

[illegible]

the national arts February–March 1998
<http://www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/>

A collage of nine images from the 1970s, featuring various artists and bands, with the word "1970s" written vertically in large, stylized letters. The images include: a group of men (The Beatles), a person in a yellow outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground), and a person in a red outfit (The Velvet Underground).

What's missing from *RealTime* 23? You'll find LOUD, the national youth media festival, the 1998 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, the Festival of Perth and the Adelaide Festival (interviews with Deborah Warner and Mark Amerika on pages 7 and 20) but you won't see anything about the Sydney Festival, except for Eleanor Brickhill's response to Tharp! (page 36). Firstly, we have to admit to not being impressed by Leo Schofield's programming, the majority of it looking pretty much like the stuff that shows up year round in Sydney. Secondly, as with his Melbourne Festivals (and in direct contrast to the Adelaide and Perth Festivals), Schofield is no great supporter of Australian talent, especially where it is innovative. Thirdly, and this tallies with the last point, Schofield persistently aggrandizes his own festival by focussing on box office income (as morally responsible) and belittling other festivals, declaring that his festival "is not a playpen for experimentation". Fourthly, we weren't invited. Well, we did receive four double passes apparently picked out of a hat. Enquiring about why, for the first time in *RealTime*'s four years, we'd been left off the list, I was told by a festival staff member that the festival had decided not to extend passes to street papers but if we wanted any to make up a wish list and fax it in or call for daily leftovers, they'd see what they could do. Meanwhile, the press had a good time with Schofield who was allocated more page space than for any Sydney festival I can remember. David Marr was the *Sydney Morning Herald* festival correspondent and occasionally let fly about Schofield's box office imperative. A final full page report card (I kid you not) listed box office figures (where available) and critical responses. Despite some very tough reviews for major festival acts—Peter Hall's *An Ideal Husband*, Joaquin Cortez, and Tharp!—the overall tone was, in the end, nonetheless approving. In fact, approving from the very beginning. Who wrote this *SMH* editorial on January 3? "A problem with festivals everywhere is that they can be caught up in overseriousness and, often, with avant garde pretentiousness. Festival directors, like second-rate lecturers, are inclined to believe that the quality of their festival is measured by its capacity to bore audiences." *The Australian*, posted glowing commentaries from Bryce Hallett despite a deliciously barbed overview of the festival from theatre critic John MacCallum. We didn't see Schofield's festival, so we're not going to judge it.

RealTime at the 1998 Adelaide Festival

After the success of its UK engagement at LIFT 97 (London International Festival of Theatre), *RealTime* returns to the Adelaide Festival, where in 1996 our festival live-in editions were initiated. This time, as with LIFT, we're part of the official program. Every four days of the Adelaide Festival will see the printing and distribution of 2000 copies of a special edition of *RealTime* responding to the festival as it unfolds. Short responses, reviews, interviews and overviews will convey the feel of the festival and the pleasures and tensions of provocative productions and debate. The four editions of *RealTime* will be distributed to festival venues, city cafes, bookshops and galleries throughout the city and will be found on-line at <http://www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/>

Adelaide Festival Souvenir Program

Commissioned by the Adelaide Festival, *RealTime* editors Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter, with assistant editor Kirsten Krauth, have selected an international collection of articles, interviews and artist statements for the festival's souvenir program. The collection is about the ideas and forces that drive artists, the processes of creation, the role of language in performance, the interplay of tradition and the new, and, true to a festival theme, the dialogue between the sacred and the profane. It's a book of ideas and artists rather than a conventional introduction to festival productions and we hope it will add to the festival experience.

NSW moveable ARTS

The NSW Ministry for the Arts has collaborated with *RealTime* to produce a liftout detailing the work and achievements of NSW artists and companies appearing at the Australia Council's 1998 Performing Arts Market and the 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival. The liftout also offers a selection of other NSW artists and companies whose work is available for touring. An impressive 60 entries reveals a high percentage of work in contemporary performance and, in all forms, considerable experience in national and international touring.

Farewell and welcome

After two eventful years, goodbye to David Varga, *RealTime*'s first assistant editor. Thanks, David, for the energy, the dedication, the html skills and the goodwill. For whatever's next, best wishes to you from all of us who've enjoyed working with you. Welcome to Kirsten Krauth, our new assistant editor who initiates her *RealTime* venture with an incisive and tasty report on the progress of LOUD. We hope you enjoy your stay.

cover image: NSW performing artists and companies

(left to right)
row 1: Umbilical Brothers, De Quincey/Lynch, Company B Belvoir Street, Bell Shakespeare Company, Flying Fruitfly Circus
row 2: Deborah Cheetham, Theatre Physical, Sidetrack Performance Group, Etcetera, CLUB bENT (The Performance Space)
row 3: Sydney Theatre Company, Matthew Doyle and Colin Offord, Leah Purcell, Bangarra Dance Company, Gravity Feed
row 4: The catholics, Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre, opera Project, Chrome, Griffin Theatre Company
row 5: Theatre of Image, The Partyline, Stalker, Legs on the Wall, One Extra Dance Company
cover design by Paul Saint

3-7	Festivals
8-9	Arts politics
10-13	Performance
14	Writing
15-26	OnScreen
27-34	Visual arts
34-37	Dance
38-40	Music

Sport: Vivienne Inch and Jack Rufus are on annual leave

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OnScreen Co-ordinating Editors	Annemarie Jonson, Alessio Cavallaro
Editorial Team	NSW Annemarie Jonson, Jacqueline Millner, Virginia Baxter, John Potts, Eleanor Brickhill, Keith Gallasch, Boris Kelly, Gretchen Miller VIC Anna Dzenis, Suzanne Spinner, Rachel Kent, Zsuzsanna Soboslay, Darren Tofts, Richard Murphet (Advisory Editor) WA Sarah Miller, Tony Osborne, Barbara Bolt, Ned Rossiter SA Linda Marie Walker, John McConnachie, Vicky Sowry QLD Maryanne Lynch, Peter Anderson, Trish Fitzsimons ACT Julia Postle TAS Diana Klaosen
Assistant Editor	David Varga, Kirsten Krauth 02 9283 2723
Advertising	Sari Järvenpää tel/fax 02 9313 6164
Design/Production	Paul Saint
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Disposable youth culture?

Kirsten Krauth gets the munchies and tucks into LOUD, so far

Plates of hors d'oeuvres coming around at a hot summer's party: the offerings look scrumptious, little morsels of flesh, heaps of variety, both everyday and tantalising, but not substantial enough to fill your gut. A training ground for the senses...but where's the main course?

The LOUD rules state that you must be between the ages of 12 and 25.

Dry crackers with Kraft cheese and sweaty salami. Past use-by date.

Babes on Boards. Road movie with all the elements. Literal filmmaking. Lots of maps. Hurdles. Virgin surfer. Car breaks down. More talk about surfing than battling the waves. Anticlimax. Ineligible according to original LOUD rules. Director Adrian Holmes over 25.

Windows of Opportunity. Window washers. Psyching out customers. Well constructed dynamic between good and bad tactics. The scum of society offending the materially conscious. Ineligible. Director Tim Mummery over 25.

