which nothing happens twice; surely an Austen novel is something in which things always appear to be about to happen, and then don't. When something does happen—two characters come together—the novel has to end.

What really happens in an Austen novel is a series of intense mental, interior dramas, represented in the characters' thought processes. Here, for example, is what happens around the dialogue when Lucy Steele, in the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, tells Elinor Dashwood that she is secretly engaged to Edward Ferrars, whom Elinor loves. As Lucy reveals this, Elinor's "complexion varied" and she is for a moment speechless with "astonishment." Elinor responds "with a calmness of manner which tolerably well concealed her surprise." She is "greatly shocked," "in a most painful perplexity," but "her self-command did not sink." She speaks with "a firm voice." Finally convinced that Edward loves Lucy, Elinor's "heart sunk within her, and she could hardly stand; but exertion was indispensably necessary, and she struggled so resolutely against the oppression of her feelings that her success was speedy, and for the time complete."

Almost all the drama here is interior. The point is that Lucy must not detect Elinor's anguish, because Elinor now feels that she must defer to Lucy's apparent prior claim to Edward. This is how Elinor conducts herself, and how people conduct themselves is entirely the point of these novels. So, despite suffering under "an emotion and distress beyond anything she had ever felt before" the only visible sign Elinor gives is a slight blush at the beginning of the conversation.

How do you put this on film? How does the actor convey all this drama, letting the viewer see it but not Lucy Steele? It is simply not possible. The attempt to reproduce this kind of thing on the screen results in all the bodily gestures I began with. The body stands in for emotion, and the heaving bosom, the firmly set jaw, become part of a bodily code for various mental struggles, which the viewer quickly learns and decodes accordingly.

In order for this to happen, the viewer has to be persuaded that the interlocutor in the scene is somehow missing the gestures, which is why there are so many facial close-ups in these films. The camera closes on Jennifer Ehle's Elizabeth Bennet, and we see her purse her lips, or exhale heavily, or raise her eyes to heaven at her mother's latest inanity, as if only the viewer, and not the people in the room with Elizabeth, can see it. In *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot is so distressedly wide-eyed so often that it is difficult to remember that she is supposedly the most self-possessed of characters. It is hard not to wonder why Frederick Wentworth can't read her like a book. The viewer certainly can.

These necessities result in a curiously hybridised kind of screen drama. On the one hand, authenticity is the keyword. The BBC and Ang Lee's team have burnt their Wonderbras and brought us the costumes, architecture and speech of the Regency. *Persuasion* goes farthest, and despite its quite un-Austen-like dirt, it provides a pleasing shock of difference when we are shown the low-gloss version of how people lived. In *Sense and Sensibility*, we learn little things about obsolete technologies (such as how to make a silhouette of your loved one), which have no narrative function other than to say "authenticity is happening here," and are not in the books because they would have been taken for granted by Austen's readers. On the other hand, the transition of written realism to screen produces something highly mannered and artificial, in ways which largely sacrifice realism and believability, and also lose a lot of the delicate narratorial irony.

Why then Austen, why now? Her world is the nearest in time to ours which is nevertheless definitively other to ours. Austen writes of a pre-industrial green and pleasant land as if unaware of dark Satanic mills. Her realism is of a very narrowly directed kind. There is no horse shit in her streets. There are not even many horses (Willoughby is out walking when he first meets Marianne, not thundering around on horseback as in the film), though there are a dozen different kinds of carriage, because these are markers of social status. Many of Austen's characters are types (her villains often helpfully alliterate with "wicked": Wickham, Willoughby, and William Elliot), and she certainly doesn't dwell on what they wear. Perhaps most strikingly of all, the events which convulsed England in Austen's time are almost entirely neglected. Despite the fact that returned soldiers and sailors are often critical to her plots, Austen barely mentions the Napoleonic wars except to refer to peace.

The screen versions have to put all this detail back in. *Sense and Sensibility* gives us a rolling green land and magnificent interiors. *Persuasion*, apparently more hard-headedly, frames the story with ships sailing back from, and off to, the wars, and gives us more dirt. It is still a pastoral dirt, however. Rather than rehistoricising Austen territory, the films amplify its artificiality. They further a vision of a vigorous and thriving pastoral world which was, in fact, all but finished in Austen's time.

At the same time, because of the reduced narratorial irony and satire, relations between the sexes become less the object of ironic scrutiny, and more the vehicle of timeless romance. It is interesting that Austen's narratives always seem to lose interest the moment the heroine decides on marriage, whereas film supplies a much more conventional romantic closure, in the form of a passionate kiss, and a wedding scene.

It is not that I think *Sense and Sensibility, Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice* weren't highly pleasurable recreations of the Austen world, but they owe their great success less to a renewed interest in a particular literary mode than to one of the surest of box-office draws: the timeless romance in an evergreen world.

Feature

Nothing ever succeeds as planned

Robert Turnbull finds dilemmas in screen funding policy in WA

It has to be said that things are getting better. But it's not as if everything is getting better. Some things are getting better more quickly than others. It comes down to a simple proposition: those areas in which time, effort and funds are invested may prosper, others almost certainly will wither. The question is one of balance.

There is a wonderful line in *Good as Gold* written by Joseph Heller (the author of *Catch 22*). Uttering a few simple words the main character creates a new adage, "Nothing ever succeeds as planned". One wonders whether, in the long run, this might be the West's epitaph.

Developing a screen policy for a state with a population as small as the West's, and a location distant from major centres, is always going to be a tough call. For economic reasons alone, production and screen cultural activity in the eastern states dominate the Australian scene.

At least screen policy in this state benefited from a recent review, and an overhaul. In 1991, a committee including representatives from a number of film organisations and the tertiary sector conducted a wide ranging review of the WA film industry. The committee was chaired by Sue Milliken. It first reported to government in November 1992. In July 1993, the government accepted the committee's final report and directed that it be used as a blueprint to guide the future development of the WA film industry.

Screen West was born of the recommendations of the review. It has taken over as the architect of the state's screen policy, but if the report of the review committee is to be given credence, then it is by reference to the findings and recommendations of the committee that the performance of Screen West will, ultimately, be measured.

In its report the review committee made the following observation: "The creation of a lively and informed screen culture is an integral part of a viable film industry. As such the WAFA [now Screen West] should ensure that Western Australians are availed of the most up to date and comprehensive film culture including [but not limited to] exhibition, distribution and debate surrounding the motion picture in all its forms. Most cultural activity will be promoted through funding non-government organisations and individuals to undertake specific programs of activity". The latter was clearly a reference to organisations such as the Film and Television Institute [FTI] which has played a pivotal role in the development of local filmmakers.

In recent times, the West has achieved success in the production of documentaries and children's TV series. At the time of writing, Paul Barron's *Sweat* and *Ship to Shore* are in production. The FTI's co-production with Open Channel, the video diary format documentary series, *First Person*, is being broadcast on SBS.

Barron films has long been a stalwart of Western Australian production and the FTI has provided the platform from which many of the West's filmmakers have launched their careers, including Paul himself. It continues to play this important role.

Clearly, the current expansion in production activity has been fostered by Screen West and its Chief Executive Debra Allanson can take credit. Credit must also go to the resilience of the relatively small number of filmmakers that populate this state, determined to stay in business and develop their craft, despite the absence of an "industry". For all of that, filmmakers in WA are dependent upon the support they receive from public funding.

There is little doubt that WA filmmakers have the makings of an agreeable environment. Schemes such as the Lotteries Commission film employment scheme help cash flow filmmakers, balancing out the peaks and troughs. The scheme provides back-end funding for producers based on points allowed for using WA production personnel. Despite some difficulties it has the general support of producers.

If anything, the problem is the amount of funding required to get even one TV series production launched. Inevitably funding must appear to disproportionately favour one form of production activity and perhaps, at times, even one producer, over others. There is never enough money to go around, and can a small industry afford to jeopardise the successes that it has? The answer is more funding for other forms of production, as well as other activities.

This may require Screen West to designate any additional funds it receives away from TV series production and into other areas. Increased funding could be directed to short film making, documentaries and feature films, all of which will serve to broaden and enhance the skills of local filmmakers so that they do not become typecast. It would be a tragedy if insufficient attention is given to growing the new entrants into the industry, broadening skills and funding screen culture development.

Screen West's September 1995 business plan, *The Big Picture*, states its mission as supporting "the development of a commercially viable and artistically vibrant film industry in Western Australia". This statement is drawn directly from the report of the review committee. Without apology to any who might consider that film or TV has attributes other than product, the business plan then enunciates its goal as follows: "By the year 2000 the Western Australian film industry will have a prolific and successful production of a diverse range of product and will be quoted as an outstanding example of what a small industry can achieve". The plan goes on to say that "[WA Industry] will be positioned to become a market leader in generating quality screen product for the domestic and export market. Western Australia will be widely recognised as an extremely commercial and conducive environment in which to make and distribute screen products".

A laudable objective and wonderfully phrased; it will please economic rationalists in any government, federal or state. It is, perhaps, the reference to "quality" product that provides the link back to "artistic vibrance", and a recognition that there is more to film and TV production than "product". Again, quoting from the business plan: "Screen West proposes to break the cycle of intermittent production by pro-actively supporting a number of key productions to assist the Western Australian industry to overcome barriers to production".

And Screen West's method of doing this? "The most viable course for growth over the next five years is domestic and export television product across a whole range of formats. Increased television production will fuel the development of the industry by generating sustained levels of production activity and talent bases within the industry; continuous television production in which higher profile, one-off projects will stand a greater chance of being realised".

Clearly, Screen West's business plan is about production, and TV series production at that. Implicitly, it tends towards the idea that feature films are outside the scope of potential achievement for the West's filmmakers unless, perchance, the economic mass of TV production creates the opportunity. One-off documentaries and series (the mainstay of many of the West's producers) and short films, are reasonably well supported by Screen West, but there is the obvious battle to justify such production if measured by criteria that require an economic return on investment.

Regrettably, apart from the funding that was passed over from the Department of the Arts to Screen West to administer for the Film and Television Institute, no additional funding was allowed either for the Institute's expansion or for screen culture development.

Funding for the Institute's operations has remained static for some years. As a matter of government policy, capital funding has been eliminated. Therefore, the only way the Institute has been able to upgrade its equipment and facilities is from earning income. Consequently, the availability of low cost, developmental resources for filmmakers, who hardly constitute any commercial or industrial notion of "industry", is threatened.

The problem for Screen West in supporting screen culture appears to be threefold. Firstly, screen culture is not specifically funded. The Lotteries Commission is an obvious source of funding. Secondly, with a business plan that focuses on TV series production, it's hard to see that screen culture exists beyond the box in the living room—but of course it does. Finally, there's the perception that, as the art house film circuit has spread beyond the confines of one or two cinemas, there is no requirement for screen culture development.

That last perception is the most insidious. It implies that there is no longer any need to promote filmmaking and develop audiences. However, if we ever forget that we need to promote a screen culture as an exercise in maintaining cultural diversity, then we can kiss goodbye the notion of self expression in a global market dominated by American product, a society that has few cultural barriers to such product.

Finally, the idea that the WA "industry" will somehow become self supporting, self sufficient and economically viable (or any other expression that will please the economic rationalists) is a nonsense. Some organisations, and some talented, creative, individuals will achieve success beyond even their expectations. By and large, however, the WA film industry will require continuing support. It will perhaps forever be "in development", even when achieving its greatest successes.

The trick is to accept this and to ensure that organisations like the FTI are sufficiently well resourced to continue to provide a platform from which creative and talented filmmakers can launch careers, to avoid pumping too much funding into one area to the detriment of others, and to recognise the importance of maintaining a vibrant screen culture.

Robert Turnbull is Executive Manager of the WA Film and Television Institute

Preview

Taking the system seriously

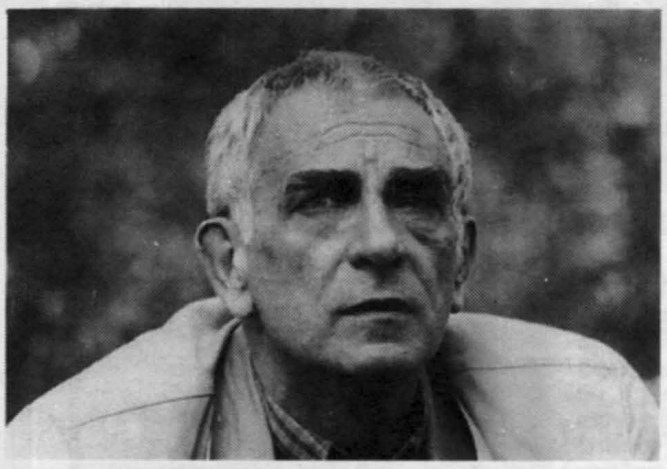
Annemarie Jonson previews the 1996 Sydney Film Festival

In this year's program, Annemarie Jonson discovers a rich vein of documentaries about film (Dreyer, Kieselowski, Fuller, Vertov, actor Jean Seberg, one about the final years of Orson Welles and another on Randolph Hearst's response to the making of Citizen Kane*). More filmic treats are on offer in the program of early short films by famous directors Australian and overseas. As well she appraises Michael Benson's* Predictions of Fire *and finds valuable insights into the cultural politics of the former Yugoslavia*

"I dreamed of being a stoker." So says the late director Krzysztof Kieslowski in Krzysztof Wierzbicki's documentary *I'm So-So,* screening at this year's Sydney Film Festival. Thankfully for cinema Kieslowski embraced a directing career instead, after several failed attempts to pass the Lodz film school entry exam. Through a series of frank interviews, Wierzbicki's compelling film (produced in the year prior to Kieslowski's death in March at age 54) illuminates the intellectual and spiritual lebenswelt of the melancholy, chain-smoking auteur. Kieslowski's post-retirement credo ("all I aspire to now is calm") is a Zen dénouement to a career which spans the social realist documentaries of the late sixties and seventies, the early features, the *Decalogue* series and the recent films including the colours trilogy, all of which are touched on in *I'm So-So.* Juxtaposed against his prodigious output, Kieslowski's self-assessment on the eve of his early death is profoundly moving: "I'm in a row further up than I deserved," he concludes. Though unprepossessingly conventional in form, this doco is a rare opportunity for an extended audience with the Polish pontiff of deep cinematic soul.

Torben Jensen's *Carl Th. Dreyer: My Metier,* also on this year's program, documents the uncompromising Danish grandmeister-auteur (*Le Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, Day of Wrath* and *Ordet* etc.). Jensen's film situates the silent masterpiece Jeanne—based on transcripts of the 1431 trial, and filmed in extreme close-up, a technique unheard of at the time—in Dreyer's 45 year oeuvre, spanning *The President* (1919) to *Gertrud* (1964). *Jeanne,* (which André Bazin described as a 'prodigious fresco of heads' in which 'the whole of nature palpates beneath every pore'), was an extravagant commercial disaster which temporarily stymied Dreyer's career (Dreyer had at great expense reconstructed a vast chateau as the set, which is all but invisible in the film). A feature of Jensen's doco is an interview with the daughter of Renée Falconetti, the acclaimed stage actor who, in her only ever film role, played Jeanne. A must for those who crowded into the screening of *Jeanne* at last year's SFF.

Wierzbicki's and Jensen's documentaries are part of an outstanding lineup of films at the '96 festival focussing on filmmakers and artists. Vassili Slivovic's *Orson Welles: The One-Man Band* chronicles the last twenty years of Welles' life, and includes clips from unfinished films and television appearances. Thomas Lennon and Michael Epstein's *The Battle Over Citizen Kane* documents William Randolph Hearst's attempt to destroy the young Welles and his film. In Adam Simon's *The Typewriter, The Rifle and The Movie Camera,* actor/auteur Tim Robbins meets and interviews independent US director Samuel Fuller. The polymath, inventor of the tetrahedronal geodesic dome, and hippie guru Buckminster Fuller, who described himself as an 'explorer in comprehensive anticipation design', is Karen Goodman's and Kirk Simon's subject in *Thinking Out Loud.* Documentaries on Danish grande dame writer-Baroness Karen Blixen (*Out of Africa*), Russian cineaste Dziga Vertov (*Man With a Movie Camera*) and actor Jean Seberg (*Breathless*) are also programmed. An innovation this year is the Short Films/Major Directors program, a brilliant opportunity to view early shorts from Kieslowski, Truffaut, Welles, Atom Egoyan, Aki Kaurismaki, D. A. Pennebaker, and Australians Peter Weir, Phillip Noyce and Geoffrey Wright amongst others. Check out George Lucas's seminal sci-fi short *THX1138:4EB.*



Krzysztof Wierzbicki's *Krzysztof Kieslowski I'm So So*

The feature line up also looks promising. Scott Hicks' acclaimed *Shine* chronicles the life of eccentric Australian piano prodigy and stream-of-consciousness extemporiser David Helfgott. Hicks' film, which sparked a distributors' bidding war at the recent Sundance, opens the festival. Neophyte director Emma-Kate Croghan's ultra-low budget feature *Love and Other Catastrophes,* the rights to which Fox snapped up at Cannes for a cool $1 million, is also on the bill. Peter Greenaway's new feature *The Pillow Book,* based on the writings of the 10th century Japanese Sei Shonagon, premieres at the festival (see Noel Purdon's interview with Greenaway in *RT*#12). At the other end of the socio-aesthetic spectrum of Britfilm is Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies,* fresh from Cannes Palme d'Or glory; Leigh is also a festival guest. Australian Shirley Barrett's *Love Serenade,* which took out the Camera d'Or against some stiff competition (directorial debuts by Angelica Huston and Dustin Hoffman) is also scheduled. Todd Solondz's comedy *Welcome to the Dollhouse* and Jeanne Jordan's *Troublesome Creek*, which shared the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 1996, are also featured. In the retrospective of Indian cinema, *Mother India*, this year's festival presents a rare opportunity to experience the Hindi epic on the big screen. The other major retrospective focuses on the great post-war director Roberto Rossellini, and includes his *Germany Year Zero, Paisa* and *Europa '51.*

Following up last festival's excellent films on the former Yugoslavia from the Sarajevo Groups of Auteurs (*Man, God, Monster*) and Marcel Ophuls (*The Troubles We've Seen*) is Michael Benson's stunning *Predictions of Fire.* Benson explores the nexus between eastern European politics, art and media through an examination of the controversial Slovene arts collective NSK, comprising the industrial rock group Laibach, the visual arts collective Irwin and the performance group Noordung. Cutting between rarely seen archival footage of the tumultuous political history of the region, interviews with the group, and performance excerpts, the film's thesis is that NSK's provocative appropriation of proto-fascist iconography reveals the inexorable forces subtending the irruption of nationalism in the recent war. In fact, Benson suggests, NSK's anti-agitprop anticipated the cataclysm. Set against the bloody backdrop of 20th century conflict the group's 80s sloganeering ("We believe in the future and will look for it in the past if necessary") proves horribly prescient. A feature of this film is an impassioned analysis of Laibach by hot philosopher/cultural theorist Slavoj Zizek. Do Laibach take themselves seriously (that is, are they fascist propagandists), is their art ironic? asks Zizek. His provocative answer: it is the condition of late capitalism per se *not* to take itself seriously—the ideal subject at the end of the 20th century is ironically detached. NSK and Laibach are subversive precisely because they take the system more seriously than it takes itself. Not to be missed.

Michael Benson's *Predictions of Fire*

The Sydney Film Festival. June 7-22. Call 02-660.8244 for further details.

Preview

It's a wrap

Anna Dzenis previews festival director Tait Brady's final Melbourne International Film Festival.

It is a year of change for the 45th Melbourne International Film Festival. Tait Brady has announced that this will be his last year as festival director, crowning a significant nine year achievement. The festival returns to the city centre, to the very heart of Melbourne, taking advantage of the fortuitous re-opening of two of the city's grand movie houses, The Old State (aka The Forum) and The Capitol. Brady says "Our major aim for 1996 was always to create a vibrant central-city festival precinct, using a number of venues all within easy walking distance. The move to two medium size venues rather than one large screen allows us much greater flexibility in programming and reflects more accurately the mixed nature of the real festival audience". The dates of the festival have also changed, and it will now occur later in the year. This will take it out of the tertiary-exam period which should mean greater accessibility for that sector of the audience. It also means that the Melbourne Film Festival won't coincide with the Sydney Film Festival. Brady notes that the national media have profiled the two festivals in terms of the films they have had in common, the guests and the events that they shared. The fact that they no longer coincide should encourage a recognition of their unique and distinctive programs, character and accomplishments. Melbourne's later date will also locate it more favourably in the international film festival calendar so that now it will be able to include the most recent films screened at Cannes.

Wild Bill Hollywood Maverick, William Wellman in France, 1918

A festival is always looking forward and backward at the same time. Last year's celebrations of the centenary of the cinema continue. In fact 1996 is the Australian centenary of cinema, marking the arrival of the medium on our shores. On Saturday 22 August 1896 the stage magician Carl Hertz opened his Australian tour at the Opera House, Melbourne, with an act which included a demonstration of R. W. Paul's film projector, the Kinematograph (Bertrand & Routt, *The Australian Screen*). While the Festival has always premiered many Australian films, in this centenary year it is intended to draw particular attention to contemporary Australian cinema as a discrete section—*Australian Panorama*—to celebrate the achievements of a very active and fertile industry. There are also a record number of Australian entries in the Festival's Short Film Competition.

Last year's centenary motivated the collection and preservation of many rarely-seen early examples of 'the cinema of attractions' as well as spawning contemporary work relating to the beginnings of the cinema. It is now understood that the Skladanowsky Bros., Max and Emil, can claim the first public projection of motion pictures at the Wintergarten in Berlin, 1 November 1895, using their Bioskop projection system. The program was 15 minutes long, and eight of the moving-image items were filmed vaudeville numbers. This inaugural *Wintergarten-Program,* consisting of nine film strips, will be screened this year. In conjunction with this, it is hoped that Wim Wenders' current project—a documentary about the Skladanowksy Brothers—will also be available for the festival.

Associated feature films of interest include a documentary about the work of Alice Guy Blache, who directed most, if not all, fictional films produced by Gaumont, and continued to work prolifically in the silent era up until 1920. In this attention to origins and beginnings, there are also some fascinating postmodern spin-offs. *Lumiere and Co.* is a French feature-length project involving 32 modern filmmakers—Bertolucci, Spike Lee and David Lynch to name a few—who were commissioned to make films of less than two minutes under the same conditions as their predecessors the Lumieres. The train departing the station at Lyon instances a very different machine.

A long overdue Ida Lupino Retrospective is another feature of the MIFF and will most assuredly prove to be one of its major highlights. Lupino was the only female director making feature films in mainstream post second world war Hollywood. Between 1949 and 1953, she directed six feature films for her own companies, *Not Wanted* (1949), *Never Fear* (aka *Young Lovers*) (1950), *Outrage* (1950), *Hard, Fast and Beautiful* (1951), *The Hitch-Hiker* (1953), and *The Bigamist* (1953). The core of the retrospective is this work by Lupino as a director. After 1954, she turned to television, directing for such series as *Have Gun Will Travel, Twilight Zone, Four Star Playhouse* (aka *Star Performance*), *Screen Director's Playhouse, The Untouchables, Breaking Point,* and *Gilligan's Island.* It is hoped to include in the retrospective some of Lupino's television work as well. In the obituary section of the Oscars this year, Lupino was acknowledged and credited as an actor. This points to a serious failure on the part of the film community to recognise a considerably larger body of work. A selection of films showcasing some of her acting performances will also be screened as an elaboration of the directorial achievements. These films include *The Man I Love* (Walsh, 1946), *Road House* (Negulesco, 1948), *The Hard Way* (Sherman, 1942), *On Dangerous Ground* (Ray, 1952), *High Sierra* (Walsh, 1941), and *Deep Valley* (Negulesco, 1947), concluding with a brand new 35mm print from the BFI library of Peckinpah's *Junior Bonner* (1972). The objective of the retrospective is to consider the many parts of a complex, diverse and significant career.

Lupino scholar, Ronnie Scheib, has been invited as a guest of the festival to contextualise the Lupino material. Scheib is the author of key Lupino scholarship, in particular 'Ida Lupino: Auteuress' (*Film Comment,* 1980) and the more recent essay on *Never Fear* from that important book *Queen of the B's.* Scheib herself has also written on Charles Schnee, Fuller's *Shock Corridor,* Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt,* Wim Wenders, Tex Avery, and most recently has been writing on cartoons with Greg Ford. Many of the Lupino films are from Scheib's collection. "Not that I started out to collect them, but it was the only way to see some of them", says Scheib. There will also be a forum on Lupino with Scheib in attendance.

What would a film festival be without Orson Welles? There are, in fact, two documentaries motivated by the work, the life and the fascination still engendered by this man. *The Battle Over Citizen Kane* is a documentary which examines the parallel lives of Orson Welles and media magnate William Randolph Hearst, inviting audiences to reassess the film *Citizen Kane* in its original context. This re-reading of the widely studied auteurist text is very lively and much more than hagiography. *One Man Band* is yet another film depicting Welles as a martyred genius. What differentiates it is its attention to Welles' work as a magician, an illusionist, and the fact that it contains some previously unseen, self-contained short works by Welles. The Festival is also trying to bring out *F for Fake* (1973), as part of its focus on Welles.