The Pursuit of Happiness. The nitty gritty of working lives for young Australians. Amway tactics. Races, with carpet burns, for a \$50 note. Danny, the manager, affectionately calling his troops "you fuck". The sales drive and descent into madness. Sexist tactics in marketing: how to make them work for you. So these are the employment prospects for Australian youth: be a window washer or a slave to market forces—no wonder we have such a high suicide rate. Ineligible. Director Tim Mummery again.

Festivals and going off... Vox pops with festival goers. No intimacy—where's *Front Up?* More a promo for the 'Gurge. Us/them mentality with shots of crowd from behind barriers. Ferals and nonconformists ignored. Get the camera in the mosh pit. Ineligible. Directors Caroline Waters and Matthew Rooke over 25.

The LOUD programming (especially on TV) shows the media giants are just not willing to risk putting cameras into the hands of under-26-year olds. Channels 9 and 7—the ratings winners—refused altogether, ABC and SBS were generous with screentime but often in shows that already target the youth market like *Recovery* and *Eat Carpet*. Were the submissions by younger filmmakers too challenging? Too raw? Weren't they meant to be? After initially offering funding to doco and film makers 25 years and under, LOUD changed the age limit to 30 (or even older). Most of the documentaries featured a "youth perspective" but weren't made by young directors. Doesn't this defeat the purpose? With LOUD's budget and three years of planning, there was time enough to develop young people's scripts to make them workable.

Carpaccio. Raw beef fillet, sliced extremely thinly with olive oil, lemon and parmesan cheese. Exotic, sharp and easily digested.

Tangerine Dreams. Vital, pseudo-futuristic bargirl meets deadpan dude with the line of the decade: "I'm a writer—job applications mainly". Tania Lacy and Ben Mendelsohn can make self-obsession sexy and this is a witty exploration of twentyish identity, the glamour of grot and dislocation. As they confront death and madness watching their reflections toss and churn at the laundromat, they are bleached, like the cinematography, into how we like to see ourselves, rather than how we really are. Director Keri Light.

The intention of LOUD, EP Brandon Saul says, is to "file down the distinction between popular culture and high arts". Yeah, but young people already see films, watch videos, listen to music and surf websites that blend high/pop culture; those distinctions aren't significant any more. "Works will be completely uncensored". Yeah, but publishing 'virtually everything



A.J. Hightower, *Angel* from *Loudspeaker*

we get', unedited and uncensored, while sounding radical and egalitarian, in reality frustrates both the reader and contributor. Uncensored, especially in LOUD's online *noise!* magazine means unedited (and sometimes, I suspect, unread), and this does not necessarily help young writers who want feedback, comments and criticism of their work as well as the chance to get published. Isn't the view 'let's just publish/screen everything, your work is great because you're young' patronising. Just because current cultural commentators can't handle criticism doesn't mean this mentality trickles down. Young artists deserve better, and are tougher, than that. What are they left with when LOUD is finished...a published piece of writing, yes, but in exactly the same form as before.

The LOUD website is where the festival has been most successful. The sophistication of the design, the range of websites which work, both technically and aesthetically, reveal how much young people are in control here. In the current edition of *noise!* there is an interview by Jane Curtis—"Information wants to be free"—with Amber Webster, creator of *Cliptart*, a clip art website/e-works project which features a collection of images for people to share. Her motivation for creation: "Marginalised people, like young people, women...are

people whose bodies don't tend to get represented by dominant culture accurately. We really need a source of images that are accurate...and inspiring".

Mezze, a selection of hummus, tarama, dolmades, grilled cheese and kebabs. Generous, varied and good for your heart.

simply lifeless. Click on the b&w grl to enter a room of her own. Online documentation of life in Brisbane and Darwin. Intimate and serene, the banal makes the personal universal. Realtime streaming video gives home-movie realism. We are introduced through video, photos, bios to women so real you can almost taste them along with the cheesecake recipes they provide: "...our culture informs our everyday activity our everyday activity informs our culture." We get to know them as much by how they design their space as what's in it: Gabrielle's favourite room is the toilet and she displays her Year 7 photos, trophies and certificates as badges of honour or armour. Kristl's bedroom is an intimate space where we can lounge with family pics, meticulously drawn furniture, favourite books and a dream catcher. You can brush your teeth with Liann, Verena, Michelle, Gabrielle, Hanna, Kristl, Jane and Holly at www.loud.net.au/works/

The Wall. Views from the inside. Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre jolts you



Shakira Robinson, finalist in *black+white*'s national photography competition, *Louder than words*

into a different awareness of personal space and (lack of) freedom. "The wall and beyond...but not locked in"—is the view from their window that much different from mine? Graffiti art introductions to men between 15 and 18, serving custodial sentences and defying stereotypes. The Koori Place with a gallery of indigenous art works. This is LOUD space well utilised.

It's hard to know to what extent LOUD has made the media accessible to all young people. Disposable art for disposable incomes? *The book of LOUD*, on sale in newsagents for \$7.95; the Disposable Art competition collection, \$9.95; *Loudspeaker*, attached to *Juice* magazine, \$4.95. How many disadvantaged young people have access to a computer and modem? With the festival taking place in the Christmas hols, computer access for young people who can't get on the internet elsewhere is denied. Many LOUD projects involve prizemoney and competitions. Is this a guarantee to get entrants or the way to get sponsors' names banded around a lot. You have to wonder how much of the original budget has gone on advertising. *The book of LOUD* is crammed with enticements to buy products (it's ok because we've got the LOUD logo, you can trust us) that are often a bad deal.

Fairy bread, sausage rolls, and Burger Rings. Cheap, accessible and bound to please almost everyone.

Like the internet, zine production seems less constrained by process and politics than other media. *New Pollution* is an online and paper anthology of Australian zines, giving insight into the tastes and creative talents of young Australians, unadulterated. Zine: a small amateur print or online publication, a victory of thought and feelings over production values, whatever you want it to be. Organised by The Pod, an artistic collective in Newcastle, *New Pollution* has produced a 'How to' guide to producing a zine. *I Hate Myself and want to Dye (my hair)*, *Are You Normal?*, *Tasmanian Alcoholic*, *The Miraculous Indulgence of the Hairball Goulash*, literally produced in-house with paper, pens, scissors and access to a photocopier or html'd on a local computer. Zines act as counter-mainstream-culture, raw and often offensive, offering the chance to mutilate and dissect expectations.

Left-over Christmas shortbread in the shape of stars

Room packed with hot young bodies and TV screens stacked...ahh technology. Where's Regurgitator? Giving young people access to the media, the shout goes out, often and emphatic, logo stamped on brain as I finger trannies at the 'media table'. Sorry these resources are only for the use of the MEDIA she says, and may as well add, 'not young semi-scruffy looking people who aren't and don't conform to my rigid view of media-types'. Senator Alston couldn't make it in person but, framed—tasteful Aboriginal art behind left shoulder, bronze sculpture beside right knee—he exposes his portfolio credentials. A speech showing the full wonder of the 1950s—*national television coverage*—as his tongue marvels at a new word: "claymation". He obviously hasn't seen the piece he introduces: down and dirty sexual playmation, all playstations go, giving filmmakers Drew Heriot and James Armstrong the chance to "explore (their) sexuality through plasticine". Framed again.

The LOUD Festival was on throughout January across a range of media (www.loud.net.au). *Pursuit of Happiness* and *Windows of Opportunity* screened January 8 on the LOUD Hour, ABC TV; *Babes on Boards*, January 17, SBS; *Festivals and going off*, January 10, SBS; *Tangerine Dreams*, ABC, January 8, LOUD Hour; *simply lifeless* and *The Wall* are part of *e-works* at www.loud.net.au/works/; *New Pollution* is available at newsagents and online at <http://evolver.loud.org.au/nupoo>

Kirsten Krauth fits into the T-shirt and, although on the verge of falling out of LOUD-dom, she is not scared of going soft. She is into film, creative writing and nibbles.

High performance

Mardi Gras Festival Artistic Director Jonathon Parsons describes to Keith Gallasch an expanding Australian theatre and performance component and the visit of Americans Holly Hughes and Nao Bustamante

The 1998 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival Guide, *20 Years of (R)evolution*, is more than a program, it's a collector's item, a celebration of 20 years of political, organisational and artistic development, the overcoming of odds internal and external, described with pride and relish in essays by Stephen Dunne, Alana Valentine, Bill Whitaker, Frances Rand and Barbara Farrelly, and Richard Cobden. Valentine reminds us just how recent and tentative the development of the arts festival has been while Rand-Farrelly recount the surprisingly halting evolution of lesbian involvement in the management of Mardi Gras. As you browse through the festival's considerable offerings and a mass of slick, sexy advertising, sidebars document 20 years of fun, violence, profit, separatism, Fred Nile-does-Moses, AIDS tragedies, Patrick White vs Oxford St, and personal accounts of the pleasure and communality realised by Mardi Gras.

And from time to time the straight reader is reminded they're about to enter a different world with language that is distinctive ("fem top", "bubble butt"), if sometimes predictable ("bitchy and bitter", "extremely moving, deliciously bitchy and outrageously funny", "explosive and tender", "explosive, erotic and controversial") and debatable—"gay" meant then what 'gay and lesbian' means now" (this in the blurb for the Great Debate, its subject: "That camp was better than queer", and "even straights can be queer").

Jonathon Parsons speaks with conviction and without cliché, informally unfolding an image of a festival that sustains a sense of community, develops new artists, allows established ones new freedoms, makes new national connections, encourages international exchange and brings unexpected nations into the Australian Gay and Lesbian ambit. He's ambitious for the festival, at the same time acknowledging the peculiar challenge of directing a festival with community imperatives.

"The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival's artistic director has to take on a number of agendas that a Robyn Archer or a Leo Schofield doesn't have to worry about when they program. We were a bit like a fringe festival in our early days, with not a lot of curating. But now the stakes have been lifted. After consultation with a very supportive advisory board, I make the final decision on what goes into the festival and there is an expectation now of a reasonable standard. It's a long term project and will take a long time to be realised."

The parameters that contain Parson's festival are, he says, "all the usual ones of running an arts festival" but also its being by and about the gay and lesbian community and its concerns. And it entails a huge range of aesthetic interests. "Last year, some thought there wasn't enough theatre, whereas, having worked at The Performance Space, I was very happy with what I saw. However, this year sees more plays including a significant number by Australians"—something Parsons is clearly proud of. WA's Sarah Brill has written a tranny saga, *Fashion Tips for the Young and Beautiful*, starring talented dancer-performer James Berlyn. Pianist and satirist Phil Scott (in the title role) and director Richard Wherret have come up with *Liberace*—"the style, the jewels, the scandal and a mountain of fur", says the publicity. *No Funny Business*, ranging through gay culture from pre-War II Sydney to the present, is written by Donna Abela. Paul Roger's *Bridges* is about a straight father in search of the meaning of his late gay son's life. The late Tim Conigrave's double bill, *Like Stars in My Hands* (script-edited by filmmaker Tony Ayres), comes to Sydney in the Playbox production which was a sell-out success in Melbourne. Also programmed are several American plays, locally produced, and, in a significant visit, the Drill Hall Theatre (London) with their production of Bayla Travis' *The Dyke and the Pornstar* ("an intimate evening

of nouveau-noir performance exploring the difference between public and private personae", says the festival guide).

Not surprisingly, given Parson's years at the The Performance Space, the Australian performance component of the festival is also expanding confidently with Barrie Kosky directing diva Paul Casis in *The Burlesque Tour*, Numinous Dance's combination of opera, dance and theatre in *Senesino* about the world of castrati, and PACT's *Heterosoced Youth*. The latter announces "This is NOT a coming out show" and examines "the experiences of exclusion and the strategies developed by Heterosoced (heterosexually socialised) youth for getting along in a straight world". It's directed by performance veterans Victoria Spence and Chris Ryan. And, of course, there's cLUB bENT at The Performance Space. But first, in the same venue, a season of female performances curated by Parsons, *Solo at the Space*, including popular cLUB bENT regular Groovii Biscuit in her first full-length solo work, *The Unruly Child*. The others in *Solo...* are Americans Holly Hughes and Nao Bustamante.

Parsons says that Hughes, like Andres Serrano, was made famous, in part, by the attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts by Jesse Helms, and it's a fame she therefore feels some ambivalence about. In the conclusion to the printed text of *Clit Notes*, which she is performing here, she writes: "...I came across an excerpt from Robert Hughes' *Culture of Complaint*, which asserted that Karen Finley and I represented everything that was wrong with American art today. I folded up the paper and scooted out of the coffeeshop, having reached my target heart rate without the aid of caffeine. Who was this Robert Hughes guy anyway, and what had I ever done to him? I figured he must be a relative. That would explain it; the bulk of my hate mail comes from my own family". Hughes is a droll and engaging writer. Parsons feels that in performance she takes herself somewhat less seriously than Karen Finley and will have a stronger rapport with Australian audiences. In Australia's increasingly censorious moral climate, he feels that having Holly Hughes perform here and stay on into the cLUB bENT season will allow for some important dialogue. Parsons also wants local and overseas artists to mix (something that the pace of festivals often doesn't permit), creating possible opportunities for

Australian artists to tour internationally.

Nao Bustamante, a second generation Mexican and bisexual "hurling ball of energy", grew up in California and now lives in San Francisco. She's performing *America the Beautiful* about squeezing herself into the myth model of beauty from Monroe to *Baywatch*. Parson's observes that while Hughes is in the tradition of direct confidential address to the audience, Bustamante's work is more theatrical, more ironic, more satirical, and dangerous: "It's a really physical performance, and very, very funny—she performs through her body. I wanted to show another American performance tradition in the season".