Amongst the innovative, feature-length documentaries are some extraordinary biographies of artists. *From the Journals of Jean Seberg* by Mark Rappaport is a highly experimental biography, examining the professional and the personal through a playful technique of video-layering. The New York-based photographer Nan Goldin—a chronicler of the Warhol period—has created an annotated slide film *I'll be Your Mirror.* Michael Almereyda (*Twister, Another Girl, Another Planet, Nadja*) documents the Sundance Film Festival in *At Sundance.* Almereyda, renowned for using footage he shoots on his 'Pixelvision' toy camera, blends 35mm footage with 'pixel' stock. He wanders around the festival, interviewing filmmakers about the future of the cinema, and presents a wildly tongue-in-cheek vision. There will also be a feature documentary on William Wellman—*Wild Billy, Hollywood Maverick*—executive produced by his son William Wellman Jnr., as well as a study of fashion photographer Richard Avedon—*Richard Avedon: Darkness and Light.*

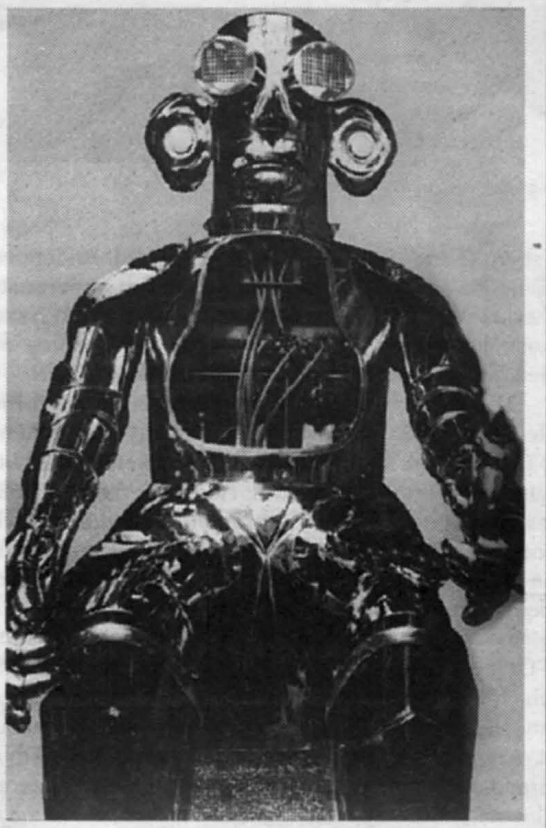
Dancerama is a dance program presented in association with Melbourne's own international dance festival and conference, the Greenmill Dance Project. The core of the program is an examination of the two forms of film and dance and the ways in which choreography merges with cinematic language. Films in this selection include a history of dance from the Cinematheque de la Danse in Paris, a Frederic Wiseman documentary on the American Ballet Theatre and a grand-scale Carlos Saura documentary *Flamenco.*

As well as through *Robotica* (see box this page), the festival also engages with the new technologies through *Digita,* a program motivated by a desire to explore the relationship between the cinema and multimedia. Experimental work of cinematic origin will be screening on CD-ROM, video and live from the internet. Negotiations are under way to present New York independent video artist Adrienne Jenick and her interactive feature film *Mauve Desert*—a roadmovie merging cinematic art, multimedia and video. A forum will also foreground and discuss contemporary imaging practices and their implications for cinema as we know it. As the festival moves into the new multimedia age with the rest of us, the digital program will also be on-line, with links to other web sites.

In a discussion about the curatorial strategies involved in bringing an international film festival to Melbourne screens, Brady describes it as a process of moving on your feet, going with the flow, grappling with the unknown. Brady says that when you're talking contemporary, it's brand new, and as a result it changes all the time. For this reason some of the festival's highlights are still to be confirmed. However, it is already clear that this year's festival, with its new centralised location and diverse program, will cater for many broad as well as specialised audiences. It is going to be full of history, inspiration, innovation and much of the best in contemporary cinema. Stand by for further updates.

Melbourne International Film Festival, July 25-August 11. For details call 03-9407.2011.

Robotica is the linked exhibition, installation and film/video/multimedia component of Experimenta's major project for 1996—*Machine Visions*—and it will take place under the umbrella of the Melbourne Film Festival. The focus of *Robotica* is the humanoid robot in popular and cinema culture, the relationship of cinema to robotics and the mechanical, and the questions that arise as fantasy becomes part of reality. Co-curated by Dr. Peter Morse and Shiralee Saul, the project brings together metal men, cyborgs and gyndroids in a multimedia extravaganza, drawing robots from commercial and entertainment contexts together with the creative explorations of the subject by Australian artists, animators, filmmakers and performers. Two two hour screenings will include a range of films about robots—from *Ballet Mechanique, Tetsuo,* and documentaries about robots, to contemporary digital animation. One of the innovations of this year's Melbourne Film Festival will be the Film Festival Club in the Lower Town Hall—a gathering place for festival goers. *Robotica's* physical exhibition will take place in the space adjacent to the Film Festival Club. It is a space that has to be traversed to get into the club, but a space that is also easily accessible to the wider public. Special features of the *Robotica* exhibition will include robots from *Babe,* Bugs Bunny and Tweetie Pie, a video wall showcasing cutting edge animation, human-sized pneumatic interactive robots, moving canine robots, a chairbot, an interactive data glove and internet access to the *Robotica* site.



AD

Interview

The obscure charm of grammar

Cassi Plate talks with Suzan-Lori Parks, screenwriter of Spike Lee's *Girl 6*.

Somewhere in between writing plays and writing novels lies the screenplay. Suzan-Lori Parks is a 32 year old African-American writer based in New York, and right now she's very busy. Her new play *Venus* is being directed by avant-garde writer-director Richard Foreman, her (first) screenplay, for Spike Lee's new film *Girl 6* is about to come to life on screens all over the world, and she's writing her first three novels simultaneously plus a new play and another film.

Girl 6 will be our first taste of Parks' giddy writing. Instead of traditional narrative structure, her many plays written over thirteen years are propelled by the movement contained in the speech itself. According to *American Theatre* journal her plays are "as confrontational as they are poetic, as formally difficult as they are intoxicating". When asked if people not from the dominant culture are the ones who can challenge things, she replies that "everybody can, but if you feel that the traditional shape of things doesn't accommodate what you're doing, then it's a more organic and natural process. Suddenly you find yourself doing something else".

That something else is a fluid way of working with structure, creating a sense of progression through repetition, with echoes of Gertrude Stein. To get a sense of her work, listen to how jazz solos are sculpted around a repeated theme. Suzan-Lori: "I realised how much this method is an integral part of the African and African-American literary and oral traditions...Its not just repetition, but repetition with *revision*. And in drama, change is the thing".

She's suspicious of plot and narrative but also sees these things as a natural function "...winter/spring/summer/fall/that's a story, that's plot, it's natural to our understanding of the world. Repetition is also a natural function of the way we understand the world: winter/spring/summer/fall". She writes within that suspicion by working "plot or formal narrative structure for all it's worth. Instead of saying that it's a given, a story", she really digs in and mines it for all its possibilities "instead of throwing it on the story like an old overcoat to cover a dead body".

In a play written in 1990, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World,* she also dispenses with characters. They become figures, with names like Black Man with Watermelon, Black Woman with Fried Drumstick, Lots of Grease and Lots of Pork, Voice on thuh Tee V and Yes and Greens Black-Eyed Peas Cornbread: vessels inhabited by a person bursting with possibilities instead of being limited by a journey. In this play, Parks implies that the greatest death of the Black Man is his being

Suzan-Lori Parks

written out of history. By addressing themes of self-narration and the way language can confer autonomy, history is rewritten. Like the form of the play, history itself becomes round. "The worl usta be *roun,*" the Black Man with Watermelon says, "before Columbus". And then "they put uh 'd' on thuh end of roun making round. Thusly we set in motion thuh end. Without that "d" we coulda gone on spinnin forever. The "d" thing ended things ended." More than that, Yes and Greens Black-Eyed Peas Cornbread replies, "Them thinking the world was flat kept it roun. Them thinking the sun revolved around the earth kept it satellite-like. They figured out the truth and scurried out. Figuring out the truth put them in their place and they scurried out to put us in ours. Mmm. Yes. You should write this down. You should hide it under a rock".

Suzan-Lori Parks writes down plenty and it all feels very alive. She says sound is one thing which charms her. "A long time ago in English Literature classes in college a teacher taught us that the words 'grammar' and 'charm' are etymologically connected and that stuck with me in a big way. I do believe that the structure of language and the sounds language makes are connected to some deeper, richer more exciting thing than just getting your point across. I think it can dazzle and transform you and make you happy." The deeper, richer vein Parks mines is the particular workings of African-American language (although she's only recently won acceptance from the black theatre establishment after being considered 'too way out there'). The way they "lay things down is unequalled in its brilliance and power; just turning a phrase, the way the phrase is shaped...The real love for putting a little shine on it, just for fun or because it better communicates what they're trying to say".

A girl with a great way with words. What more could you want from a screenplay? She was sought out by talent scouts for Spike Lee's company and this is the only film directed by Spike Lee which he has not also written or co-written. Quite a vote of confidence. *Girl 6* is about phone sex and the complicated life of an aspiring actress/working girl. Was Suzan-Lori able to expand the film medium? "The trickiest part is that not all of the script gets onto the screen. Either its not shot or edited for time or sense...it's ended up as a comedy with some of the more serious bits taken out." And working with Spike Lee? "I found him very generous and kind and funny. For a film director who's also the producer he was pretty nice about the whole process, inviting me in and giving me the sole author credit, not trying to take over my job or things like that often happen. But at the same time he's a very opinionated, strong-willed artist, like I am, and he had a certain idea and a certain way he wanted it to go so ultimately it went that way, you know, and that's the business."

Spike Lee, Jenifer Lewis and Theresa Randle in *Girl 6*

Girl 6 is Spike Lee's eighth film since he directed *She's Gotta Have It* a decade ago, and the first since then to feature a woman as its main subject, played by Theresa Randle. Madonna plays the owner of the phone sex establishment and the film also features Naomi Campbell, Isaiah Washington IV, John Turturro, Quentin Tarantino and Spike himself.

Venus, Parks' new play, directed by one of American avant-garde theatre's key figures Richard Foreman, (who also usually only directs his own work) is opening soon in New York. It features *The Hottentot Venus* paraded as a freak-show exhibit to a Victorian England fascinated by exotica, in this case by "her butt, her gluteus maximus". *Venus* is as much about her agency in the process as it is about her role as an exhibit, and it's a love story. Could we see *Venus* at the next Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth or Sydney Festival please?

Girl 6 *will be released by UIP Distribution in Sydney on August 18, other states to follow. Cassi Plate is a writer, researcher & former presenter of Radio National's* Screen *program.*

Reviews

Closed circuit

Jacqueline Millner reports on Digital Aesthetics-One

Digital Aesthetics-One was held at the University of New South Wales in April 1996. The symposium was convened by Contemporary Art and Technology (CAT), an independent Melbourne-based group "dedicated to the promotion of critical inquiry and debate of issues surrounding the shift from analog to digital paradigms".

If there's one thing that the cyber-conference circuit can agree on, it's the urgent need for a critical theory adequate to our new media landscape. If there's one thing such conferences appear to consistently fall short of, it's the substantial progression of such a theory. For while speaker after speaker at *Digital Aesthetics-One* identified the problem, vehemently put by Paul Virilio as the lack of a theory for technological art, few proposed any fleshed-out strategies for tackling it. Moreover, for all the palaver about the fluidity and openness of cyberdebate, the sense of closed circuit was underlined by the continual reappearance of familiar names, familiar arguments, none more in-your-face than Professor Allucquere Rosanne Stone, "performing" the precise same anecdotal musings on liquid identity for the umpteenth time in Australia (the last only nine months ago at the Biennale of Ideas), musings which in any case you can read pretty much word for word in her latest book.

While suffering from some dilemmas common to similar symposia, *Digital Aesthetics-One* was also saddled with the particular and difficult task of addressing its title. Peter Chamberlain from the University of Hawaii asked at the wrap-up panel, "Did anyone really talk about digital aesthetics?...there ain't no digital aesthetics, it's just too complex", and certainly few speakers actually addressed the notion of aesthetics as such or the impact which digital technologies have had on traditional aesthetics. And this despite a brave attempt by conference organisers CAT to represent both theorists and artists in equal measure at the symposium, let alone in the series of surrounding events including performances at Artspace and an exhibition at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery.

Regardless of these general problems, there were some star turns, the brilliant presentation by American cultural theorist Mark Dery, the indisputable highlight. With a masterful turn of phrase and a relentless stream of pithy and hilarious metaphors, Dery through his language alone was able to evoke a sense of a digital aesthetics, and at the same time further a salient critique of the politics of the new media. Beginning with a colourful description of *Wired*—"the mighty morphin' power book with the sheen of a turtlewaxed Formula One roadster", its day-glo fused photographs like an "irradiated monitor turned up too high"—Dery went on to surgically dissect the magazine's design and its ideological implications, seducing us first into believing in *Wired's* avant-gardism before convincingly undermining this status in the next breath.

For while *Wired* positions itself at the forefront of a push to crack the US military-industrial-entertainment complex through the democratising gestures of netsurfing and hacking (a "let them eat laptops" mentality), what it really does is provide a safe vehicle for the Silicon Valley establishment to live out its fantasy of rebellion. *Wired's* design, steeped in the Uriah Heep iconography of the early 70s, works to affirm the hipness of the magazine's core demographic (average income $US 81,000 a year, male, white and employed in the communications industry); facilitates the transition of the flat-footed IBM nerd to latter day uberlord prowling the net after hours (in other words, an affirmation that "corporations are cool"); and perpetrates a kind of "info-machismo" whereby one's worth is judged by the ability to handle information overload (as in Johnny Mnemonic's directive, "Hit me!"). Dery's facility to range from popular culture to sociological texts to complex poststructuralist theory with wit, spontaneity and a concern to be understood, made for a most entertaining and edifying session.

Another pertinent contribution was Jane Goodall's critical consideration of the aesthetic credentials of the digital. Contextualising her analysis in the history of digital programming, with its desire to obliterate human agency, and the late 19th century synaesthetic movement, with its sensorial theatre, Goodall elegantly argued that digital art remains sensorially challenged. For Goodall, "there are more interesting questions to be raised about the limits of digital art than its imagined megalopotentialities...[and] the most significant limitation is the restricted possibilities for sensory engagement. Multimedia is not synaesthetic—it's bound to an audiovisual axis, and the literally digital aspect of it—fingertip communication by the user—offers a hopelessly reductive approach to accommodating the sense of touch". Describing her visit to the CD-ROM exhibition *Burning the Interface*, Goodall observes, "There's something very unsensory about this activity or interactivity, as you stand there watching it, waiting for a turn with the mouse. And the art, far from liquefying and going global and dissolving and cancelling the social field, is all boxed in its monitors". Ultimately for Goodall, the only way to create a digital aesthetics—with the emphasis on aesthetics as perception by the senses—is to combine digital media with live performance, as Stelarc and Orlan do.

Stelarc and Orlan certainly came away as the anointed royalty of digital aesthetics from this symposium. Not only Goodall, but other speakers including Nicholas Zurbrugg—whose keynote address was a good opener, its ambit so wide that it prefaced many of the ensuing issues, its emphasis on the traditional genealogy of digital art salutary—found few better exemplars of what the future might look like. Orlan's agent/publicist/theoretician, former paediatrician Dr Rachel Armstrong, however, added very little to the debate, stringing together a swag of clichés to say nothing more than that Orlan confounds the institutions of art and medicine and evades the strictures of identity by using her body as a canvas. The bodgie 'live' link up to Orlan in Paris—which consisted not of video or even net conferencing but simply a trunk call—was only outdone by Dr Armstrong's tortuous French which frustrated the audience's attempts to elicit nuanced answers from "the world's first practitioner of carnal art".

Stelarc's contribution was far more substantial. Dismissive of the "outmoded metaphysical yearnings" of some net surfers for a "mind to mind communion", and disowning the notorious *World Art* interview in which he asserted the obsolescence of the body ("this does not imply a body loathing, nor the desire for a utopian body that achieves immortality"), Stelarc went on to outline his latest project: the generation of a "fractal flesh" by performing the body stirred and startled by the remote whispers of other bodies—displaced presences on the net—prompting the body to perform actions without previous memory or desire. This loop of stimulus and response becomes for Stelarc a metaphor for awareness, which in the artist's schema is due to gross and small muscle movements.

The symposium also invited a number of emerging local new media artists to discuss their work, among them Patricia Piccinini and James Verdon whose latest digital art was concurrently exhibited at The Performance Space and Ivan Dougherty Gallery respectively. Also on show at the latter was British artist Graham Harwood's *Rehearsal of Memory*, a poignant CD-ROM record of the personal scars and histories of inmates from a high security mental hospital. There is a raw energy about Graham Harwood and his community-oriented projects which is exhilarating, particularly in a cultural climate still hostile to artwork which wears its political heart on its sleeve. Harwood admits that he's never been interested in technology so much as where technology acts on people. Like Dery, Harwood drags the cyberdebate back to where it counts, to the realm of the social, contextualising his work by reminding us that "while one third of the national income of the UK is generated by culture, there is no cultural voice for people below a certain level of income".

Considering its lack of heavyweight institutional support—no credits to the Australia Council, nor for that matter the AFC which ran a rather more lavish event across town at the same time—*Digital Aesthetics-One* did well to attract some leading new media players. Certainly CAT's attempt to pull together artists, designers and theorists was laudable, even if a more compact program might have separated the chaff from the wheat. However, coming away from the symposium only underlines the still urgent need for cogent theoretical approaches to the new media.

Coding the possible

Mike Leggett at *The Language of Interactivity* conference

The Language of Interactivity conference, held at the ABC Ultimo Centre, Sydney, April 9-11, was the third of a series of annual events organised by the Australian Film Commission, designed to 'bridge the gap' between the often separated groups of computer specialists, creative 'talent' and entrepreneurial risk-takers. The conference chair, Michael Hill, AFC Multimedia Projects Coordinator, one of the few people in Australia with significant experience of a multitude of multimedia production proposals, suggested that this year was the International Year of Multimedia Cliché (following on from last year, the International Year of Multimedia): terms like 'content', 'interface', 'prototype', 'non-linear' were up for reconsideration if "we are to make projects which satisfy and challenge an audience hungry for something they haven't yet seen."

"Artists often have sudden ideas, want to try different possibilities within the structure of the project, so you have to be flexible and your code needs to be very flexible. You have to be able to adapt and respond to different situations and be very open to changes. Too often in commercial projects I've coded, people know what is on the market and they know what they want...and it's a very limited approach."

Gideon May was a guest speaker from Amsterdam and one of several within the 'industry' who actively pursues the unknown alongside the rent-paying yakka. "As the demand for programmers able to write code for multimedia projects increases over the next few years, their ability to succeed will be related to their ability to work in close collaboration with the full range of other specialists engaged in a project. I don't think that there will be a place for just one director who is in control and who delegates everything."

Will the control freaks, artists and moguls back away from so much shared territory?

The conference topic of 'interaction' was imaginatively extended from 'responding to screen prompts' to focusing as much on the interactions between production teamwork models. Several of the overseas guest speakers, whilst demonstrating the appearance and 'functionality' of their works, came from quite distinct production environments.

Glorianna Davenport came from the MIT Media Lab cocoon where, working with in-house staff and students, she has developed story-telling/listening agents with cute names like Lurker and Thinkies. These respond to the choices made during an interactive encounter on a computer by presenting options calculated most likely to be needed next by the individual. (Unfortunately a classic *faux pas*, with the status of an aphorism, undercut her presentation: "I was shocked when I discovered many of my students barely knew that the Second World War took place. I mean I know that it wasn't very influential in Australia but it turned out the Second World War really changed the world a lot.")

A contrast was the artisanal production approach of Chris Hales, whose interactive touch-screen installation was shown for a short time at Artspace. Using Hi8 video and working from his London home when not teaching, whimsical portraits of friends and children are woven together on the computer into an example of 'interactive cinema', a 'genre' which seems to owe a lot to a history of cinema. Hales avoids the 'classic narrative' interactive approach adopted by Graham Weinbren, who spoke at the 1995 conference in Melbourne, revisiting instead the cinema of pathos and slapstick comedy.

Another contrast was the Stevie Wonder of interactive game design, Osamu Sato, head of one of Tokyo's' "leading multimedia firms", who inscrutably demonstrated the intricacies of "the most popular CD-ROM adventure title in Japan, *Eastern Mind*". Sato's presentation highlighted the gap between eastern and western traditions of visual coding and meaning construction.

Jonathon Delacour created the links that he has achieved in previous AFC conferences between different cultural traditions. The negotiation of roles and role play in on-line game environments, he suggested, rehearses personality development and the centring of the self. Richly illustrated with 'habitats' populated by 'avatars' and other identities, the history of this development went back to the Lucasfilm Habitat established as far back as 1985.

The tension between on-line and off-line delivery and development was present behind most of the papers and panels, in this, the Year of Wwwebness. Also, as John Colette succinctly put it, this tension reflects the distinction "between whether we are seeking information or experience".

A Sydney team developing an interactive soap opera 'transformational game', *Strange Fruit*, revealed the collaborative workshop approach taken to an ambitious project. The 'big-picture/little-picture' relationship and the defining of roles for team members, including the relationship of the writer and performers to the whole, gave an insight into the brave complexities of exporting established narrative traditions into digital environments. This was in contrast to a high point of irony which was reached when 'interface consultant' Fiona Ingram gave a flawless presentation of eye-watering bullet points depicting a multimedia-by-numbers approach to the production process, and then used as her example the CD-ROM of the *Doors of Perception 1* conference Amsterdam, 1994 (part of the *Burning the Interface* exhibition,

Reviews

At the time and space of interface

Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch do the interactive at *Burning the Interface, Cybercultures* and *No Exit*

Are galleries quite the right places for exhibitions like *Burning the Interface, Cybercultures* and the Luc Courchesne contribution to *No Exit*? You have to ask. At the MCA's *Burning the Interface* at 11.30 on Saturday morning the room is already full of people quietly tapping away. What's the alternative? The private booth? Appointments at your local gallery? Certainly some kind of ticket that allows a couple of visits seems to be indicated. It's depressing to think the only solution is back home in front of your own computer because there are some pleasures in being with other people in a sea of CD ROMs—though not many. This artform would seem on the one hand to be the least social but, let's face it, the more adventurous works will always need public space. The answer is some as yet unimagined place.

As with any art you can scan images but here it's not just seeing that's at stake but more the time of cinema, the textuality of books, the pleasures of sound and most importantly time to choose from a range of options. You're likely to spend much longer with an engaging CD-ROM than a painting or a sculpture because it requires you to. And watching over other people's shoulders is no fun for them or for you. With some, non-interactive works, like Peter de Lorenzo's *Reflections, Abstractions and Memory Structures* all you do is watch as frames become flames, images unfold and fragment, transform through twelve minutes that slowly focus and transform and sometimes look like 'pixelist' paintings.

A room full of CD-ROMs and similar offerings is like being at a party where every person in the room is talking about something different and everyone is inviting you over to talk. So you move from machine to machine and you know the room is bound to contain a few bores who will never let you go. A couple of women are having trouble exiting from the jaws of the very insistent and confronting seedy-ROM *Necro Enema Amalgamated* in the corner. They're trapped until we start to hover and they make their escape.

MCA, Sydney). While stuffed with elegant visual approaches to a static documentary (by "cutting a lot of buttons"), it certainly had nothing to do with the production process described.

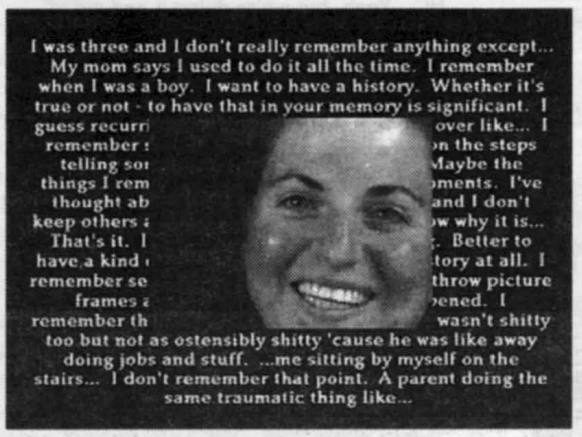
Tim Gruchy delightfully demonstrated *Synthing*, the "wetness of interactive experience", as the outcome of distinctive teamwork flowing from the traditions of the plastic and musical arts. Using modest and dated Amiga technology, the path to "unencumbered interfaces" gave a glimpse of a cultural tool which may become as ubiquitous as the sound synthesiser.

Other inspired individuals like Jon McCormack, Michael Buckley and Graham Harwood seemed much less concerned with the value that can flow from the integrated interactive production team. Can the imagination that such artists deliver ever be attracted to work with others in such a way?

The benefits of such collaborations are two-way according to programmer Gideon May: "It helps me a lot for writing good code because there are many times when you have to come back to correct or amend. And well structured, well laid-out, readable code makes this process easier and more rapid". Also visual artists have often objected, for instance, to the clean, well-rendered surfaces beloved of games makers. "It takes a lot of computing power to make something dirty," said May. But clearly such interaction has meant that code is now being written, for a variety of purposes, which will begin to remove some of that surface gloss and glitter.

With Luc Courchesne's *Portrait One* you feel you'd like to be alone. A young woman speaks intimately and offers you a set of responses and questions with which to address her. Courchesne's other work *Hall of Shadows* for the *No Exit* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, is like being in a room full of holograms and you know, because you heard it on the grapevine, that if you push the right buttons, you can get these laser-disc-video images to actually speak to one another. Just like the host at a real party. Somehow, these naturalistic/theatrical works are the most confronting because they are the least like paintings and the most like engaging with real people. And you need to be alone or nearly alone with them. A crowded gallery room reduces *Hall of Shadows* to four duets.