On the music front, Stephen Sondheim's *Follies*, historically more a success in concert than in production, is being presented—in concert—with a cavalcade of Australia's leading musical theatre stars. In some ways *Follies*, proposed by independent producer Alastair Thompson represents a safe choice, an almost operatic-hysterical four hankie evening of star turns; but its singing and acting demands (even in concert) are considerable and *should* reward the same audience (imagined to be at the other end of the same spectrum) who will seek out Marshall Maguire's program of music events *Transfigured Nights*. In what should be one of the festival highlights, the *A Tale of Two Cities* concert, virtuoso US pianist Anthony de Mare, singers Jane Edwards and Shaun Murphy, and harpist Maguire play the words and music of Leonard Bernstein, Peggy Glanville Hicks, Paul Bowles, Gertrude Stein, Ned Rorem and Tennessee Williams. De Mare's solo concert features works by American composer-performer Meredith Monk (whom he has worked with) and Frederic Rzewski's *De Profundis*, "based on Oscar Wilde's prison text addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas". Rzewski's powerful, theatrical and often politically driven works are rarely heard here. Brisbane's Perekhelion ensemble will present works by Americans John Corigliano and Robert Maggio (his AIDS homage *Winter Toccata* for virtuoso solo cello), and Australians Carl Vine, Gordon Kerry and Moya Henderson. Parsons comments that, "the breadth of the community allows for some serious music programming".

The festival also offers a stronger than ever visual arts program that now reaches beyond the US and the UK to India and Vietnam through the works of Bhupen Khakhar (to be shown in the context of the AGNSW's Asian Gallery) and Truong Tan (4A Gallery), both well known in Europe and about to make an impact here. Both will attend the festival. William Yang, the late Cuban-born American artist Felix Gonzales-Torres, the Boomalli *Black Roots* show, and *Blak Babe and Kweer Kat* (Rea and Brook Andrew at Gite Weise Gallery) are part of a large visual arts program. In a one night only multimedia event, *Singing up stones*, Lisa Anderson uses lasers, film, slides, performers and John Drummond's sound design to reshape Circular Quay. A new media arts work at Artspace, *CrossXXXaminations*, is "a web-based and site-specific installation queer(y)ing deviance...a collaborative installation by local cyber artist Virginia Barratt and New York web queen Beth Stryker".

The 1998 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is a rich and intense communal event, vividly performative in itself, over and above the programming of plays and performances, and one that is increasingly artistically ambitious and reaches out to a wide audience. But its ambitions are for its community and the artists in it. A modest development fund guarantees support for the evolution of works by PACT, Casis and Kosky, and others. The greater role and influence of gay and lesbian art on the mainstream is evident, says Parsons, in the increasing number of projects supported by funding bodies like the Australia Council.

Before we part, Parsons hands me some things he'd been reading about Holly Hughes and Nao Bustamante, and I'm taken by a San Franciscan writer seeing Bustamante for the first time: "...she was performing a Burrito Absolution rite on the straight white men in a Theatre Artaud audience. She offered anyone brave enough to bite into her strap-on, vegan, no-chilli, burrito-dildo and release their burden of guilt of 500 years of Colonialism." And I thought, perhaps this is just the kind of offer that might work for a Prime Minister who can't say sorry on behalf of his nation.

1998 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, January 30 - February 28. Bookings 02 9320 9169 or Ticketek 02 9266 4800.

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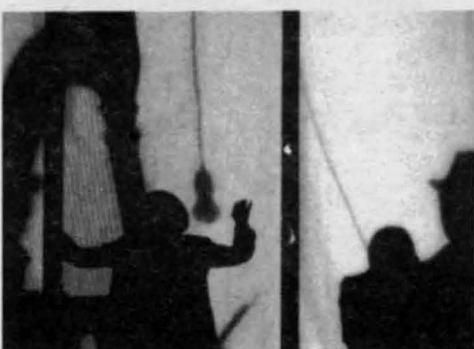
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1998
Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras
Festival Events



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Holly Hughes

Groovii Biscuit

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Thu 12 - Sat 14 Feb 10pm
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Nao Bustamante

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Patrons must wear flat heeled shoes on the centre court!

Sarah Miller previews the 1998 Festival of Perth

At the launch of the 1998 Festival of Perth program, director David Blenkinsop had some sharp words for Perth's city fathers regarding the paucity and poverty of venues for live performance in 'paradise', as Perth is sometimes called by the native born. With a degree of wit and savage conviction, Blenkinsop struck out, noting that major theatre and dance companies had no choice but to present their work in vastly inappropriate venues. He's right of course, but on the other hand, one of the charms of the Festival of Perth, is precisely this discovery of the most unlikely sites.

This year I'm looking forward to discovering some of Perth's major sporting venues which seems only fair, given that the arts sponsorship dollar, has increasingly been taken over by sport! It will be interesting, for instance, to see whether the Challenge Stadium, recently the venue for the World Swimming Championships, receives the same degree of media attention when Robert Lepage's long awaited *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* is presented there. Perhaps not. Robert Lepage seems unlikely to be the centre of an international drug inquiry. Dear me, no wonder the term *avant-garde* lacks currency these days!

I'm also very taken with the idea of the Royal Kings Park Tennis Club as the venue for a Louisiana Dance Hall night—"patrons must wear flat heeled shoes on the centre court"—and the extraordinary music of Beau Jocque and the Zydeco Hi-Rollers. Zydeco, for the uninitiated, is the blues and dance music of Louisiana Creoles, the French-speaking blacks of the state's

southwest region; but artists such as Beau Jocque and Keith Frank have introduced elements of rock, rap and reggae into zydeco, transforming it into a contemporary African-American dance music. If you wanna dance, you're advised to get there early to pick up the steps from a special cajun dance instructor.

Also at the tennis courts (pass on the cucumber sandwiches), will be Yulduz Usmanova, a phenomenon on the international pop music scene with her particular blend of music embracing Uzbekian folk, Turkish, Persian and Central Asian influences mixed with western rock, pop and dance music.

Down in Fremantle, the Endeavour Boat Shed will house the odds on favourite for local punters: *Cloudstreet*, presented by Black Swan Theatre in association with Belvoir's Company B whilst Deckchair Theatre takes over the Fremantle Prison for John Romeril's new musical, *Kate 'n' Shiner*. Also in Fremantle, the spectacular *Titanik* (not the movie) will create that sinking feeling on the Esplanade utilising 30,000 litres of water and one helluva lot of pyrotechnical wizardry. Those still looking for a cucumber sandwich may get lucky at the Government House Ballroom, where The Song Company will present Stockhausen's *Stimmung*, a seminal work in the history of vocal music.

The real venue problem, however, lies less in the exotic or slightly oddway venues than in those designated performance spaces which are outmoded, overly formal, relatively inflexible and expensive to run. Contemporary dance and physical theatre are not seen at their best at His Majesty's Theatre where The Lyons Opera Ballet and *Le Cercle Invisible* by Jean Baptiste Thierree and Victoria Chaplin will be presented. The Regal Theatre is hosting not only Les Ballets C de la B/Het Muziek Lod but, even more strangely, Acrobat, touted as "circus for the attention deficit generation". The Regal is a commercial theatre known as the one place where those most reluctant of patrons—the husbands of women who love the arts—are afraid to go.

The very formal environs of the Perth Concert Hall present some interesting challenges with a production of *Carmen*, *La Cuadra de Sevilla*, that features "magnificent white stallions" and "a 30 strong authentic Andalusian drum and bugle band". It is hard to refrain from a degree of prurient curiosity about the problem of horse poo in such an environment.

Winthrop Hall at the University of WA, having been air conditioned at great expense, should provide fewer problems for musicians and their audiences, who last year nearly expired in the 40 something degree heat. The problem this year, given the weakness of the Australian dollar, may mean these visiting artists simply expire

from exhaustion. Given the price of purchasing European and American airfares, walking to Australia may be their only option. Such a pilgrimage should, however, lend a certain authenticity to the



Fiction Factory, *House of America*

Brian Tarr

strong program of medieval sacred music (Christian) and the ecstatic passion and vocal virtuosity of Pakistan's foremost Qawwals, the Sabri Brothers from Pakistan. Qawwali is the devotional music of the Sufis, the mystics of Islam. Prepare to achieve spiritual intoxication.

Winthrop Hall will also house London-based ensemble, Triangulus, with an unusual program which includes four works by women composers and two rarely performed piano trios by Hummel, and the Ensemble of the Classical Era (18th century music) with a program of works by Haydn. They're going to be moving 'em in and moving 'em out down at Winthrop Hall because the Dancers, Drummers and Singers of Manipur, India's remotest state, will also be performing there as will the Chorus Repertory Theatre of Imphal, also from India.

More at the University of WA: Fiction Factory's *House of America*, William Yang's *The North*, Kaos Theatre's *Kaos WORLD* and, in the sunken gardens, Barking Gecko's *Frog Opera*, for young people. If the emphasis on university venues seems unusual, then it should be understood that the University of Western Australia is home to the Festival of Perth and consequently accommodates a sizeable chunk of festival product, having three theatres, the Somerville outdoor cinema, Winthrop Hall and the Festival Club, not to mention the odd oval when needed.

I'm personally very determined to see New Zealand cabaret artiste Mika backed by the snakey hipped UhuRas—two stunning Maori drag queens—performing in an Oxbridge style campus theatre. There's something about the combination of site, soul, hi-NRG dance numbers and Maori chants, that appeals to my sensibilities. Jazz lovers on the other hand, are in for a treat with France's Latcho Drom, recreating the music of Europe's greatest gipsy jazz ensemble; Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Centre's Jazz Orchestra; consummate jazz singer Cassandra Wilson; and a trio comprising the violinist Didier Lockwood, described as

his heir apparent to Stephan Grappelli, with accordionist Richard Galliano and cellist Jean Charles Capon.

The Festival of Perth always gives good street theatre and this year is no exception. Alongside, the grand spectacle of Germany's Theatre *Titanick*, there is circus from Spain with Los Galindos, colonial relics from the UK with *Colonial Rickshaw* and *The Spurring Man*, and France's Friches Theatres Urbain with *Mephistomania*. Australian Neil Thomas on the other hand, will create a constantly mobile world on his *Omnibus of Dreams*, otherwise a city clipper collecting unsuspecting passengers on the free CBD

bus route.

Sometimes, the sun does seem to be taking a rather longer time than anticipated to set over the empire, a sensation perhaps exacerbated by outgoing Festival Director, David Blenkinsop's recent CBE for services to British culture—kind of weird given he's been running an Australian Festival for 21 years! There is no doubt, however, that Blenkinsop's commitment to a multi-disciplinary, international Festival of the Arts has made the Festival of Perth one of the most important and substantial events of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Blenkinsop will no doubt continue to utilise the strength of his position as the retiring director (he still has another festival to go) to continue to harangue the city fathers—hopefully over a range of issues—but when it comes to venues, the one everyone will be looking out for, is the one in which they announce the new Festival Director, set to take over the reins in the year 2000.

The 1998 Festival of Perth, February 13-March 8. Tensions and Traditions, Art Gallery of Western Australia from February 4. Perth Institute of Contemporary Art's festival program begins February 11.

Lepage talks

Robert Lepage, *Connecting Flights*
Le Page in conversation with Rémy Charest
Methuen, London 1997 198pp \$29.95

For Adelaide and Perth festival-goers wanting to add to their knowledge of the innovative French Canadian director (*The Seven Streams of the River Ota*), this accessible volume has Lepage reflecting on his stage works and filmmaking, other directors, the peculiar evolution of his works (including his solo *Hamlet* where with the aid of new technology he plays all the roles), and, in a witty chapter called "Glossary", he muses over the cultural shifts he has to make as his work takes him from country to country, from actor to schauspielers to player, from audience to spectators, from director to metteur en scène to régisseur, and, in Japan, to different notions of shadow and light, and thought. **KG**

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The power of found spaces

Aleks Sierz interviews Deborah Warner director of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* for the 1998 Adelaide Festival

Extremists come in all shapes and sizes. Best known in Europe for her work on Shakespeare and the classics, director Deborah Warner is also passionately interested in experiment, using found spaces to extend the language of theatre. "Theatre is dead the moment we recognise it," she says. "I am that extreme".

Her current project is directing Fiona Shaw in a dramatised reading of T S Eliot's modernist poem, *The Waste Land* (1922). After a 30-month world tour, Warner brought the show "home to London", putting it on at Wilton's, a derelict music hall in a tiny alley near the City. Built in 1858 behind John Wilton's pub, the massive red and gilt hall is entered through an ordinary doorway which gives no clue to the space inside. "Unlike most music halls, which are complete ruins, Wilton's is a real discovery," says Warner. Closed as a fun palace in 1885 because it couldn't meet the fire regulations, it became a religious mission, then a rag warehouse. "I couldn't believe it was so intact—all those pews and barley-sugar pillars". Just the right mix of sacred and profane for Eliot's poem, as Shaw embodies the several voices of the text and lights throw her shadow high above her under the tall proscenium. "What's so thrilling about this space is that the poem refers to places which are just behind the back wall," says Warner. "The journey to Wilton's is almost as important as being there—although being there in the chilly winter atmosphere works really well for the text". By using this decayed building, Warner makes an invisible fragment of the city suddenly visible once more.

"One truth about found spaces is that there is a great frisson from first use. All the buildings where *The Waste Land* was staged were poised between lives, in a strange, undeclared half-life, neither used nor derelict,

neither theatre nor warehouse. There's an energy in a place that's still waiting for its next life—and I ride on the back of that". Warner's version of *The Waste Land* started life at the Théâtre de Vaudeville in Brussels in May 1995. "It was all boarded up," says Warner. "It had been a nightclub, grotesque, all red, with glitter balls. But behind this was an exquisite, hidden 400-seat theatre with a beautiful painted ceiling." This discovery came after two other ideas had fallen through. "One was a *fin-de-siècle* department store where I wanted to use the central well" and the other was the European parliament—"but they had problems with the poem's title".

After Brussels, "Dublin was a completely different experience". Taking over the Old Magazine Fort (an old barracks) "we lit up the derelict buildings where the officers used to live, so the audience had to walk past a kind of ghost town before finding the barrel-vaulted brick cavern where the show took place". This was, says Warner, "a very abstract space—almost as if you were walking into somebody's mind". A similarly daring idea was to use the empty 97th floor of New York's World Trade Centre, but vertigo forced her to abandon the location.

Instead, "we got the Liberty Theatre on 42nd Street, just before the developers moved in". Warner is excited by the role that chance plays: "Every night, they were digging up the road outside—and there was our huge hoarding saying *The Waste Land*". In Paris, the space (a small amphitheatre at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where live drawing is taught) conjured up a framing narrative: "Fiona was like a model who had come back to the room because she had left something behind." After a long search for suitable venues in Canada, Warner has developed "a nose for the right spaces": an abandoned factory in Toronto and a 2,000-seat cinema in Montreal. "I look for space in

the same way I look for new text. And each new space gives you something free that adds meaning to the text. Each new discovery enhanced the poem." Which cities were the hardest? "Dublin, Toronto and Adelaide." Why? "Well, the first two are boom towns—all the old buildings have already been converted to new uses."