In another intimate work at the MCA's *Burning the Interface*, Nino Rodriguez' *Boy*, a woman offers you fragments of memories of her childhood "as a boy", "as a tomboy", when "my mother was always throwing picture frames at people". As she speaks, her words unfold on the screen and you can click on an earlier word and phrase and she'll repeat that passage. You don't get into an exchange as you can in the Luc Courchesne, but by using the mouse you



Nino Rodriguez, *Boy* (United States, 1994)

can get her to repeat and re-order what she has said. You, in turn, play with what she says, creating an even quirkier poetry of the everyday. There's no animation, no collage, you simply choose to watch and listen to someone speak. You can even make her disappear and just read or listen to what she's got to say. All she requires is that you be with her for a time.

There's quite a lot of reading on offer on these CD-ROMs, though the kinds of reading experiences vary. Something like Jean-Louis Boissier's exquisite *Flora Petrinsularas* needs an hour. It's like reading a precious book in which words become flesh. The text comprises sixteen quotations from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Confessions*. You move from sexual encounters between 18th Century characters in Quick Time movies—breasts, faces, delicate clothing in surprisingly fine images—to a catalogue of plants in nature to close up specimens of the same that press against the screen. The urge to touch is irresistible. Who said we were mousebound? This one requires patience and a delicate hand. If you push too hard, you'll just find yourself back with the relentless lapping of water over pebbles that lies behind every image and you'll miss the eroticism of the work. Again, the human figures exert a personal directness—gazing into your eyes, flushed with near orgasm in a QuickTime loop of heavy breathing. Only when you think you encounter perhaps too obvious a connection between woman and nature do you feel the pull to another machine.

You can read Erik Lanz' delicate *Manuskript* like a visual encyclopaedia. It's a collection of small images of hand tools that first look like rows of words until you move in closer, clicking on each tool to get a small movie with the sound of the object performing its function. That's it. But what a pleasure as the everyday object and its sound and movement become epiphany

Bill Seaman offers a similar intense proximity to the object, though he also takes in roads, buildings and landscapes (even then miniaturising them). In his *The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers*, Seaman hands over the controls to a Chomskyan generator of sentences and a string of objects in shifting juxtaposition, which you in turn can play with.

The word is firmly and playfully with us again in Felix Hude's *Haiku Dada*. You conjure up a classical haiku in delicate woodblock print settings by capturing, with a move and click, a dragonfly, a falling leaf, or a passerby. Or you can call up the personal files of the cartoon host, Ichi Ni San, a sumo wrestler ("Rank: Behind the Curtain"), his female friend ("Degree in Education; Degree in French Literature; Wish: White wedding, Sydney Opera House") and his dog ("Variety: Cute"), or visit them floating around in a spaceship and shooting out haiku doggerel. From a bag of lines, you can make your own haiku. Animation and reading pleasures abound with a choice of interactive experiences.

Information is everywhere if you choose to read it. As well as lots of background from the artists on how and why the work was created, Bill Barminski's *De-Lux 'o* gives you a mock training course in advertising. You move through the nostalgia of 40s and 50s products ("SubVert, the fish flavoured cereal") packaged with surreal images, like the advertiser's dream—a face with two mouths ("That guy with the two mouths, he would drink a lot of beer"). Brad Miller's *Digital Rhizome* wittily extrapolates complex theory with multiple Quick Time movies (which you can stop-start—card shuffling, riots, curious helixes) but you can still have a great time without dipping into the Deleuze and Guattari passages (though the challenge is to do both).

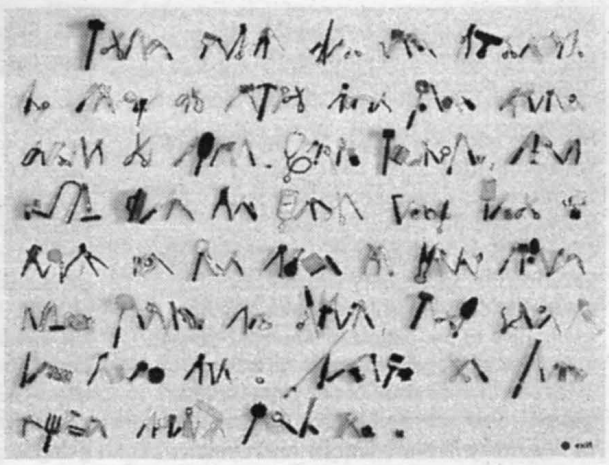
Playfulness is everywhere at the MCA. *Anti-Rom* is a brisk fun parlour you are seduced to enter. A map of the heavens is home to stars like Jacqueline Onassis and Myra Hindley, the Moors murderer. Here you can get a little girl to pull a face and say something rude at one click and then something poetic like "Time sleeps in thunder".

Like the Dutch Mediamatic contributions, these works are quick, rude grabs that subvert expectations and stretch the limits of mouse abuse.

Also for the speedy, the afore-mentioned *Necro Enema* from New York is a fast and insistent prayer for sexual liberation through interactivity: "I love you interactivity, my one and only proclivity." The crude rhyming argument runs that if interactivity lives up to its promise then the speaker will give up molesting children and other deviant practices. Ironically, though, the work itself is not interactive. Once you're in you're in.

One of the demands of an exhibition like *Burning the Interface* is that as you move from ROM to ROM you have to learn a fresh set of usually simple rules, not hard but requiring some patience, quite a bit of laterality and, again, time. Michael Buckley's *The Swear Club* yells, "The way inside a house is usually through the door!" until you click on the door. Once inside, you are in the company of cursing children, old people talking about falling and forgetting. There's some nice play with silhouettes which reminds you there was a time pre-cinema (engagingly on show in the *Phantasmagoria*exhibition in the next room).You work your way in, feel where you connect if you do at all. With the pressures of time, an audience watching you fumble your way in, it's easy to get impatient with *The Swear Club* and that's not the fault of the artist.

Cybercultures at The Performance Space Gallery, is like walking into a Japanese pop playground. At first sight, it's all primary colours—Troy Innocent's *Jawpan* and *Techno Digesto Fetishism*,



Eric Lanz, *Manuskript* (Switzerland/Germany, 1994)

created with Elena Poppa, use dense, rich colours and Potato Man graphics. Martine Corompt's *Sorry* (part of a larger CD-ROM project called *The Cute Machine*) offers a fight to the death with four cute cartoon characters on a giant children's toy. You don't click, you hit and stomp. Patricia Piccinini's *Your Sperm Our Egg Our Expertise* invites you to cost the mutation of your own computer-animated baby and then to take in her fleshy mutant innard images on the wall. In the corner Josephine Starr and Leon Cmielewski's *User Unfriendly Interface* pulls the rug on your sensibilities, a very clever relative of some of the speedier CD-ROMs at MCA. *Cybercultures* is a curious mix of the straight interactive experience, the old gallery pleasure of looking at things on walls, and a bit of real physical engagement. It points towards a multi-experience 'gallery' of the future, a rich playground of dark themes and critical ideas behind a techno-pop exterior.

The MCA's *Burning the Interface*, on the other hand, although of the sit-down-and-interact variety, poses even more significant questions about interactivity and the future of the gallery experience. Revelations from the CD-ROM experience include the power of the word on the screen, the variety of reading experiences, emerging new forms of the book, a more alarming and seductive intimacy than that offered by the movies, simple interactivity that can be profoundly pleasing, the sheer inventiveness of the artists. Despite impatience in many quarters, the mouse and the CD-ROM (or whatever replaces it) still offer a wealth of experience fast and funny or reflective and deep(in the layering of choice). Interactivity in the form of CD-ROM may only be an interregnum between cinema and something else, but *Burning the Interface* suggests a rich experimental domain drawing together image, film, video, sound, the word and the book with new ways of reading, scanning and choosing. How best we should enjoy these new pleasures and how galleries will accommodate us as audience and participators is right on the agenda.

Burning the Interface, *curated by Mike Leggett and Linda Michael, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, March 27-July 14;* Cybercultures, *curated by David Cranswick and Kathy Cleland for Street Level, The Performance Space Gallery, Sydney, March 21-April 13; Luc Courchesne,* Hall of Shadows, *part of* No Exit, *curated by Victoria Lynn, Art Gallery of NSW, May 22-June 30*

Previews

Beyond Intencity

Keith Gallasch talks to the seventh gatekeeper Hunter Cordaiy, director of Film West

HC I've been directing Film West for two and half years since initiating it. There was a community need for some intervention in film in western Sydney where life is built around multiplexes and shopping centres and local independent cinemas are dying. The product coming into the multiplexes is pure product and there are over a million people and funnily enough not all of them want to see *Robocop* or *Dropzone.*

KG How did you become alert to this—you weren't sitting in inner Sydney thinking 'poor old westies', were you?

HC I've been teaching at the University of Western Sydney since 1987 working within the faculty as a film teacher and script teacher, and the Dean, Professor Des Crawley, is very attuned to these things. He gave me the opportunity with faculty funding to create an organisation which would give to the people of western Sydney, at least in some small degree, what everyone in the centre of the city takes for granted. That was a challenge and one that comes rarely in one's life. So I said yes.

KG Have you grown with the festival?

HC I've developed a broader vision of what is possible in a film festival. Already by the second year I think I was quite frustrated with the notion that this was a film festival and we could only show films, and we could only get art-house from Europe and maybe one or two token films from Japan or India. I've looked at possibilities in cultural terms and I think as an organisation we can do community screenings, which we do fortnightly, and we can present screen works in gallery spaces. But we're also about to launch a TV program on cable across western Sydney. Even though we started as a film organisation we have all these other things to do. I think the classical model—what I might call the Jurassic model—of a film festival has to go. No-one wants to hear that, of course. The image is developing and I think we should develop with it. The important thing about Film West is we're small enough and we're bold enough.

KG How small?

HC Very small. There's me and some staff and a lot of volunteers—mainly exploited students.

KG Who are happy to get to see the films, I suppose?

HC Absolutely. And they get to work on the development of projects. We rely on a narrow funding base. There is no tradition of cultural sponsorship in Western Sydney. Businesses are very generous to the Spastic Centre, the spina bifida kids' pony club, very generous, but that hasn't translated across to cultural disadvantage, and western Sydney is still looking at the basic stuff that needs to be done. There is a complete class structure here. There are some extremely wealthy people and out of a million people you're going to get an enormous middle class who are interested in food, who want to go to bookshops, go to the movies—upmarket as well as populist. It's wrong to assume that from Hurstville out there is only one sort of people. When we launched Film West in 1994, a major national radio station invited me in for an interview and they decided the topic would be "Film and Class"!

KG What is the biggest problem you face, sponsorship aside?

HC Access to films. Every fortnight we show films in western Sydney that, without us, would never be shown. These range from *Underground* and *Burnt by the Sun* right across to *Mighty Aphrodite.* I don't know if many people know this but you can't see Woody Allen in Western Sydney. Woody Allen is deemed too difficult, too Jewish, too radical, whatever, for Western Sydney. We did a survey around January. There were 39 feature films screening in the CBD. There were 19 in Western Sydney and of those 18 were American. Now, that's a very clear statistic. Somehow, everything other than American cinema drops off the truck at Hurstville; ironically, that also includes better American product. So our community screenings are being doubled and we're going fortnightly, and hopefully we'll go weekly. We also show an Australian short with each feature.

KG For your community screenings, what's the attendance like?

HC It ranges from 40 to 100 on Sunday afternoons depending on the film, whether it's been advertised well or not in its initial season in Sydney. One of the other problems is that we can't get the films concurrently with the city. Four months after it's finished in Sydney and Melbourne then the "provinces" can get it. There are about six gatekeepers and they decide which films will go to Western Sydney and which won't. On what assumptions they base these decisions I have no idea. If 20 of the 39 films don't get here, there must be some pretty clear assumptions to start with. And it's not just the main distributors. We can't get arthouse product either, can't get a recent release for a Sunday afternoon and get it back to the Dendy or the Verona. They won't do it.

KG So it's not just a problem of creating a venue, it's actually getting the product?

HC Yeah, but we're doing it and we're risking the money. We have to pay fees for the cinema and film hire and I go to every screening. I introduce the film, welcome the audience and I'm there at the end and thank them for coming. The only thing I don't do is sell them a choc-top.

KG What if you're teaching film in the west? What do you do?

HC Tell me about it. Everything that's available at the local Civic Video. It's about disenfranchisement. The cultural power elites in the centre of the city, who do a lot of interesting work, forget that beyond Hurstville there are a million people and they're bilingual, often multilingual.

KG Just past Intencity?

HC Beyond Intencity.

KG Your 1996 festival is an electronic event, not a film festival. What kind of an audience do you anticipate for the festival?

HC We're hoping for a predominantly young, technologically literate audience plus the technologically curious who are prepared to cross-over, if I can use that term, from the art house and progressive ideas into technology. We don't know if it'll work because it's never been done. We're commissioning Australian CD-ROM artists to create new works. That's one layer. Secondly, we're going to have a live see-you-see-me link, and on the third level will be international web sites which we're selecting. We have some sponsorship. And the connections are facilitated through the university's computers. We'll use their servers and their microwave links between Liverpool and Campbelltown. It's a sophisticated network we're creating here which we're joining up for the first time. But basically the facilities are already there and what we're doing is re-wiring existing circuits. And it's free, whereas with film festivals you have to charge for tickets. I think there is a problem in terms of the traditional film festival market and I think that market is a cultural construction and I think that construction is changing and festivals will have to acknowledge all the demographic changes that have taken place in forty-three years—even in ten years—in terms of who's living in the city and who's not and the income and cultural changes that are taking place. You don't have the same audience every year or every five years on a cycle, and film festivals in my experience don't know how to respond to that. In western Sydney we're inventing things. We have no tradition.

1996 Film West Festival, Kahanamoku & Beyond, *Casula Powerhouse and Campbelltown City Art Gallery, July 12-26. Enquiries ph/fax 02-774.2043*

Trust me, taste this

A first-glimpse of the 1996 Brisbane International Film Festival

Anne Demy Geroe has been with the BIFF as a prime mover and director for most of the years since its 1991 inception. The festival also runs a New Film Makers Award in February-March and is the Brisbane co-ordinator of the National Cinematheque. Demy Geroe's biggest task, she says, is to expand audience taste for film in Brisbane.

ADG The way we're trying to expand our audience is with a thematic program rather than the more expansive models of the Sydney and Melbourne festivals. We don't have a big audience. We're still building one and that will take some time. They don't trust us yet. But that's starting to change. Distributors now tell us that they release a whole lot more product in Brisbane than they used to before the festivals.

KG For the specialist you have quite a range from the esoteric to the popular—from German silents to Stanley Kubrick to Hong Kong action.

ADG I'm keen on silent film myself. I wanted to close the Centenary of Cinema celebrations with something interesting. These German silents are coming to us through the Goethe Institut. Surprisingly they also happen to share a thematic consistency in foregrounding women's experiences. They're all pre-1920, a lot of them 1912 and 1913 films that I doubt many people would have seen. They're 35mm and they need to be projected at 18 frames per second which for Brisbane is a tricky exercise. We're lucky we have Ron West who runs a Silent Cinema. He's preparing organ scores to play live with the German silents. We've also got some pre-1915 Queensland footage in *Living Queensland,* a documentary made by local film-maker Pat Laughren with Chris Long, a Melbourne-based researcher world-renowned in this area. Queensland has arguably the oldest Government film unit so there's really interesting footage they've unearthed from that.

KG What about the Asia-Pacific component of the festival?

ADG Tony Rayns, the *Sight and Sound* writer from London is our curator for the East Asian section. He comes out to the Festival most years, though not this year. I can't say yet what the films will be but his selection always keeps me on the edge of my seat. It's also been a really interesting year for Australian films, by comparison with last year. We'll be screening *What I Have Written* and *Shine.* I would hope we'll be doing *Love Serenade, Life, The Quiet Room* and Tom Zubricki's new documentary which was shown at the Documentary Festival last year as a work-in-progress.

KG What compelled you to do the Kubrick retrospective?

ADG I saw *Dr Strangelove* again. It's a film I really like and hadn't seen for years and Kubrick is a film-maker whose output is so interesting and so diverse—he can move from *Barry Lyndon* to visions of the future and back again.

KG Are you screening Barry Lyndon?

ADG That's going in our cinematheque program which opens about three weeks before the festival. What I'm thinking of screening are the three war films, *Paths of Glory* (I'm trying to organise a new print of that), *Dr. Strangelove* and *Full Metal Jacket.* War is a major theme of his work but I'm actually working through the condition of the prints at the moment. On the other hand, I'd love to show *Lolita.*

KG As a bonus for Kubrick fans, you've also invited film writer and historian John Baxter from Paris to talk about Kubrick.

ADG While he's here his Spielberg book will come out but he'll certainly have completed the Kubrick book so he'll be able to address whichever films we end up screening and will have a lot of significant Kubrick stories to tell.

KG Who are you hoping to draw for the Hong Kong action films?

ADG People who haven't seen that kind of film before. Brisbane doesn't have Chinatown cinemas like Sydney and Melbourne so I think it's really important for us to broaden the audience for those films. I know that Jackie Chan's got an audience out there because every time I go to the video shop to get one of his films, they're all out. I had this idea last year and it seemed really left of field, so his sudden leap to fame has put me out! I think they're films a lot of people wouldn't normally contemplate seeing but should see.

KG What about your World Cinema program?

ADG It's the little films I really like. This year we've got *Lumiere & Compagnie* which features about forty international directors including Claude Miller, John Boorman, Japanese directors and many others shooting a one reeler on a Lumiere camera and talking about the experience. I've got a really wonderful Czech fairy tale feature called *The Man Who Reads Music From Plates.*

KG When you say "little", you mean in respect of budget or profile?

ADG Both. They're the films I always think are special. We've got two Iranian films this year which already have releases. *The White Balloon* will be screened shortly by Dendy and *Gaby* is already released. They're both what I'd call small films. A couple of years ago you'd only ever see an Iranian film in a festival.

KG The Chauvel Award—who won that last year?

ADG Gillian Armstrong.

KG These awards are important?

ADG The year we gave the award to Paul Cox he said that this was the first real recognition he'd received in Australia. We get a huge audience for the presentation. It's a trophy and the Lord Mayor presents it. When David Stratton does the onstage interview, we like to show clips from as many films as we can get and it highlights every year titles that are unavailable in this country. Last year, we couldn't get *My Brilliant Career.* and the year before we had to import a copy of *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* from London. There is now a print in the country.

KG Is there a competition component to the festival?

ADG An audience survey. No prize. Ten best features, ten best shorts. We've had ideas for a competition but I want it to be something that works for new, preferably young film-makers in the Asia-Pacific area. We'll see.

Brisbane International Film Festival, *August 1-11. Enquiries, 07 3220 0333, e-mail: brisfilm@mpx.com.au*

Reports

Oz Shorts-Two Timing Shorts

distributed by AFI
Chauvel Cinema Paddington, Sydney
April 24 and 28

Oz Shorts. The phrase might conjure for you a particularly unflattering genre of low couture worn by Australians on the weekend and in the warmer months. It is also the title of the latest batch of short films distributed by the AFI. The problem with the former is that it all too often reveals too much, and becomes unflattering to its subject. The problem with the latter is that it often reveals too little which can be equally unflattering. The art of a good short, whether it be apparel or a picture, is not to keep the viewer in the dark but to let them see just enough to keep them guessing.

In *Audacious*, Stella (Dee Smart) tries to jump on the information highway car named desire and take her 'big lug' of a husband Tom (John Polson) along for the ride. At work she logs into a fantasy site for married couples and tries to download the excitement into her own bedroom. The hapless Tom is tied to a pylon, covered in feathers and assaulted with a strap-on, er, prosthesis. This is one of the longer shorts in the program at around 30 minutes. There is a slow crescendo that leaves the characters as well as the audience satisfied.

Quickies can also be fun, as Roland Gallois' *V is for Virtue* reveals. This series of short sharp shots is based on the seven (yes there are that many) virtues. Each segment could be an advertisement, if ads were ever that clever. I will not spoil the punch lines by giving any more away but these sassy little vignettes make you wish there were more virtues in the world.

Andrew Sullivan and Moira Moss's *Code Blue* is beautifully realised and cleverly plays with audience expectations with an O. Henry style twist. Its not just the cinematography that is beautiful, everything in this film is beautiful. There is a beautiful nuclear family (man with gorgeous wife and child) and it is set in lovely North Sydney. Everything in the film is blue, which is also lovely because it's about a car accident and frankly I think we are all a little bit tired of seeing red splashed about film sets with gay abandon. Blue is calmer, more reserved, and less confronting, something purveyors of feminine hygiene products have long been aware of. So even though this piece threatens to be about horrible things like death and the destruction of the family, we are reassured that it won't be too harrowing. Blue is also a good colour for shorts.

Black is the colour of this next film's heart. *Dancing Foot and Praying Knee* is a bizarre and disconcerting journey into teenage angst and escapism. A girl, simply called Girl, is alienated by her father—a preaching chemist—and her mogadon mum. She seeks solace with her new friends, Sal, a worn out country singer, her deranged boyfriend, and Lucy, a cross dressing ex-convict. From revivalism to hooligan hi-jinks, the impassive Girl is drawn into an equally disturbed world where each of the characters inhabits their own private hell. While her new friends try to reach out to her they are as dysfunctional as a praying knee. The meaning? Elusive as one hand clapping.

Neither self-conscious nor twee, Robert Conolly's *Mr Ikegami's Flight* takes us up where short films belong. A Japanese businessman comes to Australia for work while his pregnant wife is at home. He experiences a peculiarly modern form of displacement, remote but also attached by the invisible umbilical of modern communications systems and mobile phones. He seeks comfort in the tangible, crafting a note to his unborn child in fine hiragana and, in a quixotic gesture, sending it via a homing origami crane. A delicately fashioned film that leaves you feeling as if someone has drawn cool silk across your face to wake you from an afternoon nap.

There is no unifying thread holding this program of shorts together. Although most of them are AFTRS productions (*Praying Knee* is from Film Victoria) they offer a diverse sample of new Australian filmic talent. For this, it seems, has become the realm of the short film. The short film is an audition where the aspiring director, with spit-polished shoes, tap dances their little heart out for the unseen but envisaged, bleary-eyed producers. They might not be famous yet but this is where some of the most innovative Australian cinema is found. Before they get the gig they will try out their fanciest footwork to impress. Afterwards perhaps, it's strictly ballroom.

Annemarie Lopez

Writing in the dark

Virginia Baxter at WIFT's Women on Women Film Festival, Sydney

In 1982 a group of women in NSW committed to improving the position and representation of women in the film and television industries established Women in Film and TV (WIFT). Now there's WIFT Australia and independent state-based WIFTs which maintain the extensive network, run workshops and seminars, directories, a mentor scheme and once a year, a festival. During this year's WOW Festival a petition was circulating to save WIFT's national funding because of threatened cuts to the federal budget of the Office of the Status of Women.

I didn't get to the opening night screening of Josiane Balasko's *French Twist* but the word next day was good. I started with *The Shell Encrusted Toilet Seat* (Leonie Dickinson) a 27 minute film in the quirky socio-doco genre on the subject of 'lawn saling', the Alice Springs equivalent of the garage sale. The film-maker picks up some interesting subjects who are philosophical about transience in a place like Alice where the yanks arrive regularly on the Starlifter for contracts at Pine Gap carrying with them exotic air-fresheners and Elvis collections, and where you cope with the grief of losing people by meticulously foraging through what they leave behind.

More fascinating insights for me in *Shinjuku Boys* (Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams, UK) focussing on a group of *onnabe* (women who identify and dress as men) who entertain female customers at New Marilyn, one of a number of such nightclubs in Tokyo's Shinjuku district. One identifies herself as a "tough talker", another's "a good-time boy", another is "the cuddly type" and they make some forthright revelations on their highly complex sexual lives: two are in longstanding relationships, one with a male-transsexual, another with a woman. The third plays the field among customers who she knows will ultimately reject her for conventional marriages. Sex in one case is confined to petting and in another, the *onnabe* remains clothed so the deception is convincing for both partners. For another in a stable relationship, the decision to remove her clothes during lovemaking was "like jumping off a cliff". Easily the most interesting film of the weekend on gender and sexuality.

The major component of the festival, two days of short films & videos sponsored by the AFI began with *Swallowing* (Sofya Gollan) a five minute film about a little girl who doesn't like swallowing pills, a nice change these days, with some surreal touches and good camera work by Mark Lapwood. In *Acquiring a Taste for Raffaelle* (Sandy Lepore) an adolescent girl is convinced by her aunty that she can win the heart of her true love by giving him biscuits that contain three drops of her menstrual blood. The director is a third year AFTVRS student and *Raffaelle* is a confident film that dips a bit deeper into the menstruation taboo (a little audience gasp as the drops of blood hit the batter). Disappointingly, she pulls back in the final frame but Sandy Lepore deserves her award for the Best Short of the weekend. In her animation *Small Treasures*, Sarah Watt uses 14 minutes to say a lot about the pleasures and anxieties of childbirth, even opening the door on the things that go wrong.

Mindlauf (Luci Dayhew) is, surprisingly, the only film of the weekend that plays with real time. A student at Sydney's University of Technology, the film-maker has shot ten minutes of video in which a woman walks from left to right through ten minutes of early morning light, the camera moving backwards and finally forwards as she moves out of frame. The viewer is offered a real sense of the camera, the film, the light. The techno-track which includes samples from The Family and Crang contrasts with the minimal emotion in the face of the woman as she "journeys through streets and mind". This one stayed with me. Whereas I found *Code Blue* (Moira Moss) a slick but somewhat manipulative film in which the rhythms of a city (inventively scored by Matthew Fargher) are interrupted and the audience only momentarily challenged to consider the real possibility of accident. This was one of a number of films over the weekend made with the support of organisations such as the RTA and TAC Insurance: another was *Scars: I Rebecca* the first of two short documentaries made by Annabelle Murphy for the RAW series dealing with the most obvious evidence of accident, the scars. Real stories of accidents are inherently dramatic and these two were voyeuristically chilling.

Memories and Dreams is like some precious object, a lovingly assembled tribute to its subject, Czech refugee Johanna Kilma-Ocenaskova, made over seven years by the director Lynn-Maree Milburn and cinematographer Andrew de Groot. I look into black as images of another's life burn into my own memories, voices whisper and shudder with grief, documentary merges with animation, sometimes the film seems to disappear altogether. "Everything I don't want to remember happened from now", says Johanna as slowly and painstakingly, fragments of her life are lovingly called up and assembled into a poignant story. Speaking of the Prague winter she says, "I don't want to see it, I want to remember it". Acclaimed at festivals around the world, this film hasn't yet had a general release in Australia. The screening is sponsored by AFTVRS Training Fund for Women.

Beeban Kidron's *Great Moments in Aviation* will probably have no trouble getting a release, but unlike *Memories and Dreams* it was a low point in the festival for me. Jeanette Winterson has used all her skills to come up with bad Agatha Christie. Despite the lush colour treatment, the star cast (John Hurt, Vanessa Redgrave, Dorothy Tutin, Jonathan Pryce), the 1940's recreations of shipboard life, this film had me staring at the floor in embarrassment. The team "that brought us *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*" has brought us a lemon this time.

Acquiring a Taste for Raffaella
photo: Dom Downing-Hickey

Longford and Lyell's *The Woman Suffers (while the man goes free)* would have made a nice double with *Memories and Dreams*. On Sunday morning, in a very entertaining prologue, Marilyn Dooley from the National Film and Sound Archive conveyed all her excitement in the act of reconstructing this film made by Raymond Longford and Lottie Lyell in 1918. The film had been lost and was recovered (minus two reels) in South Australia at the time of the Archive's Great Film Search of 1983. "Enjoy the 76 minutes, 16 seconds and 11 frames of suffering", says Marilyn Dooley and I do. Watching this daring melodrama of seduction and betrayal (it was still officially banned in NSW until this screening), one of only three remaining films of the eighteen starring Lottie Lyell, I thought of Lynn-Maree Milburn's equally loving reconstruction. Parts of the film are tinted and as with *Memories'* black holes, damaged parts of this film disappear. In this case, memory is reconstructed in the inserted frames, a mixture of stills and text taken from the original script. Donald Hollier's score was composed for the first and only public showing of the film in 1992.

Johanna Kilma-Ocenaskova, *Memories & Dreams*

Darlene Johnson's *Two Bob Mermaid* is now showing in cinemas over Australia, signs of a resurgence in popularity for the short film in cinemas and on television according to Cynthia Mann from the AFI– "even Village Roadshow are supporting it". The tale of 1950s racism has a somewhat implausible storyline (an Aboriginal girl passing for white in a small country town) but it's well made with some nice detail in the girl's obsession with Esther Williams and her movie *Million Dollar Mermaid* and some great underwater footage. *Guru* (Safina Uberoi) begins promisingly with scenes from the suburban life of an Indian-Australian family preparing for a festival, Bombay masala movies blaring from the TV. The arrival of the Aussie girlfriend introduces a crisis which the film in its 12 minutes can't quite handle and it all dissolves into colour and movement. *Trees at the Crossing* (Georgina Wills) is a popular film with the audience. With *Two Bob Mermaid*, it was runner up for the Best Short Film prize but I found its environmental message too cute for words. *Eyeballesque*(Tina Havelock-Stevens) is a curious documentary on the subject of eyes (most interestingly the glass ones) assembled from eye-to-eye closeups with voice-over. *Negative Volume* (Yvonne Kowler), like Luci Dayhew's *Mindlauf* on day one is alone in this program in its elegant experimentation with abstraction.

In the forum *What Is Cinematography?* Martha Ansara introduces cinematographers Erika Addiss, Kathryn Milliss, Lorraine Stacey and Jan Kenny (one of only two cinematographers admitted to the Australian Cinematographers Society—Jane Castle is the other). They all talk about the still fragile position of women in the film industry, the position of the cinematographer within the hierarchy and the importance of women getting hands on experience and importantly, declaring themselves as professionals. Lorraine Stacey recalls her own reluctance to put herself forward for a job she was well and truly experienced to handle when her male opposition had shot two weddings and a band video. There was brief discussion of the impact of digital technologies, finishing with a call to women cinematographers to move with integrity into these new areas.

Finally, Gillian Armstrong and co-producer Jenny Day introduced their new documentary *Not Fourteen Again*, stage four of a twenty year project beginning with *Smokes and Lollies*

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one of eight short films made with minimal funding from the South Australian Film Corporation. Though never intended, the project continued with *14's Good 18's Better* and *Bingo Bridesmaids and Braces*. It's her own and her audience's interest in the three subjects (Josie, Diana and Kerry) that leads Gillian Armstrong on. This time, three different sources of 16mm have been converted to 35 mm and the lives of the three women seem to change accordingly. Their grainy adolescence makes way for their more fixed 16mm maturity and it's the switches in time that provide the fascination—a limited view because the film-maker's framework is necessarily restricted. After the screening, someone in the audience whispered to a friend, "I wonder how these women vote?" However, given that the relationship between filmmaker and subjects must withstand long absences, the women are remarkably intimate about their personal lives. They're all in more secure relationships now with generations of children to prove it. Each expresses contentment and a certain boredom. This film was meant to complete the circle but already you can see film-maker's eye drawn to the women's dilemma and beyond it to the faces of their daughters now making up in mirrors.

This was a generous festival presenting a range of work by established and aspiring professionals. In a festival otherwise dominated by short works, I was curious at the programming of two overseas films in the prime time slots which meant smaller audiences for the screening of the recovered *The Woman Suffers* and Lyn-Maree Milburn's excellent *Memories and Dreams*. The strong emphasis on narrative cinema over the weekend was disappointing. Films that experimented with time, space or non-narrative form were thin on the ground. Good to see CD ROM works included in the program though their placement in the foyer made them difficult to view in detail. The overall attendance at the festival and the full house for the forum with three professional women cinematographers were reminders of the important work that organisations like WIFT do in providing focus for the concerns of women working in an industry which is still overwhelmingly male dominated. A fitting close to the festival was the screening of the Gillian Armstrong documentary. Here is a major commercial film-maker who can make *Little Women* in Hollywood and still turn her hand to a low budget documentary on the slowly unfolding lives of three Australian women.

Women on Women Film Festival (WOW), *May 17-19, Chauvel Cinema, Paddington, Sydney. WIFT NSW, 02-332.2408.*

In Spaces Unsuspected

curated by Cecelia Cmielewski
for the Media Resource Centre, 1996 Adelaide Festival;
selection screened by Sydney Intermedia Network Art Gallery of NSW, Domain Theatre, May 18

A theme of ambiguous geopolitical boundaries (of recent Europe) and emotive force linked these six films selected from the Adelaide Festival program.

Three short films by Gary Lane have a certain weight, portraying the desperation of people caught in impossible equations. *The Lake* is a particularly dark piece, its implied violence lingers for too long. These three films, part of the Bosnian War Protest Film Project, engage with the anxiety and process of film writing European history.

From Lane's textured black and white to *Zombietown* by Mark Hawker. A full-blown, video-Belgrade where 'underground' youth culture finds release through radio. Quick edits, interviews and 'artifice footage' define *Zombietown*, where it seems Western music, not politics, provides a unity these young men (and few women) desperately crave.

So it was a relief to be immersed within the transfer colours and textures (S8 to video to digital etc) of Kazuhiro Shirao's *Industry and Sex Doll*, an abstract tale of a tortured night drive through an industrial area. This is filmmaking that risks a play of its constituting form.

Dominik Barbier's *I Was Hamlet* presented a docu-biography of theatre director Heiner Muller (and his East/West crossings through the 50s to the present). Readings and production footage offset sometimes verbose anecdotes; nonetheless a confident working of the documentary frame.

In Spaces Unsuspected presented a balance between strong filmmaking and thoughtful curation, its screening made possible in Sydney through the positive efforts of the Sydney Intermedia Network.

Daniel Cole

Sydney Intermedia Network's website address can be reached at: http://www.ozemail.com.au~sinsite

Circuits open, closed and indifferent

Colin Hood responds to theoretical issues raised at *New Media Forum 4—Closed Circuit* at The Art Gallery Of NSW, May 26

The differences that count the same—the ones that, in themselves do not add up to, or make, any difference—are a matter of indifference to us. But can the same be said of assertions of indifference?. Timothy Bahti

In his forum paper *Utopia: Coming or Not*, John Potts outlined a number of relational scenarios (conceptual, historical and aesthetic) between modernist technological utopias and contemporary administered information culture. The question might be as simple as this: "Compare and contrast the technological utopias of Microsoft's Bill Gates and Futurist F.T. Marinetti". Or as complex as: "In what ways did the Utopian Socialism of Fourier, Saint-Simon and Owens influence the will to action and community of the historical avant gardes. How have the concepts of messianic pathos (Benjamin) and heterotopic epistemes (Foucault) changed our attitudes to progress—social, intellectual and technological?"

The Historical avant gardes—blending art, theatre, architecture and music into 'model' communities and performances—provided a working model of an aestheticised life-world. Problem is, the National Socialists and also Hollywood stole the blue-print. They made it happen bigger, better and faster.

Potts is certainly correct in drawing a line between Marinetti and Gates on the issue of ownership and copyright. Both travelled the world spreading the good word and their respective claims to authorship and extended franchise. The technological dreams may have changed dramatically, but the "will to dominate" reads as all too familiar, both then and now.

The forum became more fruitful when—leaving aside the 'bit players' of speed and hybrid communication, we shifted into discussion about terminology, etymology and history. Utopia—Dystopia? What's the difference? Nothing. Today, conceptual oppositions dissolve into a relational flux (the affirmative deconstruction of the history of ideas demands it). Good for a moment or two of speaking or writing this or that. Then subject to cancellation. An ideological fix is installed when conceptual dyads are set up, naturalised and given fixed tenure.

A quick example: the Apollonian/Dionysian distinction has been thoroughly abused by those seeking to glorify the 'participatory' excesses of certain media while assigning poor Apollo to shifty scientists and technocrats. Problem is, as Nietzsche clearly pointed out in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we have need of lies, dreams, illusion, Hamlet and delay—lest we perish of Truth (to live life at its ultimate extremity which is, dare I say, a hyperbolic limit).

John Conomos relieved the congestion around the prime word *topos* by suggesting that a more critical relational matrix—of objects and concepts—requires an engagement with particulars that bypasses the subjugation of conceptual regimes. Utilising a Derridean 'opposition' (derived from Aristotle) between *topos* and *chora* (logical space versus sacred personal space). Conomos suggested—to me at least—that certain forms of new media work us over faster than we can think—that *they* are 'across' our understanding before we muster the conceptual force to render them 'aesthetic objects'.

New Media Forum Four *coincided with media artist Luc Courchesne's visit to Australia and the installation of his interactive* Hall of Shadows *as part of the* No Exit *exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW. Katherine Byrd—co-producer of the* Booth Project *(a mutant photo booth), together with Courchesne and artist Rosemary Laing discussed their work on an artists panel as part of the same event.*

Film reviews

Der Alptraum Des Fabrikanten
(The Industrialist's Nightmare)
by Martin Heine and Gunnar Mueller
winner of the City of Fremantle Award for Experimental Work at the Tenth WA Film and Video Festival
also at Cafe Bohemio in Smith Street Collingwood, March 31 as part of Allgauge's weekly program

The work is an austere and unforgiving single take 56 minute video tour of the abandoned Bolex Factory in Switzerland. That it is the Bolex factory whose carcass is being inspected transforms my reading of the work. The video's relentless drift through emptied and peeling rooms, shadow, deserted spaces and crumbled walls meditates on the aftermath of progress itself. Indeed, it becomes a quite timely reflection on the end of film given that film does seem to be slipping into some backwater akin to The Zone from Tarkovsky's *Stalker*.

The soundtrack, created by distorting, breaking up and amplifying the hum and low level sound recording made by the video camera during shooting, suggested to me imaginary traces of film's history. Its industrial drone and muffled beat suggest the hiss of steam and the piston's turning associated with a slowly moving steam locomotive. The image of a steam locomotive, its black and silver metal, its pistoned and geared wheels, also has correspondences with the internal assemblies of the movie camera, the Bolex camera especially, just as the railway track itself is a metaphor for the film strip. The image from the early Lumiere silent film of a train entering a railway station also came to mind, an image that is part of the opening sentence of film history.

So where does inspecting progress's aftermath fit into the scheme of things? The aftermath of progress is that time, that moment in the state of things, that is upon us now. That moment when the loco-motive of progress, the mad-charge of technique, has hurricaned by and sucked the breath out of the landscape. This is the engine that has morphed out of the hiss of steam into the very fast blur, the smudge of speed. This engine has now gone digital and imploded into hyperspace, much as *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* predicted and depicted in their visual FX of the anti-explosion. It is an engine, an excitement, that is no longer in the place looked at here. The engine has passed this place by. It is the morning after. In this nightmare we are in the dead zone of its consequence and Heine has invited us here to examine an archaeology of the loss of film itself—its space and its time.

From the beginning the tension and anticipation build as the camera follows a figure wandering through the conundrum of the abandoned factory. This figure is presumably the industrialist played by Gunner Meuller. There is tension because we are, after all, as the title suggests, entering a nightmare. I am reminded of the sinister spaces of film noir and the tensions of the search and destroy sequences in *Aliens*, for example. What waits for us around every corner in this flick, it gradually dawns on us, is the greatest monster of them all: emptiness itself.

Yet, if you take the time, if time is no object, this emptiness continually reveals itself in all its chaotic complexity. This reality check builds and builds till we are back in *Snowline* again, inside a type of anarchic *Wavelength*. We have to tell ourselves, however, that we are at a different point in the His Story of film. We are not at its centre but at its end. Where Michael Snow's *Wavelength* moved meticulously forward, this nightmare wanders around in a search for ghosts from the past. It conjures them up sparingly every time Meuller passes in front of the camera or is caught in the corner of the frame, and registers as a kind of shadow or doppelganger of the cameraman or of the camera itself. Or, is it the other way around? Perhaps it is the camera that is the doppelganger. Let us not reflect too long on that or we will never escape the maze.

There is something of the epic act in the production of *Der Alptraum Des Fabrikanten* that is also apparent in Heine's other work. Even his raw and precise scratch films *At No Time*(3' 15" 1995), *Framed Limits* (2' 02" 1996) and *Vacuum Signals* (3' 13" 1995/6) suggest long and arduous days and nights over the light box. Consequently Heine acts partly as a recording machine in the making of these 16mm films and the video. Heine has mentioned the marathon concentration required to execute this 56 minute take. This resolve is all the more telling since the concentration spans of audiences have shrunk markedly over the past two decades. Heine has talked about a dialogue between the eyes as he was shooting: the viewfinder eye 'willing' straight ahead into the space being recorded, and the other eye looking off to the side, searching for something else, building physiological tension that would resolve itself with motion forward or to the side.

This is the mechanics of reconnaissance. As well as movement through the landscape, reconnaissance is also about a way of looking at things. *Der Alptraum Des Fabrikanten* evokes this idea of reconnaissance, of patrol through enemy territory, which the earlier *Aliens* reference also alludes to. It is a form of military looking—eye-to-eye combat—that reached a peak in the image of house-to-house, building-to-building combat that took place during WWII, and acts as the backdrop for male bonding in so many war stories. The reconnaissance is the type of on the ground war patrol that Gulf War technology was meant to supersede. In that media event General Schwarzkopf held off deploying grunts on the ground till that last sweep of artillery and tanks. The possibility of house-to-house combat had to be eradicated from the scenario. Nevertheless, it is a form of combat that anticipated the idea of cyborg, of invincible robocop: the armour with a technological centre.

Der Alptraum Des Fabrikanten of course, not only examines the rubble left by progress but also predicts the phoenix, the cyborg, that rises out of the ashes of military-industrial technology. The labyrinthine searching on display here is what motors computer games from the now primitive *Pac Man* to the more recent

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Film reviews

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platform games like *Super Mario Brothers, Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Aliens* itself, beat-em-ups like *Streets of Rage,* RPG's like *Link* or a game like the popular *Doom.* Yet it is the disarming notion of time that remains quite different, quite intact in this video, compared to the hyped up, speeded up reaction time that these games. Time remains to be savoured. Time is no object.

Dirk de Bruyn

Simonne Pengelly as teenage Tessa & Graham Moore as Mitch in *Vacant Possession*

Vacant Possession
directed by Margot Nash
distributed by AFI
Chauvel, Sydney; Lumiere, Melbourne; other states to follow

Botany Bay was never settled by the First Fleet in 1788. Sydney Cove was every convict's reality; Botany Bay the mythic site used to terrorise children. Transportation to its fatal shore was the fear of every human by-product of dissent in late 18th century Britain (in retrospect, mass recolonisation was a benign fate compared with other European models, for example France's reign of terror). But the cost was high: the near extinction of one of the human races. Reading the observations of the first colonisers we realise the human race we nearly annihilated held spiritual advantages unknown in Europe: ecological balance allowed for spiritual riches and the leisure to embrace the gifts of the land.

Seen from this poignant position *Vacant Possession* becomes a catchcry for generations black and white recovering from the shock. Margot Nash has made a brave creative step toward the observation and isolation of a very painful wound in the Australian soul.

Nash deals with the classical European Judeo-Christian religious experience: that of mother and father. She attempts to give it mythic universality by not tying down dates, eras, episodes. This was a huge risk because current audiences need chronologies to anchor their understanding. Despite this flaw, some will see the ancestry working through this tale.

A woman of Anglo-American origin and Australian character returns to Botany Bay after a twenty year absence. The place is home to the house of her childhood. It is a respectable colonial worker's cottage, the interior redesigned for easy living and extra light. Called 'Irene', the house is merely a site in the landscape for Auntie Beryl (Rita Bruce) and her family. Arnee Beryl. That's more like her name; why do we have to Anglicise everything? The questions start tipping forth: it's so English to Anglicise; why not Aboriginalise? Arnee Beryl is the grey haired lady next door; she's the community worker, the mother, sister, daughter, citizen—an elder but equal to the task of regenerating a sense of community amongst dispirited people. In this film those with huge spiritual problems are white: the returning Tessa (Pamela Rabe), her father Frank (John Stanton) and sister Kate (Linden Wilkinson). Like *Twelve Monkeys, Vacant Possession* is a human site where bag ladies are high goddesses. Tessa is a poor gambler. A good gambler would have come home sooner, gambling on reconciliation with mother, father, and Aboriginal society. Fate has written Tessa a low score on this test. Margot Nash re-writes the mother's role so she remains eternally the same age as Tessa. In this guise, mother and daughter resolve what the father destroyed: an Aboriginal boy, his baby and Tessa's Australian identity.

The loss of Tessa's baby is made minuscule when we whiff the scent of wartime burning flesh which haunted her father throughout the Tessa's childhood. Our fathers experienced war in one way or another. For Aboriginal Mitch (Graham Moore) it was the Grog and the trip to the Big House caused by unknowingly breaking a white man's taboo: a white man's daughter must procreate with his own likeness. In the telling, *Vacant Possession* recognises the great wounds of Aboriginal integration with white settlers by exploring the pain of a white woman's love for an Aboriginal man.

Vacant Possession in many ways explores the relationship between Oedipus and Antigone, Romeo and Juliet. Go to the dead and love them is the message of this film. It is the story of wounded white people savaged by war and alcohol; the wars of white Europeans resonate down the line while the genetic soup refuses to be diluted. Botany Bay became Sydney's back door; any performing art that explores it as an Australian experience is unique. In this sense *Vacant Possession* is a pioneering film which will probably be a must on festival programs world-wide in the next year but local audiences will find problems, criticisms. The shock of the new is often responsible for misinterpretation. *Bedevil* was a hard movie to understand but it survives as a brilliant silence breaker on the big screen. More films about indigenous Australian spirituality is the way of the future. Margot Nash might have to forgive some audiences their distaste of the subject of this film because although the experience is a local one it is foreign to status quo sensibility. White people don't like to see their father figures crying on screen about personal sadness; it is much easier to admire a Bob Hawke his public tears over foreign issues. The best moment in this film is John Stanton yelling "bullshit" because it's the first time in the film anyone dares to really tell the truth!

Shelley Kay

Cyclo
directed by Tran Anh Hung
distributed by New Vision
released nationally in August

Tran Anh Hung and Tran Nu Yen Khe are back, quite the Zhang Yimou and Gong Li combo, but with a distinctive 80s Euro-flavour. *Cyclo* begins where De Sica left off, realistic depictions of family routine and survival in a still economically shell-shocked Ho Chi Minh City. In debt, after his bike is stolen, to the Chinese merchants who own the machines, the cyclo falls into bad company to support his family—and later—his own ambivalent obsession with gangsterdom.

Tony Leung (read John Woo action hero—badly mis-cast for this film) plays the brooding, chain-smoking poet. The story turns from realism into a mish-mash of bizarre symbolism all too quickly. Hung describes the mixed mood he set out to create, "The Poet is an analytical character, someone who has deliberately sold his innocence for something easier in the world of crime. He throws the cyclo and the sister into the world of crime to see their innocence in a difficult world."

So Brother becomes a junior mobster, Sister becomes a fetish-only prostitute, with the Poet as her protector. The most memorable scene, set in a nightclub, has Sister handcuffed, Poet about to self-destruct on the tableaux he has constructed, and RadioHead's *Creep* sounding out descent into self-abasement and self-loathing. Benot Delhomme's cinematography is superb on street level but fails to make any serious impact in those moments allotted to symbolic grandeur. While Hung insists on Mizoguchi and Ozu as influences for his work, it seems more likely that a Besson/Carax comparison would be more apposite. And while Carax (in *Les Amants du Pont Neuf)* succeeded in meshing doco-realism spiked with surreal and comic grotesquerie, Hung ends up spoiling a fair portrait of modern Vietnam with too much gilt and too little follow-through. CH

Richard III
directed by Richard Loncraine
distributed by New Vision
screening nationally in July

This Shakespeare adaptation scores high marks for ambition. *Richard III* is set in a 1930s England torn apart by civil war, with European Fascism as a backdrop. Commander-in-chief Richard plots to install himself supreme leader by murdering every one of his rivals. The film's opening gambit is equally audacious: there is no dialogue for the first ten minutes. When the opening speech is made, Richard declares the first, famous lines, "Now is the winter of our discontent…" to a royal assembly; the second half of the speech is muttered to himself in the mirror, as he relieves himself in the Gents.

The strategy of this film requires a certain co-operation from the viewer. The effect is initially disconcerting, occasionally irritating—but director Richard Loncraine has a number of factors in his favour. First is the play itself, which is perfect film material. The plot is one dastardly deed after another, the language flows mellifluously. Everyone says that if Shakespeare were alive today he'd be a film writer—but if Joe Eszterhaus is paid by the million for his formulaic pap, then there's no way Hollywood could afford Shakespeare. This film's deferences to Hollywood are the inclusion of two American actors (Annette Bening and Robert Downey Jnr) and the spicing up of sex and death scenes to suit a Tarantino culture.

None of this is offensive; and the set design and costume aid in smoothing viewer resistance to the nature of this adaptation. The greatest strength of the film is Ian McKellen's performance as Richard. His evil is more charming than anything else; he is a man of wealth and taste, seductive in his intelligence. The film's flaws are not enough to torpedo McKellen's skilful acting—but the final battle scene is over-the-top ludicrous, and there is an annoying tendency for McKellen to speak his soliloquies direct to camera. This device is too theatrical; the camera reveals characters' private moments well enough without such blatant recourse.

John Potts

Ewan McGregor as Renton in *Trainspotting*

Trainspotting
directed by Danny Boyle
screenplay by John Hodge
Distributed by Globe Films, screening nationally
Trainspotting & Shallow Grave
screenplays by John Hodge
Faber and Faber, London 1996
ISBN 0-571-17968-1

Three gaunt youths belt down an Edinburgh alley, contraband spilling from junkie apparel, police gaining. You sense defeat as physical within straining, sunken, chests. The raw sound effecting the 'music video' mimicry is *Lust for Life,* Iggy Pop's punk classic, heralding your immersion in the marginal world of "sincere and truthful junk habits"—Scots urban drug culture. Images precisely composed and briskly edited, interspersed with anti-hero Renton's heroin revering monologue suggest your 'tour' is to be carefully guided.

Predictably, *Trainspotting's* unrestrained acknowledgment of the pleasure heroin can provide users has drawn strong reactions from both the conservative and youth/music/slacker press; the former condemning it as a blatant incitement to heroin use, the latter rejoicing in a fashionable example of apathy and wilful self destruction articulated as resistance to the mainstream. Director Danny Boyle (of *Shallow Grave*), avoiding a social realist approach, steps without superficiality around the clichéd representational traps drug stories usually invoke. The broken landscape of Edinburgh's urban poor offers an appropriate context for drug consumption, but the four lads (and it *is* very much a lads' perspective) are not victims. The enemy is boredom and theirs is a considered solution—"…an informed, healthy, and democratic decision to get on smack".

The extremities of addiction become fertile material for black comic excess, carefully constructed through a slick script and the strong physical performances of Ewan McGregor (Renton) and Ewen Bremner (Spud). A stylised filmic language, at times deftly surrealistic, negotiates both the comedic and bleaker spaces of junkie survival. In one scene Renton plunges head first down an unflushable, excrement-choked toilet in search of his highly regarded opium suppositories, his dive liberating him to an oceanic underworld, the objects of his desire swaying invitingly on the sea floor.