Adelaide fascinates her because of its atmosphere. "It has a haunting feeling of 1950s ex-pats—in a junk shop I found all this old stuff from England, all these memories." But it was hard to find a space that conjured up the same sensations, so Warner settled for the Royalty Theatre.

Using space imaginatively can upset the tight-arsed. When Warner and Shaw put on Beckett's *Footfalls* at the Garrick, London, in March 1994, they covered over the stalls and staged one part of it on a plank under the balcony. Warner says, "The image of a creature crushed between heaven and earth was just right for the piece." But the Beckett Estate was unimpressed—and withdrew the licence for the show.

A more liberating experience was the St Pancras Project, which Warner created for LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) 1995, using the derelict Victorian Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras station to create a walk for individuals, who could explore the empty space. Then, on the top floor of this neo-gothic dinosaur, along the corridors where the servants once lived, "I gave people a glimpse of maids, dressed in clothes of the time, then rooms with evocative features, like a pianola playing or grass on the floor". It was "like being in your own play"; people "who had been really quiet, came out gushing—because they had been so alone, they wanted to tell everyone about their experiences".



Deborah Warner

Neil Libbert

Warner's next project for LIFT 1999 will develop this success. "What I want to do is to take a large group of people on an epic journey by bus, hopefully during the night." This was partly inspired by a chance event in Dublin, when the first preview of *The Waste Land* was cancelled at short notice. "The audience arrived in buses and, because there was no show, the drivers started reading them bits of the poem."

While *The Waste Land* is "an experiment with using poetry as text and space as experience", Warner feels that "theatre has somewhat exhausted its present, conventional form. What I would really like would be to get a play through the post and be able to say about its form: 'Hold on, is that really a play?'. Until this happens, audiences can explore the "unreal city" in Eliot's evocative company.

Deborah Warner, director; Fiona Shaw, performer, *The Waste Land*, 1998 Adelaide Festival, Royalty Theatre, Adelaide, March 3-7. Warner has directed Fiona Shaw as Richard in Shakespeare's *Richard II* recently screened on ABC TV, and in the title role of *King Lear*.

Aleks Sierz is theatre critic for the London Tribune.

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Decision without vision?

Mary Travers looks at the consequences and the implications of new funding strategies in the Australia Council for theatre

At least 10 theatre companies have lost Australia Council funding for 1998, five in South Australia. A few companies have less money, and the Council's new annual grants policy means more companies will be cut, later this year. Australian theatre could be described as in a state of crisis, with visionless arts bureaucracies failing to come to terms with the state of the art.

In South Australia, Junction, the community theatre, considers its future without Council money, the Carouselle Puppet Theatre is closing. Cirkids, a participatory children's circus, will battle on with State support. A question mark hangs over Red Shed and Magpie 2. Arts SA (the State Arts Department) is considering a recommendation that the two could merge, although this also depends on the companies' views. Magpie, a wing of the State Theatre of SA, repositioned itself as a theatre for 18 to 25 year olds, a year ago, after two decades of performing for school aged children and teenagers. (See Murray Bramwell, "A future or a blown youth?", page 9)

The gravity of the Council's decisions became clear in January when I phoned an officer at Arts SA to find out what was happening. A few hours later, no less than the Director of Arts SA, Tim O'Loughlin, called me back. While the SA government is the major sponsor of all of the companies in question, he said what state governments usually say, "We are not prepared to plug the gaps left by the Australia Council".

Polyglot Puppets in Melbourne, the Canberra Youth Theatre, Zootango in Hobart, Theatre South and the Q Theatre in NSW, have also been cut. Five regional companies in NSW have slid off the Council's list in the past few years, leaving the Riverina Theatre Company in Wagga Wagga and Hothouse Theatre in Albury. The NSW government is supporting a new company to replace the Q and the old New England based companies. Those listed here as cut are long term regular grant recipients, but there are also others missing from the list who had a grant the previous two years, some further back.

Although the Coalition government cuts in 1996 have not helped, the reasons for this year's massive fall-out goes back further. For years the Council has stated it cannot keep taking on companies reliant on subsidy, and while saying this, has gradually encouraged more and more. Last year the Council did two things. It limited the grant money used for the annual support of organisations to 45 per cent of an artform's budget. And, it established triennial grants.

The Theatre Fund offered 10 companies triennial grants, starting in 1998. Twenty-six others were awarded a grant for one

year—although there is no policy for this. The triennial grants total 20 per cent of theatre grants available for the year, but add the one year grants and annual funding is 58 per cent of the budget of the Theatre Fund. Presumably a few more companies will drop off next year, as the Fund works downwards to its 45 per cent ceiling.

The Fund seems to have suffered a decision-making block by offering 20 per cent, not the possible 45 per cent of its funds in triennial grants, removing the possibility for more companies to forward plan. One officer said it is was so they can be flexible and perhaps offer it to other companies next year. Do they think a new company will emerge over the next few months that is so extraordinary a three year grant will materialise? Hardly. Are they waiting for some of the companies to become better organised? All but four on the current list existed in 1986. Why, for example, are companies such as Skylark, Handspan and Legs on the Wall good enough to get grants for overseas touring (last year), but not to get triennial funding? The Fund simply deferred making the hard but inevitable decisions.

More questionable is how the decisions were made. The SA member of the Theatre Fund is based in Mt Gambier, four hours drive from Adelaide. The Council has no presence in Adelaide, since staff ceased regular visits to companies, and the decision-making part-time members stopped crossing the nation to see the work. They say they can't afford to travel, preferring to limit the administration budget and maximise the money available for grants. It seems the momentous decision to cut five companies was based on written reports, and one assessor from Adelaide sitting in on the grants meeting. "I would like to see Australia Council staff and panel members in Adelaide more often", emphasised O'Loughlin. This is obviously a very sore point.

The Council's Major Organisations Fund also supports eight drama companies and Circus Oz. On the surface, 40 subsidised companies, including the MOF companies, sounds a good number. That is, until you divide this between circus, drama, visual and physical theatre, puppetry, youth theatre, children's theatre, across eight states and territories. Also, until you realise that many of the 1990s companies produce only two or three shows a year, and few have full-time performers on staff, a situation vastly different from the 1980s.

In 1986, for example, there were 48 annual grant companies, most presenting works all year. If flawed, behind the funding decisions there was a structural vision for theatre in Australia. For example,

that the state theatre companies needed alternative companies as a source of creative frisson, hence companies such as Troupe and the Pram Factory were supported. Sometimes the Council matched state government initiatives; for regional theatres in NSW, or professional companies working with communities in Victoria. There was also a commitment to children's theatre (building audiences for the future).

The new visual and physical theatre styles struggled along on project grants, and gradually gained regular grants, adequate to exist in a continual poverty cycle. But as the scene evolved the Council failed to identify a direction, rather just adding on companies and cutting them off again. For example, 23 of the 48 annual grant companies of 1986 have closed. Some, like the Nimrod, were seen to have run out of steam, others such as Anthill, failed to adequately woo the system.

Listening to O'Loughlin's concern and the Council's discomfort, there is a sense the bureaucracies are now too caught up in the culture of their own relationships and the history of funding to look afresh. For example, if Carouselle, founded by Polish trained puppeteers, has a good enough record, why lose the only example of that art-form in the State? Also, how well can the one remaining children's company, Patch Theatre, serve the children of South Australia. In a period of declining subsidy, can SA afford more than one "alternative" to the State Theatre? Doppio Teatro has produced some of the most interesting 'alternative' theatre in the country, starting from an Italo-Australian perspective and moving to explore the new multimedia possibilities. Can the state government adequately fund a merged Magpie 2 and Red Shed? Would it be better to improve the base of Doppio? These are hard questions in hard times, but are they being asked?

Without a drive to get companies, beyond the so-called major organisations, to an adequate financial base, none can become a near household name, nor can their principal creative artist(s). Face it, after Robin Nevin, Neil Armfield, and Barry Kosky, who else have you heard is hot in theatre. But this is drama, and there is far more to theatre than that. Yet without resources, smaller companies will always be marketing badly and uphill. Would fewer companies, better funded, end up with better work? Maybe. The low levels of some company budgets has obviously diluted both the standards and the expectations of standards.

At the big end, companies such as the Sydney Theatre Company earn over 80 per cent of their income, and have to charge over \$40 per ticket. They are out of reach of the majority of citizens. Is this right for taxpayer subsidised theatre?

Occasional exceptions to this gloomy picture do exist. The Sydney Opera House season of *The Hobbit* was a sell out for Company Skylark. It is almost unheard of, for a company on \$100,000 annual subsidy, to rent such an expensive venue, and tour 10 performers. The puppet company, from the ACT, forged business partnerships for this show. The big sets and lavish production values completed the high quality of conventional show, and the audience loved it.

The Council strongly encourages this kind of enterprise, but it simply won't work for all kinds of theatre. Such sporadic achievements will not build a solid core of Australian theatre conditions. Even if the States stretch their budgets a little further, without a clearly developed artistic vision by the funding bodies, one thing seems certain. We are heading for fewer companies, no better funded.

A reassuring Australia Council

Dear Editors

28/1/98

Your editorial in the December issue of *RealTime* makes a number of inaccurate criticisms of the Australia Council, but space permits me to only respond to one.

You refer to "the anticipated demise of an increasing number of arts companies and infrastructure organisations, up to 35 per cent of them, over the next few years as a result of Australia Council policy". You are way off the mark. Nothing like this gloomy prediction will occur as a result of Australia Council policy.

While raising unfounded fears, you are neglecting to explain why changes have been introduced.

The Australia Council's new triennial grants strategy was implemented in 1997 after two years of development and consultation with the arts community.

It was vital the Council redress the imbalance between previously "locked-in" money and its capacity to respond in an environment of unprecedented levels of creativity in Australia to assist younger artists and newer companies.

The result of the strategy, which is being phased in over three years, is that there will be a better balance of support for outstanding organisations and outstanding individual artists and project initiatives.

At present, about 117 outstanding arts organisations are receiving triennial funding, while a further 104 organisations are receiving one and two-year grants as part of the phase-in.

While it is true that some organisations which applied for these grants missed out last year, this does not mean they are closing. Many are operating on funds from other sources. Many have picked up other grants for specific projects.

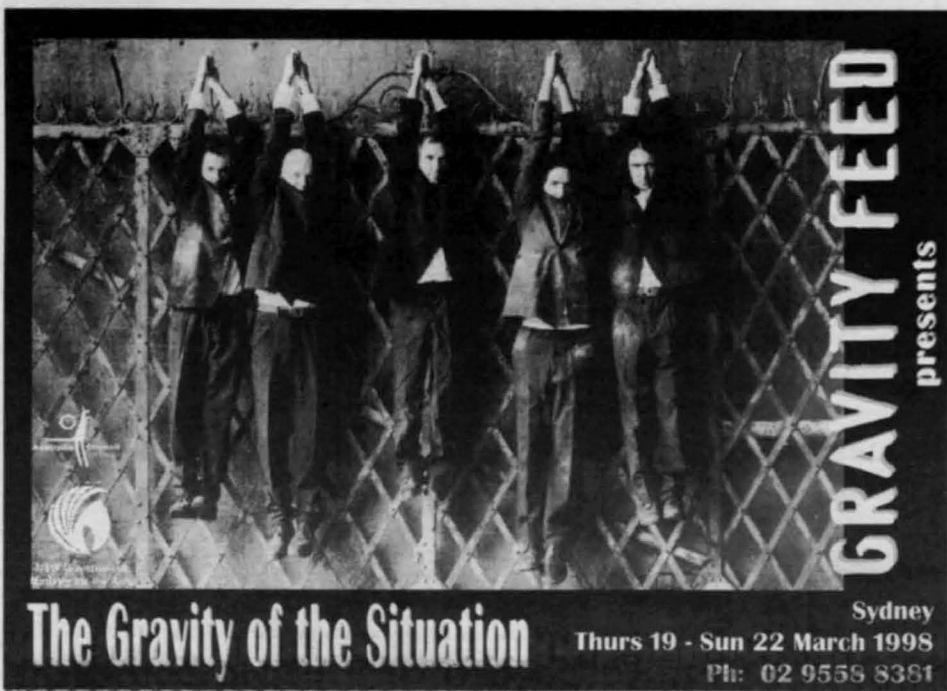
The Council remains fully committed to supporting the most innovative arts practice in both traditional and newer artforms through an assessment process based on decision-making at arms length from government and the direct involvement of artists from a 1000-strong Register of Peers.

You claim there were "devastating" results for theatre in South Australia. The Council's Theatre Fund currently provides seven South Australian theatre companies with the equivalent of annual support—the same number as the Fund supports in Victoria. Whatever the degree of change from the past, current funding represents significant public support for artists in South Australia. We are also working with the South Australian government to examine ways to create a more sustainable theatre environment in that State.

The Council is closely monitoring and evaluating the effect of its strategies and funding decisions. It is also important the arts sector and the wider community get behind our bid to government for increased arts support so that we can stabilise arts infrastructure while increasing support for new initiatives.

Yours sincerely

Michael Lynch
General Manager
Australia Council



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A future or a blown youth?

Murray Bramwell on the fate of Benedict Andrews' Magpie 2

It was only in July last year that I reported in these columns the arrival of a new funded company in Adelaide. Well, it was not so much a new company as a makeover of an existing operation. In an effort to rescue the long-term subscriber base for State Theatre, then Executive Producer Chris Westwood grasped the nettle and changed the charter for Magpie, the young people's wing of State's operation, which had run almost as long as the parent company itself.

poetic dialogue by French writer Bernard-Marie Coltes. It was accomplished, bold work, well-performed with assured direction from Andrews and memorable design work from Imogen Thomas.

In December Benedict Andrews capped the year with *Features of Blown Youth* from the gifted Melbourne-based writer Raimondo Cortese. Having read his earlier work *Lucrezia and Cesare* the director had contacted the writer in 1996 when there were plans afoot for Andrews to work with the Red Shed collective.