Such perversely black, and at times farcical humour is routinely available in equally arresting episodes of lifestyles of the depraved and addictive, and this storytelling prowess is *Trainspotting's* strength. It's these fragments which prove more engaging than the central narrative—Renton's redemption/escape from the identity of an aging, increasingly sleazy junkie—providing the best reasons to go and see a film which has become a fashionable cinematic event.

John Hodge's screenplay is a carefully distilled version of Irvine Welsh's more nihilistic and philosophical novel. The absence of book's gravity is replaced by an exact economy of words designed for screen performance, plus a strong awareness of filmic timing, a combination so accurately conceived that the final film cuts few of the scripted lines and only one or two minor scenes, a rarity in a major release. Included also is a foreword by John Hodge, an interview with Irvine Welsh and the script of *Shallow Grave,* now in the video shops and worth a fresh look. DV

Dead Man
directed by Jim Jarmusch
distributed by Globe
currently screening nationally

There are some films that we are not sure of having really seen, which we must go and see again to reassure ourselves.

Johnny Depp as William Blake in *Dead Man*

Such is the latest film by Jim Jarmusch. Take a protagonist whose fate is already foretold, thus rendering the customary unfolding of the narrative unnecessary. In its place another type of filmic logic emerges. Because we know that William Blake is going to die, and he spends a good deal of the film doing so, we are prevented from investing too much emotion in him—we know this would be unwise. Nor can we be shocked by his death.

Having short circuited some of the conventional engines of the narrative film (character and plot), *Dead Man* must rely on other means to maintain our interest. It does this by creating a unique choreography of time and space. We wander through the badlands, through a foreign landscape stripped of its attachment to realism, washed only in black and white. It combines a mixture of the commonplace and the supernatural, the spiritual and the humorous.

Faces become skulls, corpses become religious icons, and our only guide through this wild and terrifying landscape is called Nobody. There is a chase but without suspense, William Blake is not running from anything, he is running towards an end. Each moment, each scene accumulates details of a landscape marked by time.

When Johnny Depp points a gun towards us he recalls one of cinema's first Westerns, Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery.* When his boat floats out across the water it might carry us to Mizoguchi or Kurosawa. Neil Young's music intensifies the ritualistic, incantatory effect.

As Bill Blake wonders where the train has deposited him, we might wonder what type of film we have fallen into. Jarmusch evokes, sometimes with humour, and sometimes sadness, the ghosts of our cinematic memory and of America's history. It is the space of the past but one we have yet to cross. The fireman prompts us to wonder: Is it the sky that is moving while the boat remains still?

Annemarie Lopez

Film reviews

Catwalk
directed by Robert Leacock
distributed by New Vision
screening nationally

Maybe not everyone thought that what was missing from their lives was a film on supermodels at the Milan, Paris and New York collections but I, for one, had been looking forward to the release of *Catwalk* for ages. Leacock's documentary claims to go backstage for a behind-the-scenes look at a world that is impossibly glamorous and unashamedly superficial. Unfortunately, this attempt at scratching the surface of surface is about as exciting as a broken fingernail.

The best scenes reveal the symbiotic relationship that exists between model and designer in the creation of fantasy. As when John Galliano directs Kate Moss to "Think Princess Lucretia fleeing from wolves! Think Anna Karenina escaping from Russia! Think Irving Penn!" while she runs down the catwalk in a crinolined skirt wider than your average doorway. There is genuine talent in managing to effectively evoke all these images without looking confused and Galliano praises her "genius"—before checking if she can remember all that.

Perhaps it's unfair to expect supermodels to display a high degree of intelligence or wit; nobody expects Susan Sontag to be breathtakingly beautiful or make twenty centimetre stilettos worn with metre high wigs look like a reasonable thing to do. Nonetheless, as a viewer you have the right to expect that the climactic scene will be something other than Christy Turlington removing her make-up. *Catwalk's* obsession with its star at the expense of the more interesting characters, means that it achieves the almost impossible feat of making fashion boring. Neither does it do anything to dispel stereotypes. The lasting impression of Christy and her pals is that behind all the narcissism, play-ground cattiness and self-absorption of the supermodel there is an over-indulged little girl who, rather than ever growing up, just grew tall. Karen de Perthuis

Newsreel

Women in Motion

Women in Film and TV Victoria will be hosting a film festival and careers forum to assist secondary school students, media students, women thinking about a career change or anyone with an interest in women working in the media industries. Included will be the sessions *Jobs for the Girls*, focussing on how women are establishing careers in film and TV, *You Twisted Bleached Blonde Bag*, a screening of short films and panel discussion examining the ways in which women relate to each other on film, as well as screenings of outstanding short films by women and practical demonstrations of film making. Speakers will include Maree Delofski (Screen Studies, AFTRS), Sue Turnbull (Media Studies, La Trobe University) as well as independent directors Sarah Stephens (*Untold Desires*) and Darlene Johnson (*Two Bob Mermaid*). VCA and State Film Theatre, June 17-19. WIFT Victoria Tel: 03 9525 4922

Photography, Low Budget Film and the Law

The Arts Law Centre in Sydney recently held seminars covering legal issues relevant to filmmaking and photography. The photography session topics included copyright, moral rights legislation, commission agreements, reproduction licence agreements as well as new concerns specific to advances in multimedia and on-line publishing. The low budget film program outlined many of the commonly faced and frequently ignored legal areas that filmmakers should be aware of—raising finance, distribution agreements, release rights, minimum legal requirements for funding bodies and minimum contractual obligations for crew and cast. A pack of sample contracts for film makers including relevant background legal information for each contract is available from The Arts Law Centre of Australia. Forum papers from *Photography and the Law* is also available. Tel: 02 356 2566.

Short Affairs

The AFI continues its program of short film screenings with a collection examining ideas of "love, life, loss and light". *Short Affairs* , Chauvel, Sydney, June 26 &30, and Lumiere, Perth, August 8.

Red Garde

The Art Gallery of NSW will screen a program of early Russian film works by Dziga Vertov as part of the *Kandinsky and the Russian Avant Garde* exhibition. Also included will be *The Refracting Glasses* by David Perry. Art Gallery of NSW, June 8-August 18, free admission.

Jurassic Technologies

Part of the 10th Biennale of Sydney,
Jurassic Technologies Revenant
will focus on the vast potential contemporary artists continue to find in photographically-based methods and principles, at a moment when the prevailing forms of visual representation are undergoing rapid revision. In addition to still photography, a film program will be included and gallery-based work that revisits landmarks in the history of 20th century film. Nearly 50 artists from 24 countries will be represented. Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Art Gallery of NSW, Artspace, July 27 to September 22.

Documentaries on TV

Good to see so many new documentaries on television. ABC TV's *The View From Here* series (Thursdays 9.30 pm) recently featured Fiona Hergstrom's excellent *Hollywood Hotel* and coming up on June 13 is *Men and their Sheds*, a love story about that curious Australian phenomenon directed by James Manche. Meanwhile, SBS who already screen the only Australian TV talk show that permits a range of people to speak for themselves (*Front Up*, Tuesdays 7.30 pm), now offer *First Person* (Wednesdays 8.30 pm)—the videocameras are given to the people who want to do the talking.

Newsreel

Screenplays pay

Since the publishing success of Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, Penguin Books Australia joins Faber and Faber in continuing to pave the way with film and TV scripts releasing such titles as *Strange Days, Get Shorty, To Die For, Four Rooms, Leaving Las Vegas, Dead Man Walking, Trainspotting, Shallow Grave* and *Casino*. They're already announcing the release of *Flirt*, the script for Hal Hartley's new movie. Scripts are supplemented by handy brief essays and interviews.

Eat Carpet

SBS's Eat Carpet disappears in June for a sporting fixture (does the reverse ever occur, I wonder?), returning Saturday June 29 11 pm with an Australian series on modern romance featuring, among other notables, the always interesting Eva Cox. Australian work in the July program includes *Miss Taurus* by Graeme Wood and *Mugs* by Terence Hammond (July 6). There's a rare opportunity to see South African William Kentridge's wonderful *Captive of the City* on July 13 and on the same night *Nothing Left to Say* a dance piece that uses the body and Auslan (Australian sign language). *Maidenhead* , Marle Craven's world of opposites screens July 27.

Queensland Voices, Queensland Styles

QScreen 2 announces *Queensland Voices, Queensland Styles*—a Film and Television Conference, June 14-16 . The conference will cover most aspects of the development program from idea to script to sales, with a closer examination of where the future lies in the creative development of the film and TV industries in Queensland. The guest list comprises over 30 guest speakers with experience in features, TV drama, documentary, short film, animation and multimedia and includes: Steve Ascher & Jeanne Jordan (US), winners at this year's Sundance Film Festival for their documentary *Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern;* Jonathan Shteinman, producer of *Angel Baby;* Andrew McGahan author of the Vogel prize winning novel Praise; documentarist Mike Rubbo (*Waiting for Fidel, Sad Song of Yellow Skin*); Jill Cohen (US) production lawyer for 20th Century Fox and Touchstone; Robert Gibson (*Video Fool for Love*); Jackie McKimmie (writer and director of *Waiting*) and Chris Brown, producer of *Mona Lisa* and *All Men Are Liars*. The Conference is filling fast but there are still some places. Information Jane Creasy 07 3220 0444

Making [too many] things of words

Colin Hood plays lost and found on the borders between performance and writing at a one day event at Artspace

HJ Wedge *Kinkarra Tea*

Why always the word when the thing itself has disappeared?

Discourse, 1992

Josette Feral typed these ten tedious words in 1992, in yet another bout of angst over the currency of the words 'performance' and 'performance art'.

In the land of many voices, bodies, agonised writerly beginnings, and hyperbolic non-endings, performative strategies are now shared between textual 'extroverts', cabarettists, musicians and a co-operative bound in the margins of theatre and the visual arts. Parsing this assortment of performative objects, disciplines and curatorial strategies, the theoretical spin on performance as 'the distinctive appearance of productive difference' seems to have lost its edge and vigour in both textual and dramatic renderings. The 'performative', not unlike its fellow traveller 'blurred boundaries', has come to mean everything and nothing.

Meanwhile, not many questions are being raised—or 'performs' convened—concerning the politics and micro-economics of 'academic performance' (words ensconced within managerial and 'servant' discourses on 'quality assurance'). With an anticipated 5-12% cut to university funding the future big picture, academic performers may rest assured of a larger audience share in years to come—students bursting out of tutorial rooms and lecture halls in the mini-citadels they have allowed to be constructed around them.

To enter into some 'spaces-for-presentation' these days is to encounter the fourth wall transformed into a kind of Mona Lisa smile: "I see you looking at me and—Hey! I'm comfortable with this—presentation—here with *my* family, friends and colleagues". The curatorial framing of the Artspace event only increased my desire to see *less* performance as 'savant-variety theatre'—and *more* speaking displaced from the polite punctuality of the cultural calendar.

This ideal *locus vocal* would contain: no lectern, no stage, no forum, nothing even vaguely interactive. You wouldn't even have to be there on time. You might not turn up at all. But you'd know there was something funny, aggressive—dare I say unrepressed—about what you missed.

My desire for *less-is-more-performance* was satisfied this day by Brenda Croft and Harry J. Wedge for two reasons: a remarkable collaboration in the first instance; second—their appearing to want the 'thing' to be over with as soon as possible. Harry speaks, pulling bits of styrofoam off his coffee cup. Brenda speaks, sleep-deprived, giving her dry and rapid delivery a pleasingly sour edge.

Truth is: they *did* have another pressing engagement after the Artspace gig. They left the premises fairly promptly. Not so much a performance as a brief voice-mail message saturating the space with an irritable, radiant half-life, a "child's game of disappearance and return"—to which I could only respond by thrusting a *carte-de-visite* in the trajectory of their passing-out-the-door.

I sat there the rest of the afternoon feeling a little restless myself, listening to words lift from the page only to see them fall back with a resounding crash—stuck back there in a fixed silence. I thank Edward Colless for at least providing a readable playscript.

It was a grey and airless moonscape that I now occupied, a no-man's land between word and audience, as in Beckett's *Texts For Nothing:* "They are up above me, all around me, as in a graveyard. I can't raise my eyes to them, what a pity...Do they see me...what do they see of me?" What prevailed was a taking of the words in disengaged 'show time' rather than the time of the colloquium (where at least one could enter into the spirit of polemic).

Boomalli by name (to strike, to make a mark), *Boomalli* by nature. Croft and Wedge left it brighter and funnier, no polite embrace of the "performative aspect of the event and the writing process itself" (curators' blurb).

Here, an audience member might surely, just for once, encounter something of the *realpolitik* of difference between literary and non-literary performance.

Harry J. Wedge can neither read nor write. He composes poems for a day and promptly forgets them. His stories are different however. They materialise and endure in the same manner, in the same space-time as his paintings and drawings.

This day, Harry's most pressing oral composition detailed his beginnings as an artist: a naughty schoolboy encouraged, then discouraged by his teachers, sent off to a home, then to a mission, taking up the pension and also the grog, before finding his way again with lavish paintings and abundant story-times.

Painting in a style similar to Ian Abdulla (with whom he has co-exhibited), Wedge has dictated narratives to accompany his paintings for the last six years. It's a pleasure to see work which blends the spoken word and the painted surface into a texture which escapes the tedium of *theoria* at play.

Wedge consummates both an innocence and power that is rarely achieved within the proscenium or forum allotted to visual artists. Brenda Croft now takes up the HJ Wedge story about Paradise—lost and found:

When they went to have a look they found a beautiful snake coiled around the fruit tree. And the snake said in a soft cool voice, "pick the fruit and have a taste". And Adam said, "No, we're not allowed to touch anything from this tree". And the snake said, "Go on, don't be a square". And Eve said to Adam, "This fruit won't hurt us at all". So Adam watched Eve put the fruit to her sweet soft lips. She really enjoyed eating the fruit. As she was eating it, she passed it over to Adam and the snake said to Adam, "Take a bit of this lovely juicy fruit". Adam took a bite and suddenly there was a big electrical storm and a big raging voice came and told them to FUCK OFF OUT OF THE GARDEN, to leave the place and never return. As they walked away, Adam said to Eve, "You fuckin' happy now?"

Then two dark people came into the garden. They came across this tree. The beautiful snake was still there. They could hear two people in the distance rowing and fighting. Then the snake attracted their attention wanting them to taste the fruit on the tree. When they started looking for something on the ground, the snake became curious. "What are you looking for?" One of them turned to the snake and said, "We're looking for a Boondi stick and we're going to Boondi you and eat you". Then a big black beautiful spirit popped out of nowhere, frightening the two dark people, and said to them, "This garden is your home for the rest of your generations to come.

HJ Wedge, *Adam and Eve Getting Evicted*

I caught up with Harry about a week later. The story, full of questions and answers, would consume all these pages and more. How does one speak, and remember what one spoke when you can only speak, think, and paint? How to recall a time when all seemed lost: an account of farm funding dispossessed and alcohol regained, back on the Mission in Cowra; how to speak of a future where paint and words would fill your days from beginning to end in this truly eventful space they call Boomalli?

We will never understand these things what youse actually destroyed, so before it's too late why don't we just stop and leave things alone the way they should be...This is what I feel about this land I love so much. Will you stop and wake up to yourself before we lose everything else? HJ Wedge

HJ Wedge *Wiradjuri*

Thanks to HJ Wedge for permission to reproduce Adam and Eve Getting Evicted.

A collection of paintings and writings by HJ Wedge will be published by Arts Press later this year.

Making Things of Words *featured HJ Wedge, Brenda Croft, Anne Ooms, Laleen Jayamanne, Anna Gibbs, Edward Colless and Linda Marie Walker and was jointly curated by Abbie Mellick and Anne Ooms.*

Monstrous family show

Nikki Heywood and Keith Gallasch in a dialogue about *Burn Sonata*

Claire Hague, Clare Grant, Dean Walsh and Benjamin Grieve photo: Heidrun Löhr

At the beginning of our talk, Nikki Heywood shows me a series of photographs of the performers from Burn Sonata, *realistically costumed and posed as a family group in front of a fire in a 44 gallon drum in a suburban backyard. The performance looks at the monstrous in us and in domestic violence in particular. I'd just been to see Hilary Bell's emotionally and morally demanding play* Wolf Lullaby *at The Stables (Griffin Theatre Company) in which a nine year old murders a younger child.*

KG Your work has a rich symbolic power, archetypal female figures and chains of metaphor like the human-insect analogy in Creatures Ourselves. *This new work looks like a leap into something more social, more literal.*

NH I don't see it as a departure. I think *Creatures* grew out of a big question I had about how women use their power and transferred that into looking at insects and at human beings as creatures. Women have occupied a place of no power and, given power, there's something very terrifying that happens. It's an area people like Camille Paglia have looked at, and she has proven very unpopular with a lot of feminists. But I think it could bear a lot of further investigation. I was looking at what we consider to be monstrous and how we relate to it, and whether or not we place it inside or outside ourselves. At that time there was a lot in the media about serial killers. Like a lot of people, I am very interested in that impulse to kill.

I'd been thinking about my father and the fact that I'd decided I didn't want to see him again for quite a long time, if ever. Then I heard that he was in hospital having an operation. Of course, it called on my sense of guilt and of duty as a daughter. I sat thinking, well, if I go to the hospital and visit him, what will happen? I imagined him lying in bed, and I imagined him on a life support system, which of course he wasn't because it wasn't that serious. But that was the image I had and I just let the story run. And the story went that I walked into the room, felt nothing for him and switched off his life support system. At that moment, I thought "That's really satisfying. That would just complete something for me, to do that. Okay, I know I could kill someone". And I remembered I had dreams about killing my father when I was a child.

KG Archetypal father or actual father?

NH The actual father. I'm not alone in that. There are a many people who've had that difficulty with one or other of their parents. A lot of murders happen in families. But the interesting thing is, it's very hard to find a case where a daughter murders her father. And that seemed to me to be like a big taboo. Even in Greek mythology, I still haven't really found *the* story. The father is God. If the daughter, in terms of hierarchy, was to turn the tables and to kill God, what happens?

KG I'm curious about the naturalism of the photo images you're showing me.

NH Well, the inclination's there and I'm trying to subvert it and find other than naturalistic ways to occupy the performing space that re-create that energy of violence, of dysfunction. When we're not functioning well as adults we all occupy again the place of the child. There's a schism created for us through a childhood experience, and that experience will continue to operate out of that fracture, in some way or another, until we find a way of resolving it.

KG When Open City performed Promiscuous Spaces: Table Talk *at* A Progressive Dinner, *(The Performance Space, April) I spoke about my obsessive horror-story-telling behaviour at the dinner table, about how here I am at 50 behaving like someone who was traumatised at an early age. But it wasn't a big one-off trauma. At one performance, because the work is semi-improvised, I suddenly invoked Sartre's notion of serial trauma, of recurrent events (like a decade of family rows over meals) that cumulatively shape the psyche.*

NH I thought I might look at what happens when a child tells a story or does a drawing, the act of transference where they become another character or an animal. One of the performers, Claire Hague, has worked as a visual artist, so I've been talking to her about it especially since in the performance she occupies my place as a child, that place of no power, in a sense, like that of the youngest daughter.

KG *In* Wolf Lullaby, *as soon as you enter the theatre you see the walls that surround you are covered in a dense child's blackboard scrawl along with the erased shape of a wolf. The child is a murderer. Her parents are not oppressive, they just have no idea what their daughter is, no way of responding to her 'cries for help'—her nightmares are 'comfortingly' dismissed. They haven't created a monster, they've got one. Of course, sooner or later they suspect the 'monstrous' is in them, that their daughter has inherited it. But there is no genetic or psychological consolation from the writer for either the parents or the audience. Because the parents share a kind of bland optimism, a belief in childhood innocence, they both figuratively and literally don't see the writing on the wall. The moment when the child, played by Lucy Bell, furiously draws a wolf on the wall, is truly frightening. I haven't been frightened by anything in conventional theatre for years.*

NH I don't want the space to be cluttered with drawings. I want it to be meaner than that.

KG It helps the stage play because it's a real challenge to convey the enormity of the child's vision, the wolf which she both is and fears, without resorting to too many words or a symbolic poetry. It's a beautifully spare text.

NH What do you as a child do when you recognise that you're living with a monster, whether its yourself or a parent? Can you recognise the monstrous for what it is?

KG It's bound up with affection and the desire to love the parents. When I performed Photoplay *in 1988, a work about my relationship with my emotionally tyrannical mother it was a very difficult experience even though she was long dead. The work turned out to be an exorcism-in-progress.*

NH *Jean/Lucretia* (1995), my work about my grandmother was a very private, personal thing, a lament. That's when I started to recognise that I really don't feel I can make work until it rises almost like some sort of bubble. The fact that it's about my family is not pre-determined. It's just that it's happening.

KG Your work is very distinctive, it doesn't read as Butoh even though your training is in that area through the Body Weather 'school' of Min Tanaka. Is Burn Sonata *going to combine the archetypal power of your work with the everyday? I'm back at the naturalism issue again.*

NH What happens in ordinary life is far more extraordinary than what we create as high art. That was what interested me in Meg Stuart's dance work at the Adelaide Festival.

KG A Sydney choreographer said to me that Stuart's dancers weren't sufficiently in their bodies!

NH The total opposite was the case for me. I felt that I was in their bodies half the time. I noticed that one of the dancers had worked with Min Tanaka. I made a decision a couple of years ago that I wasn't interested in doing Butoh anymore but Body Weather training is based on everyday sensations and movements. It allows you to access conditions and states on a physical level and transfer that into a work where you're dealing with a sort of realism. It's like taking a microscope to the real, or accelerating it by using a different speed, or by amplifying it.

Lucy Bell and Tara Morice in *Wolf Lullaby* photo: Robert McFarlane

KG You have had some classical vocal training on and off for a couple of years, you perform with the Cafe at the Gate of Salvation gospel choir and you work with sound designer Garry Bradbury. Lately in Sydney it's been exhilarating to hear the voice emerging in performance works you usually expect to be physical and silent. The vocal work in Creatures Ourselves *and* Jean/Lucretia *was both natural and heightened.*

NH Body Weather doesn't really address the voice, but I think it has influenced my approach to the voice. I feel I'm just scratching the surface. Sound is a fundamental part of the way I construct the imagination of the performance. Garry Bradbury is someone I've found who I can work with in a very intuitive way. I talk to him about the thematic content of the work and he invariably has a connection with it. We were working on *Jean/Lucretia* and I was talking about my grandmother's house and her pianola and my childhood relationship with it. He's really fascinated with pianolas so he's looking at 'deconstructing' a pianola and making new rolls based on electronic and possibly vocal sound. The performers have great voices and I'll want to use them too.

KG With words?

NH I'm not sure how much. I'm just beginning to write text, another surprising development, another way of working. The subject matter is such a juicy area: what is the relationship between the archetypal and the real. The older I get, the more fertile that territory becomes. I remember talking to a psychologist years ago, who said your late 30s, early 40s is actually when the unconscious starts to really become…well, no longer so separate. The dreams get stronger, and anything that's not resolved actually becomes bigger.

KG You can resolve it through your art?

NH I think you can.

Nikki Heywood, Burn Sonata, *with Claire Hague, Tony Osborne, Benjamin Grieve, Clare Grant, Dean Walsh, sound design by Garry Bradbury, The Performance Space, July 25-August 4.*

Sleights of mind

Zsuzsanna Soboslay interrogates the power of puppetry in Philippe Genty's *Stowaways*

I give child-friends in suburban Canberra a huge brown bear. They plop it in a stroller and neighbours pause as furry paws and belly slide across the pavement in a sure canvas ride. Huge bears with little children. Little children with huge bears. In *Latcho Drom*, the Gypsy movie, I see a dancing bear leer out of the ring where he dances. Children shriek and scatter. Then they laugh; its wild toothiness is contained. Muzzled, only its size and proximity are what really confronts. Illusion plays with proportion, as it shifts and challenges perspective and certainty. The stuff of forest dreams and soft (night)mares:

And from...nothing shall come life—even as we watch, in the very centre of that void a single atom seems to stir—to rise—it ascends like the awakening of a thought in a dream...the slow, deliberate ascension of a single form—near it, yet further back, a second and a third atom seems to have come into a half existence...slowly shapes continue to rise in endless numbers—to rise and fall while still the folds unfold and close, mounting one higher than another, others falling until there stand before us vast columns of shapes, all single yet all united—none resting.

Edward Gordon Craig,
The Art of the Theatre

Many of Gordon Craig's 1920s visions were pie-in-the-sky, cumbersome, impossible; a theatre replacing actors (whom he called "an insuperable difficulty and an expense") with columns and cubes of shapes rising, multiplying, and swapping until they settle "like a dew". Philippe Genty, the grand illusionist who cites Gordon Craig as a source, has the technical resources impossible for Craig. *Stowaways* is Grande Theatre as Grand Illusion—a prestidigitation, a reliance on nimble fingers to shift time and space and play with the psyche as a child plays with toys.

Huge pockets hide big and little things. Ernie, the central character/enfant terrible/central prestidigitator, has 'stowaways' (the unconscious passions that drive him) appear from within folds in his coat and slide off him no matter how hard they try to cling. There is a legless woman, an armless girl, a hipheavy buffoon of an African safari-man; and one who could be an Arabic monkey-grinder complete with cape and fez. They beat him, turn his foot around his ankle, play with him, tease and torment him. They cause him to search and travel under water and over clouds.

Little Ernie escapes from within his folds: a puppet-boy in a trench coat who thinks he's in control. He slams the door of his matchstick house, his matchstick home, shutting out the huge Father's face as it looms in the door. Little Ernie decides to burn the house down—it's simple, it's paper, he can draw flame around it like a balloon around a word and burn burn burn it small, remote, a problem in a pocket that can be laughed away. The threat made incendiary then ash that can fit in his briefcase as he walks away.

One object is used for and seen as many things. Is it a brain, or a worm? Is it a bird, or a plane? Are we on sea or land? Swelling and shrinking, a puppet's dough-face is made and remade according to the desire of each person who remakes it. The puppet dances or itself pushes a different dance according to who holds it.

In *Stowaways*, there is a telescoping of earth and sky; of the legless and armless, of meanness, kindness, lustiness, into a questioning of reality. Genty's process is one of teasing out layers and layers of meaning (how much can one do with paper? how much with flour?) with meaning derived from the texture of materials that compose an image, rather than a meaning derived from psychology or words. Who is real—the puppet, the puppeteer, or the puppet's soul? I see an equal tempering of puppet to player; it's the relationship itself being explored.

There is a texture of ruffled silk against rolling human skin. Of sea and bone. A breathlessly beautiful moment where sky becomes sea and Meredith Kitchen's back is bared to bathe.

I wish the program and pre-publicity didn't pompously hint at some major epiphany for Genty as he travelled around Australia in the seventies. These hints at (self-)realisation are a disservice to both depth analysis and his own work.

The value of *Stowaways* is its lightness, its nimble translucency, its tone of equivalence. Perhaps the most successful segment is where Kitchen dances with the naked puppet in the second half. There is her muscle versus his canvas skin: her angles versus his curves. Where is its soul, and where hers? Both seem to fluctuate equally. At other times, I feel a tension between too much deadness from the live performer and too much puppet vivacity. This perhaps is the problem in the dough-face scene, which is curiously passionless, with a bewildering coolness of tone.

Performer Russell Garbutt says Genty is a "manipulator first"—someone whose source is puppetteering and playing with pictures. Genty puts pressure on performers to produce 100 per cent from day one because his focus from day one is on the picture being right. He is "getting better with actors", he admits. With dancers he works better. What is so unwieldy about an actor? What of the human is one seeking to achieve?

If I think about things such as the dough-face, I can tease out meanings, but I do not do so during the performance, where mostly I sit thinking about the how, not the why (judging by what I hear from the audience, so do they). Though it hides its nimble fingers, the performance focus most often is itself the wonder of appearance/disappearance and not what it expresses or contains.

Compagnie Philippe Genty, *Stowaways*

The Australian rehearsal process was a stretching and condensing—on the one hand, for Australian actors used to up to six weeks' rehearsal, an elongation of time and exploration; for Genty on the other, a telescoping of process, condensing and worrying about the quartering of his usual rehearsal time.

This telescoping, for me, contributed to an odd sense of luxuriant (and perhaps indulgent) stretched time within the performance itself: how many tricks around the same idea can an audience sustain? How many slides and teasings is it worth sustaining (as opposed to how many you can get away with)? Many images for me repeated what I'd seen in Genty work from years before.

There is no doubt about Genty's technical achievement, partly made possible by the luxury of four months' rehearsal time (including one whole month in the performance space) plus a budget which can afford to throw away specially-made props which are found not to work. It means that gorgeous images such as a whole landscape swirling and disappearing around two figures down a plughole can be perfected into the illusion that it needs to be. (I wonder if they change the direction of the spiral for northern and southern hemispheres to match the water down a plughole. This segment alone took two full weeks to rehearse.)

I think again of the muzzled dancing bear. It is not really frightening (nor in some way convincing): its shadow is what casts the scare. Its teeth—more than half of its nature, the place of incision, piercing, penetration, defence—are wired, out of sight. These are dreams without anchors—floating realities, floating worlds, with the odd and for me jarring touch of the too-specific blues-singing kangaroo. This work doesn't show its teeth nor does it want to show them. Perhaps this is what I feel most about *Stowaways:* its toothlessness. The questions are resolved so easily with a shift in perspective away from the void. "Being has teeth," says Nietzsche. This is a muzzled bear. It is an untoothed spectacle which titillates: and it is not my unconscious he draws.

Thanks to Russell Garbutt for discussing the creative process with the writer.

Compagnie Philippe Genty, Stowaways, *written and directed by Philippe Genty, co-directed by Mary Underwood. Performers: Russell Garbutt, Meredith Kitchen, Jennifer Newman-Preston, Brian Parker, Simon Rann.* Stowaways *toured nationally.*

A show of hands

Boris Kelly queries the development of Company Skylark's *Pocket Size*

Pocket Size, 1996 photo: Katherine Pepper

The seriousness of intent in any performance ensemble can in part be measured by the discipline and craft evident in its approach to training. In general, theatre training in Australia tends to be undervalued by being confined to the period of college education leading to entry into the theatre profession after which it is often assumed that training is a thing of the past. However, the history of performance clearly reveals that the individuals and companies which have made their mark on the art tend to be those who understood and valued the discipline of ongoing training. Company Skylark's Artistic Director Peter Wilson clearly understands this and, bringing as he does an appreciation and working knowledge of the Asian traditions of puppetry, the company's training program, implemented two and a half years ago, is beginning to bear the fruit of the diligence and focus Wilson has devoted to the task of developing a world class puppetry ensemble.

Company Skylark, based in Canberra, came under the directorship of Wilson in 1992 and since that time has shifted its focus from being a company almost solely concerned with the production of work for children to embrace performance for adult audiences. The company's most recent work *Pocket Size,* which played a short season at the Ralph Wilson Theatre, is the result of a process which began prior to the 1994 National Festival of Australian Theatre during which it was performed as a work-in-progress. Presumably, the current showing is a continuation of the developmental process and is not intended as a complete work in itself. Primarily, the work is a demonstration, a showcase of the results of an extensive training program elegantly threaded together to form a pleasing performance free of any pretensions.

If all the world is a stage then puppetry is often the celebration of the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent hand which is the unseen architect of our actions and destinies. In *Pocket Size,* a title which refers to the scale of the production, pure illusion is deployed to animate familiar objects—a deck chair, a man's suit, a suitcase. Mary Hutchison provides a sparse, poetic text on the theme of the tentativeness in human movement—with allusions to walking on slippery surfaces and spinning on the toes like a top—which, by intention, has the faintest suggestions of a *leitmotif*. However, what distinguishes the work from conventional puppetry is the revealing of the 'unseen hand' of the performers featured in a number of ensemble movement pieces.

There is much in the aesthetics of this show which does not appeal—largely a matter of personal taste, I admit. My eyes tend to glaze over in the stage presence of pieces of stretch fabric manipulated by performers, and surely puppetry has paid sufficient homage to pieces of shimmering cloth lit a dozen ways. These unworked clichés hamper an otherwise simple and quite effective design and while much of the purity of the illusion is sacrificed to the harsh realities of working in a small theatre I have no doubt the techniques will carry to full effect in a larger space. Jeff Evan's music, although competently executed and well integrated by the director, suffers from a debt, in my mind, to the likes of Andreas Wollenweider which has the effect of evoking the claustrophobia of a corporate elevator or the irritation at being put on hold by an insurance company switchboard. And if we are to have the 'unseen hand' on display, more attention needs to be paid in training to the dynamic range and dramatic intention of the performers' ensemble movement work.

While acknowledging Peter Wilson's dedication to the process of building an ensemble and the role of training in that process, I was left wondering why there was such an apparent avoidance of risk-taking in this production. Surely, the contract between artist and audience in work-in-progress presentations allows for a substantial degree of envelope pushing, where technique is deployed in attempts to defy the possible. *Pocket Size,* while being enjoyable enough and no doubt of considerable appeal to the company's established audience, seemed somewhat shy in this respect. This is odd given the circumstances in which there is so little to lose in daring. Furthermore, although Wilson has shown in the highly acclaimed *Inside Dry Water* a willingness to approach grand themes and complex ideas, the absence of such spirit in this production suggests a functional vehicle for the display of skills.

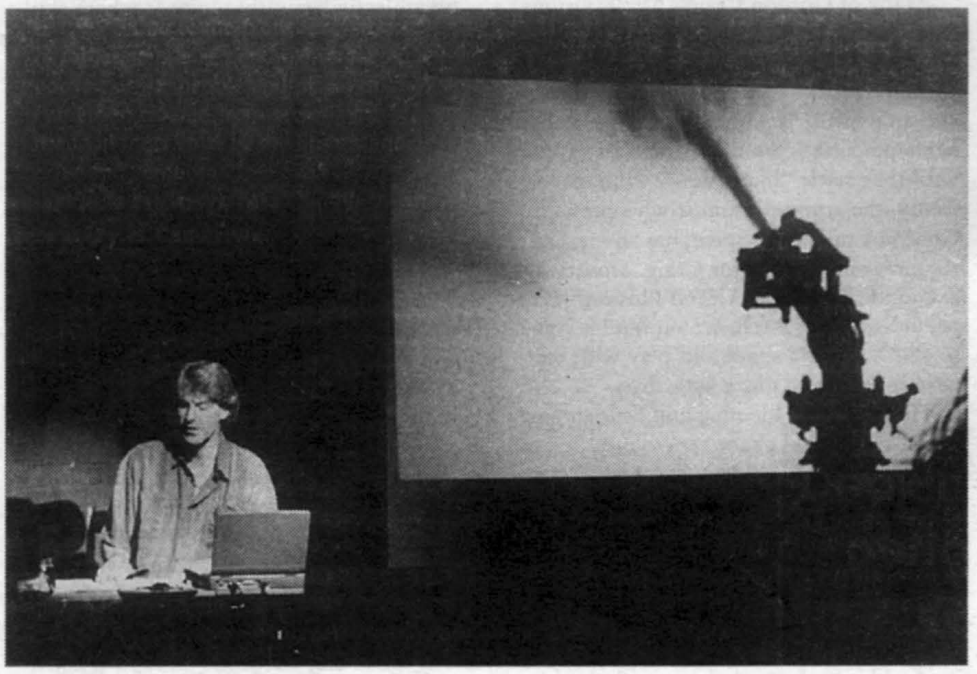
Pocket Size, *Company Skylark, Ralph Wilson Theatre, Canberra, April 17-20*

In search of the source

Maryanne Lynch on the complexities of autobiography in Steven Lang's *A Strong Brown God*

In 1992 Steven Lang followed the course of the Mary River from its source near Maleny, a small town in south-eastern Queensland, to the sea. He travelled alone and on foot, the journey taking eleven days. Steven Lang's diary of this journey formed the starting point of his performance work *A Strong Brown God.*

Lang's initial endeavour, at least in part, was to retrace the route taken by Stephen Simpson and Christopher Eipper on the first official journey by white men into the region 150 years earlier. Another, perhaps stronger, motivation was to seek an approximation of the relationship Lang understood the indigenous inhabitants to have (had) to the river: a relationship of exchange. Beyond both of these motives was the distinctly contemporary Western concern with the self, in this case, the masculine self, pulled into focus by Lang's biography.



Steven Lang in *A Strong Brown God* photo: Nicola Chapman

A Strong Brown God was by no means the uncomplicated culmination of Lang's journey. Using spoken word performance, occasional characterisation, and a narrative style consciously reminiscent of nineteenth-century European explorers, along with three projection screens, Lang clambered his way through the physical, emotional and ideological terrain of the Mary River. Like the trek, the piece criss-crossed between different cultural and historical assumptions, constantly fraught by the difficulty of claiming the 'I' of the narrative. Here I was reminded of William Yang's *Sadness,* a piece with a similar form and intent.

I'm not sure that Lang's 'journey' was always successful, especially when he strove to reconcile the differences—internal and external—that made up his endeavour. One problem, unwittingly presented, was the tendency to elide Aboriginal cultural beliefs with postmodern concerns. Speaking of "singing the landscape the way it is, [of seeing] things the way they are" suggested that Lang was confusing the diluted version of Aboriginal beliefs he had with a neo-Romantic ideal of the innocent wilderness, pristine in its wisdom, a place where phenomenon, idea and word meet in harmony. Lang then appeared to incorporate this confusion into his own search for 'identity' and his understanding of himself as a man.

I'm probably being a little harsh. In its narrative structure *A Strong Brown God* referred to the feelings of clumsiness, of awkwardness Lang experienced in tracing the physical and the performative paths of his endeavour. The piece shifted between anecdotes, reflections, dialogues and monologues, extracts from Simpson's and others' colonial diaries, images ranging from the picturesque to the disturbing (the latter most often prompted by the disjunction between words and image), and description. Although the piece modelled itself on the dry, deliberately unemotional style of Simpson and co., this only made more poignant the slippage into late twentieth-century uncertainty, the almost gauche confessional tone as Lang, person/persona, struggled with vulnerabilities forced out into the light of day by the absence of familiar distractions.

Lang, quietly sitting at a camp table to one side of the screens, dominated the piece with his measured reading and his unpatronising imitation of Les, Lil, Sharon and others met along the way. *A Strong Brown God* was at its strongest for me, however, when Lang simply showed his images of the Before and Other of the riverlands and when he spoke of the other Stephen, Simpson, a man bearing the grief of the death of his wife and child with a stiff upper lip in the privacy of his journals.

It was in these two moments that the tensions between the different elements of Lang's endeavour were at a peak, and yet I felt the resonances between, say, Lang and Simpson, or Simpson's grief and the grief of the local slaughtered or displaced peoples. Beyond Lang's desire to find connections, connections became apparent; differences weren't assimilated but found accommodation in small moments of pain, bewilderment or some other experience of exile.

Like *Sadness, A Strong Brown God* offered itself as autobiographical—a seductive notion when the performer draws upon recognisable personal experiences. What both pieces highlighted, for me, was that the search for meaning now begins with the self, and that all else must be discovered, not in the nineteenth-century style, but in a constant struggle to not make meaning one's own. Lang's piece showed the difficulty, as well as the possibilities, of this act.

A Strong Brown God: the Mary River Diary, *written and performed by Steven Lang, Experimetro, Metro Arts Theatre, Brisbane, April 2-6.*

Egendering laughter

Barbara Joseph crosses the punchlines at the Melbourne Comedy Festival

Meraphie Carr, Stayci Taylor and Penny Baren of The Rhonda Movement in *Drumhead*

Upfront Comedy at the Melbourne Town Hall Main Stage on Monday April 15 showcased the talents of more than twenty female comedians. Audience response was enormous with over a thousand tickets sold. This and the success of national and local performers Judith Lucy, Denise Scott, The Rhonda Movement, Irene Koch, playwright Sarah Vincent and international acts Jo Brand, Lynn Ferguson, Annie Sprinkle and The Full Figure Theatre Company indicate that women's comedy is gaining broader acceptance amongst the general public, sponsors and the media.

Yet the popular misconception remains that comedy is a male pursuit and those 'brave' women who do try it are, like women making headway in any other male-dominated field, a select few who have that something extra. Why does this perception of comedy as male exclusive zone persist as cultural myth?

Women comics are consistently throwing down the gauntlet and challenging male comics on 'their' turf. Julia Morris makes a joke of the male audience member who derided her for being disgusting and offensive in her occasional use of the vernacular. In pointing out the absurdity of the situation, she illustrates clearly the double standards by which female comics are judged.

While the content of women's comedy helps to break down public perceptions of appropriate female behaviour, the style and delivery required for stand-up often limits the subversion of stereotypes. More theatrical styles seem better suited to challenging or confrontational material. In Andrea Powell's brilliant portrayal of a 'feral' in *Enough is Enough*, she takes pains to display excreta-stained underwear, Full Figure Theatre Company overtly deconstruct images of femininity with their power-dressing yuppie, boot-wearing revolutionary and dippy hippy characters in *The F-word*, and The Rhonda's use their PVC body suits as percussion instruments.

Judith Lucy in *An Impossible Dream* photo: Jeff Busby

Does cutting-edge comedy for women have to be issue-based or woman identified? Stayci Taylor, Penny Baron and Merophie Carr of *The Rhonda Movement* see their comedy as agenda-free and while accepting feminism as an ethos for their personal lives, reject the tag of "feminist comedian" on the basis of its potential to marginalise. The long term effects of negative and inaccurate portrayals of feminists have caused many women, even audacious female comics, to reject the term as a description of their socio-political stance.

Jo Brand's comic persona is a bitter, man-hating, feminist who bears little connection to Jo Brand herself. For her, the comedy comes first, the issues are secondary. Yet her material quite openly confronts issues of body image which concern many women. Early in her act, Brand discusses the negative stereotype of the feminist, referring to the British tabloid construction of her as a beer-swilling, smoking, swearing, fat, man-hating, boot-wearing lesbian as being only partly correct. "I'm actually heterosexual," she says, "so you men in the audience, be very scared, I do want you for sex."

Jo Brand relates the gender inequities in comedy to audience perceptions of female comics as "less able" performers. Both male and female audience members exhibit this response—so much for the mythical sisterhood. From her vantage point, she often observes female audience members mediate their laughter through their male partner. Women will glance at their husband or boyfriend before responding to a joke. Yet on the opening night of her Melbourne shows, rising above the silence of masculine incomprehension, were the differently pitched volumes of female laughter. I doubt whether Australian audiences are more liberated. The context of this performance within a Comedy Festival with elements of carnival, where the acceptable is challenged and standard codes of behaviour inverted, may have produced this expansive response from the largely female audience. So why, even in this generally supportive environment do women comics continue to struggle to change the misconception that comedy is a male domain?

Few women could have got away with the shambling, unrehearsed, poorly improvised performance of the sort presented by Anthony Morgan in the first of his self-named 'triptych', *Ink. Pink. You Stink.*, or the tired jokes and familiar visual gags of some other established male comics. Surely audiences are sick of spending large lumps of cash to witness men shambling around a stage, smoking and having a bit of a whinge as though in their own lounge rooms? It's wading into murky water to debate this as a gender issue when it's tied up with the apparent need of the comedy scene and commercial audiences to protect their 'legends'.

One of the hierarchies operating, often to the disadvantage of female comics, is the choice of venues. The Melbourne Town Hall offered a central location and a smorgasbord of comedy including big local and international acts. It also enabled many small shows access to a performance venue at reasonable cost. But pity those who were stuck elsewhere—Full Figure at the Royal Women's Hospital, Julia Morris somewhere in Toorak and *Barbara's Tour de Jour* at St Martins. Common lore has it that if you're good, you'll pull an audience. But good at what—your comedy or at enticing the media? Why were so many interviews given to Greg Fleet talking about his drug addiction? Getting publicity has become more difficult than ever and many papers won't send a reviewer unless the group/ performer/ producer takes up advertising. Meanwhile, inside the comedy network, systems of privilege and influence (including the Moosehead Awards) are operating—women are often paid well or given a go only for their novelty value; and the competitive environment of the stand-up circuit makes it an uncomfortable place to work for many women.

Denise Scott

In spite of a burgeoning audience interest in women's comic performance and rising numbers of very funny women making comedy, there seem to be socio-cultural impediments that continue to support the notion of comedy as a male domain. While gutsy, extraordinarily funny women are challenging gender with their comedy, there is some way to go to address the inequities they experience.

Barbara Joseph is a performer, writer and director currently tutoring in Drama at Monash University and developing a women's comedy show to be performed in Melbourne later this year.

Memories are made of...

Mark Minchinton at Lyndal Jones' *Spitfire 1 2 3*

When I was a child, a friend had an uncle who flew Spitfires in WWII. The uncle lived up to his implied glamour in many ways: swept-back black hair, spiffy moustache, even a cravat. But rather than a fraffly English accent he had a lazy Australian drawl and drove not a Lagonda or Bentley but a maroon Holden.

A little older, I briefly looked after my brother's cat, Morris. Morris, who was black and skinny and had long legs, also had a behaviour problem: he ripped up curtains like Chuck Jones' Tasmanian devil, shredded the scalp of a toddler who came to visit, and was removed to a farm for delinquent cats where he had to have a cage of his own.

Later on, I was hit hard across the face in a reflex action by a lover in a crowded Carlton restaurant after I stroked her wrist and inadvertently pinched a nerve; a year later she hit me again in a street in Fitzroy after I told her I was going to Sydney with another woman.

I can't say how much of these memories is true, but they're what came back to me after viewing Lyndal Jones' *Spitfire 1 2 3* which seeks to evoke and interrogate the spitfire and some of its multiplicities—wild cat, wild plane, wild woman.

The setting for *Spitfire 1 2 3*—a disused power station in Lonsdale Street near the shunting yards of Spencer Street Station, the Melbourne Remand Centre, and the nearly invisible docks on the Yarra—provoked associations with the harsh conditions of a male dominated industrial world. Through this environment the audience travelled to what a friend of mine called four `pleasure zones', taking up different kinds of spectatorship in each zone:

• walking into and around an installation of 10 or 15 television sets, with, to the side, a row of poppies growing incongruously out of a workman's bench lit by suspended industrial lamps; into this space came two women, one wearing a long and obvious red wig; the bewigged woman set a video going on the monitors, showing long, medium, and close up shots of a field of poppies; the two women then 'rehearsed' a scene of walking and some dialogue about Bosnia (where I stood it was difficult to hear what was said);

• standing before a low stage watching and listening to a man in jeans and singlet tuning his guitar before launching into heavy metal riffs; he was joined later by a woman in a red dress and the red wig from the previous scene; she sang operatically, while on the other side of the stage a handsome young man climbed into and out of WWII flying gear, voguing to a video camera, his captured image projected onto a small monitor at the front of the stage; a film from the cockpit of a plane played more or less endlessly in the background, and the sound of an aircraft engine droned;

• sitting watching a dance theatre piece where five male-female couples played out scenes of attraction, flirtation, and making-out amongst scattered storage cabinets, individuals taking turns to speak fantasies/tales of seduction into microphones placed along the front of the stage;

• standing for twenty minutes or so in a lane at the back of the building mirroring a line of people (one of whom wore the red wig) who might have been refugees waiting to be let out of a gate; once, while they waited, the roar of a piston-engined aircraft passed along the lane; when the gate was opened they ran up the lane, across a street, and into another lane, 'freezing' in positions of flight.

There was no narrative link between any of these zones, the only connections were the bare industrial environment, the colour red (seen in poppies, roses, dresses, and the wig), some of the cast members, the anonymous announcer's voice moving us from zone to zone, and the sound of spitfires—feline, aero-nautical, and female.

If I seem troubled it's because Lyndal Jones is a performance maker I respect and *Spitfire 1 2 3*—part of her larger project, *The Darwin Translations,* the only other part of which I have seen being the video *Freud's Couch*—felt distanced and imbued with a sense of absence that I wasn't sure was intentional. The curator, Gillian Beer, notes that the title "explicitly expresses the idea of multiplicity", and that the piece "promotes fluidity and heterogeneity as desirable models for human relationships", but it wasn't clear to me how the piece itself did this. Some of the absences felt significant: the absence of (industrial) workers from the power house, the seeming absence of pleasure in the performers as they performed erotic moments, the absence of connection to the audience. True, I found moments of pleasure: the redness of the poppies; the guitarist's nonchalant movement as he tuned and played his guitar contrasted with the stagy RAF-voguing of the Spitfire 'pilot' to the video camera, and started me briefly thinking about male icons; the conflation of heavy-metal guitar, operatic singing, and aircraft engine which throbbed through our bodies; the coincidence or artifice that placed a slowly revolving wall fan in silhouette next to the reels of the projector casting an image shot through the propeller of a plane; Shelley Lassica caught in half light as she entered the zone of seduction, and her dance/seduction with Bryan Smith.

These moments did not, in Gillian Beer's assessment of Darwinian theory quoted in her curator's note, "resolve to a single significance nor yield a single pattern", but nor did their coincidence and indeterminacy seem to generate an "absorbing unpredictability"; rather they remained disconnected effects, markers of what seemed a private and elusive language to which I could find no access. In the end I was left with my memories.

Lyndal Jones, Spitfire 1 2 3, *with Deanne Flatley, Rhys Muldoon, Helen Hopkins, Miliana Zirojevic, Bori Rotar, Jadja Costich, Shelley Lasica, Michael Sheridan, music by David Chesworth, lighting by Margie Medlin. Lonsdale Street Power Station, April 10-27.*

The jobs behind the acronyms

David Varga interview's TEAME's Dianne Dayhew about traineeships in the arts

With the Coalition yet to announce its policy on training, arts industry workers and employers are being forced to consider future directions in a time of uncertainty. Labour market employment initiatives such as the Jobskills program, which have provided strong support to arts employers (primarily as sources of inexpensive administrative staff) could well be dismantled in the August budget. One new training body with a specific arts/media agenda is TEAME (Training and Employment for Arts, Media and Entertainment). Established under NETTFORCE (National Education and Training Task Force), the former federal government's national traineeship administration and brokering body, TEAME's traineeship program enables employers to take on trainees and provide them with a range of skills over a twelve month period. Developed in consultation with a range of arts and media groups, TEAME sees itself as an industry-focussed training alternative set to receive ongoing government support. TEAME Group Training's NSW manager is Dianne Dayhew.

DV TEAME has a national strategy?

DD Yes, very much so. We have offices in Victoria, Queensland and a representative in Tasmania, and we hope to cover all states eventually, but NSW and Victoria are our most successful at this stage. We also have trainees in regional areas, including arts centres and indigenous organisations. Our focus is not limited to cities.

DV What's in it for employers when they take on a trainee?

DD The employer pays the National Training Wage, which is relatively low considering the employee is still in training. Employers also receive a minimum $2000 incentive payment. As the traineeships are linked to other subsidy schemes we access all possible government subsidies and then pass them on directly. TEAME Group Training administers all the paperwork relating to the trainee including superannuation, workers compensation, annual leave, sick leave and wage payments so the employer is saved the burden of administration time and costs as well.

DV Is there an emphasis on youth training?

DD Yes, although there are no age restrictions. The response we've had from employers is that trainees require a certain amount of maturity to work in the arts industry, so we look for determination and commitment in applicants, for people who we think are career oriented.

DV What's the process of selecting employers and matching them with the right trainees?

DD We meet employers, discuss their requirements and then see if they are able to provide the training support necessary. We then recruit according to their needs from our database of applicants, and in some cases advertise if necessary.

DV How is the training component of the traineeships structured?

DD The type of training depends upon the traineeship curriculum. This can be either totally on-the-job or as a combination of on-and-off-the-job training. Off-the job training can be delivered in a block or one day a week over the course of a year.

DV What is your role once the traineeship has commenced?

DD TEAME Group training remains the legal employer of the trainee, providing a safety net for employers. We also monitor the trainee's progress, carrying out job assessments throughout the year. A supervisor guides the trainee through the different on the job modules.

DV Labour market programs such as Jobskills, have been utilised successfully by many smaller, non-profit and government funded arts organisations. Are there any provisions in the TEAME package which could benefit these tightly funded arts organisations in a similar way?

DD If an employer has taken on a staff member through a labour market program like Jobskills, instead of releasing them after the program is finished, we encourage the employer to incorporate that staff member into a traineeship. If they address the TEAME requirements then it's possible that we can credit their prior training. The difference is that TEAME offers a structured package. At the end of the period the trainee is given a certificate in recognition of the training they have done. We recognise that many arts organisations are extremely tightly funded and we try to cater to their specific needs.

DV There have been rumours that NETTFORCE may be disbanded, in which case TEAME would come under the umbrella of the National Training Authority. What are the implications for TEAME if this goes ahead?

DD Like all government funded bodies we are expecting change under the Coalition, but we do foresee continuing support. We're also anticipating positive changes too, like the opportunity to cut red tape. At this stage the future is looking very bright.

TEAME Group Training offers traineeships in Arts Administration, Multimedia, Television Operations, Music Business, Indigenous Television and Video Production as well as Media and Journalism. Live Theatre and Community Radio traineeships are currently in development.

Monica Wulff photo: Robert McFarlane

Political fortune-spinning and lush deals have raised the ire of a broad community, united under the glowering belly of a 747. A performance project tracks its trajectory. Straight out of Marrickville, straight over Leichhardt, Newtown, Botany, Petersham—the deaf geography stretches on forever…

I am at Sidetrack Theatre, Marrickville, Sydney. I find myself moving past notice boards, avidly reading letters to politicians, legislation and propaganda as a bird-woman flits by with her luggage. *Plane Truth,* a performance project by Sidetrack in collaboration with student performers, is theatre of local revelation. The object of interrogation—the reviled third runway. A burning urban environmental issue.

Hark, Mahler's funeral march. The narrator takes to the podium and in solid style leads us through the cynical twists of political motion. Contemporary performance styles produce a multivocal social body, a mock choir. Birds screech overhead. Deaf ears, expediency, money—the perfect dramatic conspiracy combines with local reality.

Sidetrack blows on the ashes of the flight path. Fact and theatre combine to tell the tale of a protracted government development which has shaken South Sydney-siders to the marrow, prompting the most vocal and frustrated activism in recent Sydney history.

Plane Truth combines a rich array of form, text and address to make an alive ethical tale—snatches of intimate confession, bold universalisms and apocalyptic video carve out the bone of contention. The Brechtian equation is recited in part—the people will come to know what's good for them.

Behind me, some of the most determined anti-runway activists clap their hands in appreciation and delight at this deft rendition of their domestic lives. Roaring laughter dovetails into the shudder of a real plane overhead. In *Plane Truth* some truths are leaden, but some images are delicate, light and just. I emerge feeling swayed and slightly air-sick.

Caitlin Newton-Broad

Sidetrack Performance Group, Plane Truth, *Sidetrack Theatre, Marrickville, April 9-27*

Deborah Pollard Heidrun Löhr

Arriving in the theatre, we shuffle around some jazzed up woman in Indonesian drag "doing pop song". Her smile, flicking wrists, hips and the level of her gaze are somewhat unnerving. *She has got to be joking,* Some of us look away because the cloying pitch is too much, too feminine, too…

But this resilient little singing woman persists. Her lilting tune is infectious, and soon enough even those keeping their hard face on begin to nod and hum. We become the fly-by tourists for Deborah Pollard's show *Fish Out Of Water.*

As "the plane lands in Jakarta, imagined through venetian blinds, a coil of smoke and intrigue", Pollard ransacks the narratives of popular film and fiction that mythologise "our closest foreign neighbour", Indonesia. The tone of her work is pitched as vicarious adventure, exploiting the border-defence paranoia of diplomat-speak and the gloss of tropical romance. Colonialism, post-colonialism, soft porn and the clichés of exotica are peddled by Pollard.

She lays out an unflattering but precise portfolio on the hungry western woman—she is a new-age globe-trotting sarong-clad goddess and in turn a sunburnt stranger clamouring her way through cultural misinterpretation, cultural fatigue and feminine hysteria. She gets in close to our fears and desires. Pollard whispers warnings "…but most of all, remember, don't fall in love." She doesn't want to learn. The luckless she is harassed and heartbroken by an enthusiastic Indonesian puppet with a salacious drive. Luckily there is always someone white to pick up the pieces—Mistress Pollard is serviced by "Boy" (Joel Markham), endlessly willing all-round cultural servant and safari-styled golf-caddy.

Adept chain-kretak-smoking musicians (Margaret Bradley, Suhandi Kosasih) provide music that is pervasive and seductive, conjuring traditional Indonesian music, pantomime and cabaret in tropical collision.

Same space, another show. The initial image of a woman swinging wildly on her baggage holds me captive. I am prepared to travel wherever…Later, the romance is interrupted as another woman offers up evidence of our own voyeurism, "Go on, look at me, I know you like it."

Noroc, a collaborative venture by Death Defying Theatre exploreing the imaginative space of identity and memory, promises to make connections between female experience in diverse cultures. Michelle St Anne, Terese Casu, Aida Amirkhanian and Deborah Leiser with director Tanya Gerstle have created four very different voices to elaborate this space. The design by Pierre Thibaudeau is a collection of maps and mirrors, reflecting back a fragmentary collage of experience and performance styles.

One woman recites a macabre recipe "Holocaust Borscht", how to ensure the children of survivors meter their emotional lives properly. A mock Indian woman tickles our taste for comic racism, a woman travels around Romania in a taxi and suddenly I am lost in a confusion of voices. *What are they asking of me?*

Caitlin Newton-Broad

Deborah Pollard, A Fish Out of Water, *The Performance Space, May 2 -12;*
Death Defying Theatre, Noroc, *The Performance Space, April 3 -14, University of Newcastle April 19, University of Western Sydney, Nepean, April 23*

Taking the piss; too close to the bone

Sarah Miller laughs at Tony Osborne's one man show. If she didn't laugh, she'd have to cry.

Tony Osborne's one man show, *Festivals, Vestibules and a Humourless Bastard* performed in Perth's Blue Room, ripped into some of Perth's most tried and true cultural clichés. Following hot on the heels of the Perth Festival, this unfunded, partly scripted, largely improvised, theatrical gem drew on the improvisation skills of the dance trained artist, the buffoonery of the stand-up comedian and the versatility of the variety artist. I laughed a lot. Osborne first appears like a beetle on its back or—shades of Kafka—a cockroach, finally achieving a kind of verticality from which he takes on the festival of imported product, overheard conversations in theatre foyers, economic (ir)rationalism in the arts, anglophilia and isolation.

And that's the great talent of Australian artists: brevity of rehearsal time. We don't need to waffle around in rehearsal rooms for months on end, trying out ideas! We're there on a six week project grant and before you can say 'snap-funding', we're in the pub on opening night. And that's why I'm proud to be an Australian artist. We know what we want to say and we say it quickly.

And Osborne has the perfect solution for the economically rationalist arts minister. Yes minister! A performing arts company which will "produce not only ballets and plays but opera as well"!

It's all in the rehearsal period you see. I'm working with a prominent group of WESTERN Australian artistes and we have reduced the preparation time of a three act play to seventy two hours. That's right. Working three days and nights non stop with a good workplace agreement, we could produce any of the classics in a week… With the cost savings I plan to make, I could mount the entire stage works of Shakespeare over one month with all of Verdi's operas and a new Chrissie Parrott piece opening every 24 hours. We'll be able to perform 16 hours a day (this will attract the younger audience). We'll do several versions of each play: Playschool style in the morning; Highschool in the afternoon and special 2am shows for those quiet nights at Acqua and Vultures. This is the way to save the theatre in Western Australia. This is the answer.

And god help us, it probably will be someone's answer. Physically and intellectually dexterous, witty and topical, Osborne's political satire hilariousiy articulates the tragedy of our 'state of the arts'.

Festivals, Vestibules & a Humourless Bastard *was performed at the Blue Room Theatre, Perth from March 20-31, 1996.*

Rosemary Myers, Hogh Covill, Bruce Gladwin photo: Ponch Hawkes

Rosemary Myers, artistic director of Melbourne's Arena Theatre Company, is ecstatic. Her driving phone account of Arena's *Autopsy* is fuelled by the sight of the inflating of Maria Kozic's sculptural installation set just arrived from Sydney as we speak. *Autopsy* is based on market survey interviews about "how people make sense of their lives" via the likes of Amway, gyms and internet romances with a dramatic focus on the "moments when communication channels bottleneck". Arena ran the survey itself, advertising for participants who turned out to be only too willing, honest and emotional—"enough material for the next stage of Arena's work". *Autopsy,* says the press release, "acts as a 'pause' button on life, a chance to dissect the whole picture before we become too obsessed with fast forward." As these fearful speed metaphors rush down the line, I ask Myers, "Is this an anti-tech show?" No, says Myers fearlessly, explaining that Arena's attitude to technology is a positive but critical one, that their audience is young (she doesn't want to restrict the term to youth), open to technological development, and that the show itself uses video technology—digital human packaging (the CD-ROM cross-section scans of an executed murderer), internet imagery, projected text, and the performance is completely scored for music in rock concert format. The plot however is telling: a love story via the internet, work conflict in a computer software company, a life support system crisis, all three strands morally entwined and "a kind of happy ending, the difficult emergence of a new ethic, an antidote to *Natural Born Killers* which is critical of technology but which informs the culture and becomes the culture and is depressing. The end of *Autopsy* was a hard call for us to write."

Arena has been invited to perform *Autopsy* at the ASSITEJ World Conference in Russia later this year. The six track CD of *Autopsy* by Band of Hope (of which Myers is a member) will be available for sale at performances and Timezone in Swanston St. Mall. Arena Theatre Company, *Autopsy,* George Fairfax Studio, Victorian Arts Centre, June 6 - 15 Enquiries: 03 9699 8500 KG

The spiritual in the popular

Eleanor Brickhill finds unexpected depths in visiting US dance company Momix

Momix, *Baseball* photo: Moses Pendleton

At its best, there's something attractive about American humour. In *Baseball* and *Passion,* two works by Moses Pendleton, performed by Momix, there are enough salient cues for events to coincide with personal biases, even if at first glance the images in the program act like warning signs. Clueless gum chewing ball players strike facile poses with bats. Perfectly linear, rigorously symmetrical groups of dancers threaten to paralyse the imagination. Nervousness overtook me until I read a quotation from Woody Allen, also included in the program, "I love baseball, you know it doesn't have to mean anything, it's just very beautiful to watch." I was relieved with this more comfortably oblique perspective.

In both works there's an unexpectedly rigorous interior texture, a tang of spirituality, a sacredness of sorts. Profuse images cluster, working to create dense, open-ended iconographic histories which speak about the dimensions of a tart spirit manifesting itself in the profane cultures of everyday human endeavour. Take an apparently sweepingly simple and familiar passion for a game of baseball, and if you care to follow this line of thinking, it turns out to be part of the same deep well from which spring other mystical and unfathomable aspects of human civilisation which follow us from the ancient into the contemporary world. In *Passion,* sexual fervour, death, struggle and ecstatic religious immolation are made of this same stuff.

An important feature of both works is the layering over live performance of projected slow fading images on a scrim which together capture expansive cosmological perspectives. In *Baseball,* we see ancient, 'graven' images and monuments like Stonehenge overlaying the vivid and live spirit of the pitch on stage; corpulent female Venus figures (described sometimes as homo sapiens' first object of worship); bat and ball images, banal and serious, are conspicuously genital—a girl in a half-shell; a ball nestles egg-like in a baseball glove, simultaneously vulval and phallic. We see performers regress to a *2001* scene, exercising an atavistic pleasure in hitting soft squashy things with long hard things. We see emblematic crossed bats; Moses with his commandments, the set of rules for the game; film star images, Humphrey Bogart, Babe Ruth; American Indian warrior images; beer-can culture; the *Stars and Stripes Forever;* a dance within pliable and perfectly balanced double arches set to Arvo Pärt's *Stabat Mater* (Stood the Mother, full of grief), and militaristic synchronised bat play. One woman's Sufi-like spinning solo is able, with immaculate simplicity, to draw us into an understanding of that peculiar kind of devotion.

Nations develop civil religions whose liturgy and iconography are capable of sustaining a range of meanings for devotees, because the symbolism, though intensely religious, is not from any orthodox faith, but typically taps primal or ancient sources. Moses Pendleton's *Baseball* shows us all the hallmarks. Civil religion in the US is grounded in the Constitution, directed at binding the individual to the state, "One nation under god". Virtues are civil ones: physical strength, skill, team spirit. No religious spirit celebrates any God Out There, but exultant humanity right here in the world of competition, politics, finance, dirt, fame, greed, sex, beauty, pain, and skill, and the damp meditative autumnal (should that be fall) afternoons spent tossing a ball around in the wet leaves. This, an insipid but perfect closing image of *Baseball,* brings that spirit home, binding it to a place which is fundamentally American, even in its own self-mockery.

The immediately spiritual images of *Passion* take us unhesitatingly to Shiva, Indian god of the universe and lord of the dance, a huge branching tree, the teeming ardent struggle of organic life, the passionate attachment of nerve and cell, fierce, microcosmic vortex of pistil and stamen, flower and insect, vultures in a dead tree, ginseng root—a human image—folds of cerebral cortex, decomposing flesh, war, medieval images of flagellation and ecstasy, monastic penance, repetitive, extreme and peculiar. The passion of a bride, whether of Christ or man, comes to us bare breasted, swathed in tulle. There is a profound eroticism in all of this, from the images of Italian renaissance women, tiny winged cupids with dimpled legs, to the huge mechanical clock marking the passage of both cyclic and linear time.

Neither frail, brittle nor pre-pubescent, the women's bodies have a more flagrant aesthetic independence not so familiar to Australian mainstream dance. An apparent maturity and succulence seems to walk all over quaint narrow female images we have unfortunately come to expect, and embarrassingly, to think of as erotic. These dancers show no signs of physical struggle, they make no slips, they have immense facility, they are perfectly attuned. Meanwhile, the choreographic designs are surprisingly so foursquare, repetitive, turn-taking, linear, and peculiarly literal as to make me wonder why their dimensions do not feel more circumscribed. Such are the illusions, farcical and sophisticated, which are created with meticulous precision. You need a soft focus on these images for them to do their work.

Momix (U.S.), Baseball *and* Passion, *conceived and directed by Moses Pendleton, Sydney Dance Company, Sydney Opera House, May 2-9.*

Is it possible to talk about first, second, third generation contemporary choreographers in Australia—what constitutes a generation? At Dancehouse's *Great Escapes*—two week-ends of continuous dancing, one event following another for up to four hours—generations came and went. There were the subtly skilled bodies of trained dancers and ex-company dancers—Dianne Reid and Rochelle Carmichael—doing sinuous solos or showing the work of their fledgling companies. There were the frisky bodies of Al Wunder's studio in *Five Square Metres.* There were the modern dancers still stretching fabric and making elegant gestures (*Arches of Desire* and *Mind the Gap)* and there were the intensely Butoh and psychological, Tony Yap again. Others bordering on the edge between the banal and the truly funny, *Suit,* and still more.

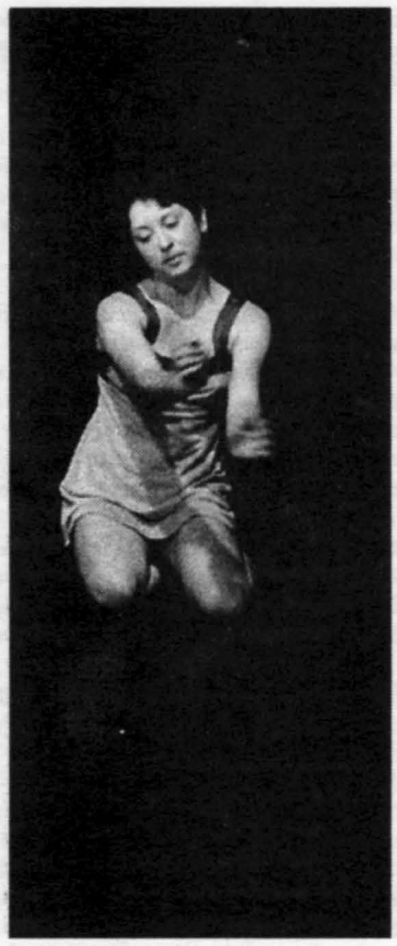
Dancehouse is meeting a real need for independent dancers, or dancers in general, to have a place to show work and to meet one another in a polyglot and non-judgmental environment. The newly polished jarrah floor of this old building shone more than some of the works but then the mobile crowd came and went with enthusiasm for what they saw. It's cheap and diverse and the format does allow dancers to tease a little and test a little. I missed Jane Refshauge's solo but was told it had a focus on inner listening which was quite foreign to the refinements of a younger generation. One of my favourites was Steven Pease's monologue in the midst of Yap's *A Little Escape into the Subterranean*; no dancing, but standing still he took us on a rapid journey from kitchen table to maggots, worms, urethra and Vikings—far more grotesque than the other sweaty bodies around him. Perhaps the ultimate escape was *Breaking Free of Human Bondage* in which Andrew Casey, pinned to a ganchion on the brick wall, hurled himself at the audience while his dog was tied to a pillar in the yard outside, barking wildly. On the first performance the rope broke, nearly demolishing the front row of spectators wrapped in their blankets. The second night audience missed the return visit. *Rachel Fensham*

From the crab room, a cherry herring

Julia Postle celebrates the opening of Brisbane's new dance-based performance space

When over 100 people braved the recent Brisbane downpours and subsequent floods to attend the launch of the Cherry Herring, somehow it wasn't all that surprising. After the success of the Crab Room last year, the continuation of its spirit of experimentation in a new venue, with a larger group of core artists, was more or less guaranteed to renew the interest of an already supportive community. The new space adjoins the Council Bus Depot in the Valley, which at one time housed a drag racing association. Cherry Heering is one of the many liqueurs depicted in the wallpaper behind the old bar, hence the title Cherry Herring. The potential for such quirky intertextual exploration makes 1062 Ann Street a particularly interesting site for those artists involved—Shaaron Boughen, John Utans, Jean Tally, Avril Huddy, Lisa O'Neill, Julieanne Hansen, Tony Kishawi, Brian Lucas, Gail Hewton, Helen Leeson, Sonia Fletcher and Susan Lewis.

Politically, this may seem like a curatorial nightmare, with all twelve artists sharing the financial responsibilities for the lease of the space. Yet it was the financial burden upon the four artists who initiated and administered the Crab Room that contributed to its eventual dissolution. At the moment though, this group of artists seems to be honeymooning; there's an atmosphere of harmony and conviviality as they urge each other towards new creative possibilities. Cherry Herring's manifesto states as one of its objectives: "To encourage and facilitate the creation of an environment which rigorously embraces and embodies risk, experiment, research, discussion, and debate about artistic practice and application". The artists are more explicitly united in all being quite specifically dance-based. There is a definite openness to other art forms however, as the emphasis is on the more expansive notion of 'performance', as opposed to dance as such.



Lisa O'Neill

This broader understanding is echoed by Lisa O'Neill, one of the collective. Lisa has two 'families' ; the Suzuki-influenced FRANK Productions, under the strong artistic direction of Jacqui Carroll and John Nobbs, and the flexible, democratic Cherry Herring. "My main focus at the moment is evolving as a performer," she says. "So my pieces are a vehicle for increasing my awareness of my relationship with the audience, which is something that comes out of working with FRANK. And since working with FRANK, I've discovered and developed another level of my own solo work. I feel like I work the audience differently. And I suppose it's the difference of going from 'dancer' to 'performer'. There's much more to it than dancing in a space."

Lisa has created her own movement vocabulary out of a self-imposed rule to work away from conventional dance techniques. "It wasn't a conscious rejection of anything, it was just honest. People say my work is pretty odd, but I get that from trying to find different physical connections," she reflects. "Through the last few solos I've done, I have built up a character, and she's full of contradictions. And I find that in a lot of ways she reflects who I am, which is a bit scary." In the forthcoming inaugural season at the Cherry, *Tanked,* Lisa will be revisiting her performance persona, although in this incarnation the movement will be more aggressive. *Yety in e minor* is a continuation of *sweet yety,* the solo Lisa stomped her way through last year at the Crab Room's first season. It is fitting then, that the work has been extended in a fresh context, while essentially bridging the two performance spaces.

An obvious marine fixation has already bridged the venues with respect to title, and this was playfully celebrated at the opening of the Cherry Herring. Each artist designed a unique fish tank for the event in a comic representation of the group's name, sushi was served, and the members of the Cherry were wearing cherry red ensembles. There were also snippets of works in the making for the *Tanked* season. Despite this, there is no definite theme for *Tanked*. For instance, Shaaron Boughen is reworking a piece she originally choreographed for Wendy Houston when she was completing her Master of Arts in London. Shaaron wanted to return to a work which held creative significance for her in a particular time and place and try to reshape it in a movement conversation with a different performer in this new space.

Not all of the artists involved are presenting work in this season, and because of the size of the collective there is less pressure for them to do so. Jean Tally comments, "Instead of a few artists continually generating work, there is more space for the individual". Brian Lucas agrees, "I think just the physical fact of having so many people involved means that the work can be spread around, so we will be able to do as many if not more performances". There is also more space for workshop series, classes and forums, because of the different backgrounds, capacities and interests of the members of the group.

Perhaps the Cherry Herring will prove more difficult to manage than the Crab Room, but the potential for the space is clear. Building on the enthusiasm of the Crab Room but diffusing that enthusiasm through many different courses, the Cherry Herring will be, as it purports, "a major venue for emerging and established artists, offering a local focus for the creation, development, rehearsal and presentation of original performance based work".

photo: Leigh Hobba

On paper it looks neat—three collaborators, three weeks, three subjects. But the tapestry these three threes weave together is richer than a simple braid. The working process to create *No Time Like The Present*, a collaboration of dance and design by Ruth Hadlow, Wendy McPhee and Cate O'Brien involved a complicated layering of necessity, risk and ideas, of intuition, structure and invention. Wendy, a feisty, explosive dancer brought an energising serving of necessity and intuition. She works from her kinetic intelligence, responding in movement to deeply felt imperatives. Ruth, ostensibly a "designer" is actually someone who is not afraid to get her hands dirty. She doesn't decorate the work, she instigates, probes and designs it in the sense of devising. Her contribution to the working process of *No Time Like the Present* is another vital triple: "structure, hope and faith". Cate makes the bridge between Ruth's measured and optimistic approach and Wendy's rush of expression. Although used to dancing in formalist work, depending on her very reliable and developed technique, Cate says calmly that when asked to do improvisation which may or may not have an outcome and to try a bit of "gush" dancing to Patsy Cline she was "willing to take the risk". Audacity with equilibrium and a sense of perspective. And so the three were able to work together in a tightly structured and emotionally fraught three weeks to create *No Time Like the Present*, a work which started with a lot of ideas, developed into even more ideas and then filtered itself down to three: time, speed, and change. And in the end, while the finished work looks at these subjects from the point of view of time passing in decades, of the dizzying speed of the world, of the changes in society, the three collaborators agree, it's also about their lives, and even about this working process. It's a piece about time they wanted more time to make. A piece about speed that was made fast enough. And a piece about change that keeps changing. The working process created a finished work, but also the beginning of the performing process in which they have to balance, and wave and risk their way around Tasmania, ever updating their intentions within the piece and bringing it into their own time, which, certainly there is no time quite like.

Karen Pearlman

No Time Like the Present *is a dance and design collaboration by Ruth Hadlow, Wendy McPhee, and Cate O'Brien currently touring Tasmania. Karen Pearlman is co-artistic director of Tasdance*

At the cusp of appearance and disappearance

David Williams collages the thoughts of Jude Walton and Mark Minchinton on Walton's *Dance:Text:Film* for Greenmill

In 1994, Jude Walton was invited to develop work as an artist-in-residence at the Queen's College, University of Melbourne, in the neo-Gothic Tower Studio. In turn, she invited choreographers Sandra Parker and Trevor Patrick, writers Jackie Dunn and Mark Minchinton and cinematographer Brendan Lavelle to work with her around the broad thematic constellation of knowing and bodies. Material generated from that time and space is now being reworked for a week of performances in July, in a very different space: the George Ballroom in St. Kilda, a weathered Neo-Baroque dance hall ghosted by its pasts and possible futures.

Dance:Text:Film emerges from questions that seek to recognise epistemological 'gaps', spaces in-between self and other, presence and absence, remembering and forgetting. These spaces in-between are the sites of desire and its corollary, fiction. What follows is a collage of fragments by Jude Walton and Mark Minchinton, written during the development process.

★★★

Desire comes as a realisation, a perception, as it were as the result of a mental operation which has now entered into the system of desire. The erotic, one might say, is the intelligence of the body. It is the body become sentient and self-aware by way of the other. Peter Brooks, *Body Work*

★★★

I said, "Who's missing? Someone's missing". You said, "There's always someone missing".

Is it only in absence that we know another? Given that incorporation is both act and condition of experience, how do we know intimately through the 'body' through the 'mind'? The knowing that stems from incorporation is acquired through accretion, translation, accumulation of 'fact', evidence observed, experienced, collated, sifted...but in the end what do we know? And what is this inherently insatiable desire to know another—to 'hold their mind in your hand'? These are some of the questions.

When we speak we communicate more than we can know. But more important is what we seek to omit, to withhold. What are these selves that could have been, and in withholding them what do we gain and lose?

I feel we continually rebuild our reality to suit our wishes and desires. As Leif Finkel says in an article on the construction of perception, "our cortex makes up little stories about the world, and softly hums them to us to keep us from getting scared at night".

The reflection of the fields in the glass of the train window remind me of another time. A time known only in motion. The sense of going forward to another place, another me, and I invent my life, what it will become.

This project brings together the differing languages of dance, text and film to investigate how knowledge is generated and conveyed from body to body, from soul to soul. I think it creates an unstable patchwork, a shadowy narrative of desire between the performers, a world at the cusp of appearance and disappearance. At various times information is accumulated, concealed, transformed or deleted to reveal relationships that remain forever potential and therefore, in a way, forever unknown.

What is the place of absence? Where is it we are when we're not (t)here? Who do we become when we are not present? And should a fireman come to us, wearing helmet and boots, would we know how to respond? Would we go with him, accept the state of emergency, or sit dumbfounded and questioning, wondering if we had heard the sirens, and if not, questioning their absence? What is a fireman? And why do fires need to be put out?

The structure of the work is conversational, nomadic, looping back on itself and making tangential excursions. It exists as a collection of small, individual moments which hopefully, as Walter Benjamin suggested, act as "*crystals* from which can be read or inferred the shape of the total event". Audiences are invited to participate in an unravelling and understanding of the circumstances, "to grasp the epoch from the small symptoms of the surface", as Horkheimer has said. To make their own fictions of what really happens.

At sunset, in those moments of fading, when I try to see what I think should be there, where have you gone? And at sunrise when the light slowly reveals you, why don't I feel surprised?

Jude Walton's Dance:Text:Film *will be performed by Sandra Parker, Trevor Patrick, Jackie Dunn, Mark Minchinton and Jude Walton at the George Ballroom, Fitzroy Street, St. Kilda, 16-21 July, as part of the Green Mill Dance Project 1996. For booking information, call the CUB Malthouse, Melbourne on 03 9685 5111*

Dancing western in the north west

Stefano Tele talks about teaching in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions

In 1995 Stefano Tele spent five weeks as a teacher in the Ausdance Outreach *program which travelled to the north-west of Australia. He was subsequently asked back to take up week-long residencies at Woodstock (a remote community near Kalumburu) in November 1995 and August 1996. Stefano explains to Tony Osborne how he came to be a dancing success with young people not normally exposed to Western performance dance forms.*

Fieldworks, *Rites of Passage* photo: Ashley de Prazer

TO Ausdance were excited that you'd been invited back after the initial Outreach *program because someone in the remote communities—not necessarily involved in the arts—had recognised the value and the benefits of the workshops you gave as a potential catalyst for transformation for some of their people.*

ST I only worked with kids and they varied from pre-primary through year seven to high-school. Being there for a whole week as opposed to doing a one-off workshop was important.

TO How do you think your teaching practice and your performance work inform each other?

ST You have to be able to impart the information in a way that is not too esoteric. For instance, if I'm doing a one-off class, if I don't know the students and I'm not sure how they're going to take the material, I'll use my warm-up to gauge what step to take next. I found that the kids in remote communities were so shy at first that I had to coax them to do things. They like to see what you can do first. So I improvised a little show with a talking drum. Once they saw me turning drum rhythms into movement the little kids started copying me. Then the older kids followed as the enthusiasm infected the group. It taught me an invaluable lesson in how to change my teaching style and not allow myself to be too limited by a rigid program. I can use that experience to change the direction of a workshop if I need to.

TO Do you regard yourself as predominantly a teacher or as a performer?

ST I would say a performer. I studied performance at the Victorian College of the Arts and my teaching skills were acquired at Two Dance Plus, a West Australian dance-in-education company. Since I left Two Dance Plus teaching has provided employment between performances.

TO I've noticed a real ease in the way you move in performance as well as the comedic aspect you bring to your work—a strong theatrical element. You seem very comfortable with a sense of the ridiculous and with satirical material such as your collaboration with Jon Burtt during Dancers Are Space Eaters *at PICA and* In the Blue Room *last year.*

ST Sometimes people take themselves too seriously. An anatomy teacher once told me that its good to twitch...as an antidote to the highly technical training I was receiving at the time. She saw dance, especially classical, as a form that was detrimental to the body and I believe that there's got to be a balance.

TO Do you think your ethnic background was an element in the connection you made with the kids up north—not another white-fella coming in to show them how its all done?

ST One foot in the door, so to speak. I was born in Western Samoa and my parents emigrated to New Zealand when I was about three. I came to Australia in 1985.

TO How did dance come to figure in your life?

ST Basically to curb my hyperactivity. But in my culture everybody dances and in a lot of ceremonies as well. If a visiting group comes to the community, then a performance will be staged and the men will be part of it. When my family realised I was doing white-man's dancing, such as classical and modern, they were really surprised. My cousins have only had a tiny exposure to white-man's dance.

TO Does white-man's dance appear to be a career rather than something that you do culturally? Was that the significance of their surprise?

ST They couldn't understand why I would want to do that. If I had become an actor it would have been quite different. Exposure to TV ensures that they would be quite familiar with what actors do, but not so with dancers.

TO What was the importance of the dance you took to the remote north-west as opposed to the dance people there experience as part of their community activities?

ST What I took to those communities was my 'zest for life', trying to impart in different ways that the dance I do is very important to me. I taught some of the kids to play the talking drum or played footy or basketball with them as the only way of connecting them with the group. Rather than just doing the job, I interacted with them and became a small part of the community as well as being their teacher.

TO Do you think it was important for them that you are a 'success' in the white-man's world through dance?

ST Because there is no role model here for Aboriginal kids, like the Bangarra Dance Company, I think it's important for them to see that there are fields other than sport.

100 Years of Cruelty

Nicholas Tsoutas announces an international conference on Artaud at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, September 13-15

Antonin Artaud was born one hundred years ago. Nicholas Tsoutas has formed a significant and rare coalition of forces to present a three day event—conference, films, performance—to celebrate Artaud.

Tsoutas' intentions are clear, *100 Years of Cruelty* is being presented "not as a homage, not as a boring historical evaluation, but a look at the impact Artaud's ideas and his philosophy have had on a number of different media and disciplines".

Although the idea for the event came from Tsoutas, an experienced performance director, and Edward Scheer of the Drama Department at the University of Newcastle, the focus is not on theatre. Tsoutas hasn't approached the theatre community, feeling that "in Australian theatre we deal with only little bits of Artaud. He's a lot more problematic than imagined." The 'influential' Peter Brook flirtation with Artaud in his realisation of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* was short-lived.

Instead, Mike Parr has been invited to create a three day performance, the duration of the conference, and Tsoutas himself will perform during the conference.

However, Tsoutas is quick to point out that, "*100 Years of Cruelty* is not an attempt to locate Artaud in an Australian context". This is an international event, like conferences will be taking place at MOMA in New York and the ICA in London.

The organising committee (Tsoutas, Scheer, Alan Cholodenko and Jane Goodall, who has written a book on Artaud) "wanted a lateral approach, looking at electricity, at psychology, at whatever. A surprising number of people in postmodern writing have referred to him. The challenge of the conference is to think through the problems posed by Artaud, to encourage intellectual ferment".

One of those writers is Jacques Derrida, much in demand at Artaud gatherings in this centenary year. Unable to come to Australia, Derrida has nonetheless agreed to a video hookup to be hosted by another international guest, writer Samuel Weber, at the Clancy Auditorium at the University of New South Wales. The bulk of the conference is being held at the Powerhouse Museum, but for the expected turnout for Derrida, Tsoutas needed a 1000 seat theatre, the Clancy.

The rest of the great names—Sylvère Lotringer, Julia Kristeva, Allen J. Weiss, Stephen Barber, Samuel Weber—and the excellent line-up of Australian thinkers—Lisbeth During, Fran Dyson, Leon Marvell, Patrick Fuery, Bill Shaffer, Ross Harley, Jane Goodall, Alan Cholodenko, Clare O'Farrell, Lesley Stern—will appear in the flesh to worry at the unfolding legacy of Artaud.

Artspace, 100 Years of Cruelty, *The Powerhouse Museum and Clancy Auditorium, September 13-15. See advertisement p 5. Enquiries 02 368 1899*

Shorts

• *from page 40*

Contemporary museology has received a boost with a $15,000 grant from the Australia Council for the writing and publication of a monograph on the Ramingining community in Arnhem Land. **The Native Born:Objects and representations from Ramingining, Arnhem Land** provides a detailed guide to contemporary Aboriginal art and its symbolic systems as unique to Ramingining. The book is edited by Djon Mundine (former Art Adviser at Ramingining and now MCA Senior Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Manager) and includes contributions from anthropologist John Rudder and MCA curator Bernice Murphy. **The Native Born** exhibition featuring the work of over 60 artists including **Jimmy Wululu**, **Tony Danyula** and **David Malangi** runs till August 18 at the **Museum of Contemporary Art** in Sydney.

The **Situations Vacant Project** focuses on the role of studio collectives and artist associations operating in the Perth city area from the1960s to the present. The project incorporates a museum display, a book and a group of contemporary artworks Information: Chris Fitzallen or Lisa Wolfgramm on 09-328.3000 or write to The Verge Gallery at 310 William Street Northbridge WA 6003.

The recipients of the1996 **Australia Council Hybrid Arts Fellowships** ($20,000 each) are Sydney-based composer and sound artist **Ion Pearce** who received the ABC Radio Fellowship and film-maker **Antonia Bruns** from Melbourne who received the RMIT Fellowship. Ion Pearce will create a radiophonic composition exploring concepts of discontinuity in art and life. The project involves an ongoing dialogue with choreographer **Helen Clarke-Lapin** and writer **Sabrina Achilles** as well as a workshop in Bandung, Indonesia with composer **Harry Roesli**. Antonia Bruns will develop an installation set in the future where three imaginary artists are using what are now emerging materials and technologies. "Beatrice" is a CD ROM artist interested in the construction of story forms in four dimensional space; "Helen" is comparing light in various city sites and a choreography of transitional zones for a 15 minute video; "Giles" is a sculptor concerned with the transition to a global subculture and the subsequent development of a new aesthetics, language and set of social relations. A conversation between the artists via the internet will form part of his studio. The Fellowship will allow Antonia to access the facilities of the University such as the CAD and 3D Studio and allow her to collaborate with designers, writers and artists.

Virtual Cultures at **Artspace**, a conference on new spaces for writing and creativity with Sabrina Achilles, Paula Amad, Patrick Crogan, Chris Chesher, Justine Ettler, Dean Kiley, Darren Tofts convened by McKenzie Wark Information: Artspace, 02 368 1899

Playworks (National Women Writers Workshop) presents **The Interrupted Narrative,** a workshop with film-maker and writer **Ross Gibson** and writer for theatre and film **Beatrix Christian**. How does technology mediate narrative? How can ideas of narrative expand in this context? An opportunity for performance and film writers to engage with these artists in practical exercises. Information 02 262 3174

The Community Arts Network SA now provides nationally accredited training for artists interested in working in community settings or managing community arts projects. Information: Kylie Grimshaw 08 232 4343

Tanya Ellis in Rem Theatre's *Buralga—An Aboriginal Dreamtime Tale*

REM Theatre is an ensemble of innovative artists who create music theatre narratives for young audiences. A short season of school and evening performances of REM's *Buralga* featuring dancer Tanya Ellis opens at Parramatta Riverside Theatre June18.

Shorts

EAR emphasises an extreme diversity and constant change—innovative sound performances and installations, slide works, occasional film or video screenings and spoken word are all featured. The EAR collective comprises **Brendan Palmer** and **Garry Bradbury** (the duo behind the first two successful years of ELECTRONIC @ Bentley and Goodbar) **Suzanne Styche** and **Jasmine Guffond** (instigators of Theatre of Sonics) EAR is not a dance club, not a rock venue: the environment is carefully constructed as a comfortable and neutral listening space. Two rooms (150 capacity) with plush seating and a polished wooden floor provide the optimal atmosphere for absorbing new creative emissions. Every sense a human being has is taken into consideration by EAR. Every Thursday at the **Bentley Hotel** Cnr. Campbell & Crown Street, Surry Hills 9 pm. Information: Suzanne Styche 02 9569 7308 or Brendan Palmer 02 9310 3609 or email:nadnerb@sysx.apana.org.au

http://sysx.apana.org.au/soundsite/
SoundSite is the world's first sound-specific website exclusively for critical writings in sound and sound art including poetics, acoustics, psycho acoustics, sensory experience, hearing vs listening, aurality and corporeality, space and architecture, sound geographies, philosophies of sound, post-musics, film, video and tv soundtrack; sound art; sound and noise; virtual systems; human computer interface; communication and technological systems; low fidelity sound; radio and radiophonic art; performance; recording composition; aesthetics; art. SoundSite is interested in receiving contributions from writers and artists. They are interested in critical and cultural theory in essay form and in receiving proposals for regular columns, artists' descriptions of sound works they have recently exhibited or broadcast and critical analysis of such works. Artists are also invited to propose works for the world wide web for exhibition.Information: email: soundsite@sysx.apana.org.au

Tasdance's cross-media invasion into the architecture of the ordinary, **New Life on the Second Floor** sounds like the only thing that would drag me out of my house on a wintry Tasmanian evening. The result of a collaboration between dancer-directors Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen and visual artist Simeon Nelson, the work takes on the everyday and the house in particular featuring designs and devices that instigate dance action. Furniture takes on new forms and walls, roofs and floors become springboards against which dance is thrown, bounced, hung or spun. Launceston in July, Hobart in August. Information: 003 31 6644

Relations is a new dance work inspired by the poetry of **A K Ramanujan** and **Kamala Das**, the latter an outspoken critic within India of marriage and ritual practices. Devised by **Padma Menon** for the Canberra based **Kailash Dance Company** the work opens at Sydney's Performance Space June 12 and tours Adelaide in August then India for three weeks in October as part of the New Horizons program sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

What is culture shock and who is shocked? Among the umbrella events at this year's Greenmill Festival, Darwin's **Tracks Dance Collective** present two works that explore how living in the culturally rich and dramatic Northern Territory can irrevocably change and enrich people's lives. The two works **Silent Thought** and **Sacred Space** will be performed at Dancehouse July 3-6 @ 8pm Information: 03 9347 2860

Rosalind Crisp has set up a new studio in Newtown to research,make and show new dance performance. She is running classes three days each week and the studio measuring 170 square metres is available for hire. Information 02 519 3430

Deborah Hay returns to Australia in September to conduct a workshop in performance meditation practice entitled **Performing Statelessness** followed by a ten-day Choreographic Workshop during which a performance will be developed. Since 1976 Deborah Hay has pursued a radical revisioning of the teaching of dance. She does not warm up, she does not rehearse. She is not interested in mastery. She is interested in process. She calls this a performance meditation practice. Her tools re-route the performer away from fixity or self-absorption in movement and ideas about what dancing looks like. Information Dancehouse Ph 03 9347 2860 Fax 03 9347 9381

Sydney's **Asian Theatre Festival** at Sydney's **Belvoir Street Theatre** in August-September actually contains a mixture of Asian and Asian-Australian theatre. This year's program features new short works in a season entitled **Open House**; traditional, contemporary and cross-cultural fusion in the Festival of Asian Music and Dance including **Ashok Roy** and **Riley Lee**; **The Winds of God** a play about two former 'kamikaze' pilots turned comedians trying to make it in the world of entertainment in Tokyo by contemporary Japanese playwright **Yasayuki Imai**; **Burying Mother** a performance exploring the dark side of mother-daughter relations by Mémé Thorne which premiered impressively in progress at the 1995 Contemporary Performance Week; **Conversations with Charlie**, a dialogue in verse and movement between Charlie Chaplin (**Stephen Champion**) and Vietnamese-Australian artist **Ta Duy Binh**; an intermedia performance by **Yuji Sone** and a reading of **The Request for Spring**, a new play by Vietnamese playwright **Le Quy Duong**. The Festival will also include post-performance discussions, forums and workshops. Information: Cheryle Yin-Lo 02 698 3344

After their hit with the many-headed Oedipus ("100 catharses" RT10) **PACT Theatre** now applies the shot in the eyeball to the first great work of the 20th Century, Buchner's **Woyzeck**. Ryan and PACT youth will take to this classic, open-ended work with a panoply of isms, movements and aesthetics— for starters, Symbolism, Romanticism, Neo-Classicism, Weimar Germany, Bauhaus—"And all", says Chris Ryan "without ever relinquishing the knife-edge gestus of each scene of this bastard of a tragedy". June 7-29 Information: 02 550 2744

Brisbane's **La Boite** is calling for ideas from local and regional artworkers for the1996 **Shock of the New** Festival. They're interested in performance and installation works that "spill over the walls which threaten to contain them... site specific works that attempt to frame the un-framable". Information Jean-Marc Russ on 07 3369.1622 and quick—applications close June 7.

More non-stop live art at **Open Season**, **The Performance Space**'s annual festival of performance, video, film and visual art from independent artists and performers runs from **June 24 to July 14**. Week one in association with **Metro TV** will include a series of video and performance workshops aimed at developing video skills in the documenting of performance works. Weeks two and three in association with **Radio 2SER FM** features eight nights of performance culminating in the annual party on Saturday July 13. Information: Julianne Pierce 02 698 7235

Adelaide's **Soundstream Contemporary Music Ensemble** is committed to presenting contemporary Australian and international composers through the fusion of live performance with visual technology, amplified piano, digital effects and computer music systems. In Soundstream's *New Music for Piano and Electronics*, pianist **Gabriella Smart** and Butoh dancer **Yumi Umiumare** perform works by Australian composers **Ros Bandt**, **Stephen Whittington**, **Linda Ceff**, **Bridget Burke**, **Roger Alsop** plus **Allen Strange** (USA) and **Katherine Norman** (UK). Opening at Adelaide's Flinders Street School of Music on June 1, playing La Trobe University June 5 and Artspace, Sydney June 14 Information: Claire Harris 08 364 5930

AustraLYSIS' June-July program opens June 4 with the Kitchen Sync, multi-media sound art by some young artists (**Colin Craven-Sands**, **Thomas van Koeverden**, **Shayne Leslie**, **Lulu Ong**, **Brooke Shelley**, **Gregg Telian** and **Jessica Wells**) co-ordinated by **Martin Wesley-Smith**; June 6 program of electroacoustics in cyber sound and imaging features recent works from AustraLYSIS, **Natasha Barrett**, **Roger Dean**, **Jon Drummond**, **Martin Wesley-Smith** and a classic of **Luciano Berio**. Week 2 (July 16-20) features sound and computer-interactive text performances by **Hazel Smith** and **Roger Dean**; computer-interactive improvisation with the AustraLYSIS Electroband and Sound in Process by **Jon Drummond**, **Ian Shanahan** and **Greg White**. The Performance Space. Information: 02 523 2732

The **ABC Classic FM Computer Composition Award** is open to Australian composers under 35 currently working with music software. The winner to be announced in November will receive a computer and music software package to the value of $12000 as well as a national broadcast of the winning composition. Information: John Crawford at New Music Australia 06 275 4606

The Australian Art Orchestra's1996 subscription season opened at the CUB Malthouse in May with Night Music Suite (**Schauble/Grabowsky**), The Room That Knew Nothing (**Stuart Campbell**), Constans (**Mary Finsterer)** and Concerto for Piano Accordingly (**Tony Gorman**). The program for the 29 September concert includes Journey Into (a series of small group events linked by ensemble sections composed by Paul Grabowsky) and Some Minutes of Alchemy (Fragmentation, Superimposition, Elasticity devised by THAT: **Dur'éDara**, **David Tolley** and **Ren Walters**. Information: Ph 03 9685 5111 Fax 03 9685 5112

Michele Morgan

Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA) presents **3 x 3 @ 3** a mini-fest of contemporary trio music featuring **Australian Creole** (guitars, tabla, percussion and keyboards), Andrew Robson Trio (alto saxophone, bass and drums) and **Michele Morgan's Chelate Trio** with Michelle Morgan on vocals, Steve Elphick on bass and Simon Barker on drums. This is the first of these SIMA performances at the fully licensed Lyric above Baraza,93 Riley Street Surry Hills 3-11 pm Sunday June 30.

Throughout May and June, the 60 voiced **Melbourne Gay and Lesbian Chorus** will be recording a selection of their most popular work for the planned launch of their first CD, **Kaleidoscope** to coincide with a concert on Saturday August 17 at the Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Centre, Southbank Melbourne. Information: Philip Platon Ph/Fx 03 9528 1303

White Hysteria at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia features the work of 30 Australian artists in the two larger galleries while 36 A4 works/texts from Australia, UK, USA are displayed in duplicate in the central gallery in a space resembling a group therapy room. The show includes works by artists, doctors, writers, curators, film-makers, cyber-feminists, psychologists and bureaucrats who were all invited to respond to the idea of 'white hysteria' in any manner; eg a letter, a questionnaire, a confession, a prophecy, a speech, a story, a report. Curator **Suzanne Treister** says "the show aims to extend our understanding of the forms and layers of meaning associated with 'hysteria' as well as functioning as a kind of anthropological investigation into the obsessions of 'white' practitioners".

Sport

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus

The sporting world is about to be transformed by the advent of a new breed of sport star: the supermodel. The recent Australian visit by Linda Evangelista, promoting her treadmill, has set the pace. It is now only a matter of time before the pantheon of sport, the Olympic Games, welcomes supermodels of the world into its great competition.

Supermodels have all the advantages: low fat ratios, high fitness levels. Most importantly, the cameras love them and they pull endorsements. All we need is a few new Olympic events to cater for their unique abilities. The treadmill event would be a crowd favourite, with Linda the early gold medal hope. An aerobic workout tournament would start with our own Elle one of the frontrunners. Claudia and Naomi could go for gold in special catwalk events, with built-in obstacles to increase the degree of difficulty.

The other supermodels could all be put to good use. The skinniest ones could serve useful functions in track and field. Supermodel-hurling could replace the javelin; put three supermodels together and you have the high-jump apparatus. There is no limit to this fabulous new human resource. Authorities should work now to make Sydney 2000 the Supermodel Olympics.

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Is it just me or has this sports psychology stuff gone completely over the fence? As Greg Norman failed to follow through in the big US Open that could have made him a legend instead of just a contender, I found it nigh impossible to weed out any actual coverage of the state of play from the hours of probing commentary on the state of his mind. "What do you think might be going through the Shark's mind now as he walks away from that disastrous chip shot, Des?" And what about all that rummaging around in the psyche of Keiran Perkins as he failed to make time in the Olympic selections! "We had high hopes for Keiran but he's let us down badly here. What could he be thinking?" "I can't explain it," shivers Perkins, "I'm just hoping it's something medical." What about the Performance? Don't these sports commentators know that Greg is a method man whose psychology is twitching in every muscle and Keiran is the moody von Sydow type, reedy but deep. Whereas I, like Olivier, work from the outside in. I have performed many a bad putt and never stopped for a moment to think about whether my *shadow* was in ascendancy. It was always my wrist that let me down.

Bette Mifsud

Australian Centre for Photography June 7-29 features two photographic installations. In **Landmarks Watermarks**, **Bette Mifsud** uses family photographs and contemporary slide and photo images to explore photography's role in a migrant transition between cultures. In **Anne Ferran**'s installation **Where Are You Now?** colour slide images are projected against objects that are old, discarded, awkward, even forlorn creating a shadow theatre of the imaginative and metaphorical as well as the substantial."The enclosed space of the gallery, the objects in it, the light that falls over them, the shadows which they cast - are all parts of the pre-history of photography itself." **ACP Gallery** 257 Oxford Street, Paddington NSW

In **COPYsan** Adelaide and Melbourne artists Hans Kreiner, Niki Vouis, Christos Linou, Leigh Corrigan & Alex Senior share their mutual obsession with the possibilities of counterfeits & colour photocopies. At **Red Shed Gallery** 255 Angas Street Adelaide June 7-30.

Sweet Foray is a gallery established by Jenny Edgar and Dragan Kalemusic, two artists aiming to provide a space for contemporary art in the Blue Mountains of NSW by providing a venue for both experienced and emerging artists. Exhibitions turn over every four weeks. Currently showing are paintings by Patrick Everingham. Sweet Foray is at Suite 5a, 118 Main Street Katoomba and open Thursday to Sunday 11-5. Information 047 824 797

Bridal chamber tribal artworks from the remote and ancient jungle communities of the Bihar region of India are on show until June 30 at **Casula Powerhouse** prior to a tour. The exhibition, **Khovar Dreamings** features 70 works by Khovar women artists on exhibition for the first time outside their tribal settings. The exhibition is drawn from an innovative project establishing a Women Artists Collective to support tribal communities now threatened by the encroachment of western technology and heavy industry. The Khovar tradition of painting has developed over 30,000 years and makes use of x-ray, ochres, muds and natural dyes. In July the exhibition will move to **Fremantle Arts Centre** followed by **Footscray Community Arts Centre** and to the **Moree Plains Gallery** in regional NSW.

• *continued page 39*