Then, when his appointment to Magpie was announced, the hunt was on for new, gritty and local work. Cortese and his new venture into naturalism, *Features of Blown Youth*, was just what the director ordered.

As it happened, *Features* opened in Adelaide's Queens Theatre only a few months after its Melbourne debut. Performed only weeks after Mark Ravenhill's

Shopping and Fucking toured, the local work—with its narrative based around a group of singles living, and partly living, in a run-down tenement—compared strongly. Some themes—like the systematic abuse and exploitation of the vulnerable young are even more graphically displayed in Cortese's play. Performed in Justin Kurzel's dizzyingly high doll's house-like set we peer into the besieged lives of Dove (Valerie Berry), Rot (Jed Kurzel), Isabella (Elena Carapetis),

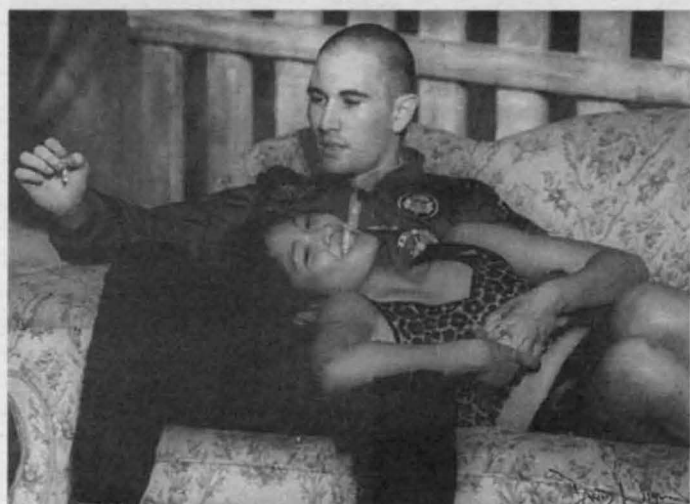
company Red Shed, lost its financial support. "We didn't expect triennial funding", notes Andrews ruefully, "but neither the Shed nor us thought we'd be cut. In Magpie's case we got cut before we were even walking. This experiment was unique in Australia. We had young actors, designers, lighting people. Where else would you find so many young artists—properly funded, not just working in a co-op—presenting material that they really believe in and love. The work was truly professional and audiences responded to that".

As we go to press there are still prospects for an Arts SA initiative to fund a combined venture between Benedict Andrews and the Red Shed's AD Tim Maddock. There is a new work programmed for the Adelaide Festival, *The Architect's Walk*, which has Maddock continuing his fruitful partnership with

playwright Daniel Keene. And hope persists that a four work season might still eventuate in 1998.

But it won't be called Magpie 2, which despite a fine brace of productions has been permanently grounded. State Theatre, under new Artistic Director Rodney Fisher has other ideas about programming and that is fair enough—the flagship has a big job this year just keeping itself afloat. But Adelaide can't afford to lose the likes of Andrews and Maddock—nor the circle of dedicated artists they continue to attract. It is in everybody's interest that a revitalised third force emerges—and quickly.

Daniel Keene's The Architect's Walk, Red Shed production, Telstra Adelaide Festival, The Arts Theatre, February 26-28, 8pm, March 1, 3, 8, 10, at 6pm; March 4-7, 11-13 at 8pm



Jed Kurzel and Valerie Berry in *Features of Blown Youth*

David Wilson

No more TIE activity, no more schools tours and theatre for littlies. Instead the rebadged Magpie 2 was to target the 18 to 25 age bracket in order to keep the flame of theatre burning long enough so that in a decade's time there might still be an audience ambulant and sentient enough to come and see the State's work.

It was a brave move—part strategy, part desperation. The age group—late teens to early twenties—is, for most purposes, the demographic from hell. As a defined age



Elena Carapetis and Richard Kelly in *Features of Blown Youth*

David Wilson

group they are largely hostile to theatre, unless they or their friends are in it. And, generally, they are tribal, atavistic, volatile and justly suspicious of most of the usual attempts at niche marketing. So, for newly appointed Artistic Director, Benedict Andrews the Magpie job, if not a poisoned chalice, was certainly what the sports writers like to call a Big Ask.

Remarkably, with only two productions slated for the year, Andrews came very close to making his mark. Opening with *Future Tense* back in May last year he brought together a double bill—*Mercedes* by German writer Thomas Brasch and *In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields*, a densely

Oron (Richard Kelly)—among others—as they are preyed upon by the sinister new landlord, Strawberry—played with eerie energy by Syd Brisbane.

Features played for two weeks drawing late season houses that suggest a third would have sold out. As usual, combining performances with rave nights run by leading techno wizards Dirty House, Benedict Andrews believes his ventures were succeeding in creating a new and increasing loyal following—many of whom had never been to the theatre before.

Unfortunately, in that night of the Australia Council long knives late last year, Magpie, along with veteran

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The performing contraption

Don Mamouny interviews Joey Ruigrok Van der Werven

DM Before settling in Australia you spent quite a few years working as a core member of the Dutch company Dogtroep. Can you tell us something about Dogtroep?

JR The company is based in Amsterdam but it performs all over the world. They mostly make out-door, site-specific work, inspired by the site and the country they are in. The 10 core members and 30 freelancers are sculptors, musicians, visual artists, technicians, actors and movers. In principle each member comes up with ideas for a scene, makes the props or machines and puts it into a little performance which is then shown to the rest. Gradually over three or four weeks these scenes grow towards each other and with the aid of the director into a show. The result is a highly visual, poetic, and musical spectacle. Stories are often taken from everyday life. Most people are touched and can find something in it for themselves. The size of audiences can vary between 40 and 4000.

DM You have only been in Australia for a very short time and already your skills are in great demand. What projects have you accomplished since you arrived?

JR I worked for last year's Sydney Festival on Ned Kelly as a consultant/builder. For Legs on the Wall, I designed and built the set for their new show *Under The Influence* and during Sidetrack's CPW I taught a 5-day workshop called "The Contraption in Performance". My main work though is with Stalker as a core-member. I created special effects for their show *Mimi* and also toured as a member of the production team. For Stalker's current project, *Blood Vessel*, I

made the construction design and built the set (with others). It is really an acrobatic rig which images an old sailing ship. During the creative development period I created and rigged test machines on which the performers were able to explore the creative, technical and movement possibilities. This work was then used to design the final set and the story.

DM Your contraptions in performance workshop at Contemporary Performance Week attracted a lot of interest from an amazing range of artists and technicians. It was easily the most popular in a very strong field of other offerings. Why do you think this was so?

JR I cannot really answer this. Apparently there is a big interest in utilising sculptures for and within theatrical events. A lot of people want to make theatre with objects and machines because they feel they can communicate something important or amusing with a well chosen fantastic contraption—more so than with words for instance. It is a highly fascinating theatrical form, because it uses image, visuals, touch, even smell within a narrative event...a show.

I was happily surprised when people responded so enthusiastically at the workshop because at that stage I hadn't met many people in Australia who made this kind of theatre. Actually there are quite a few...Splinters in Canberra, Snuff Puppets in Melbourne, Neil Cameron with his fire events, Tryclops in Sydney. There may even be more and, if so, I really hope to meet them.

DM It would seem that your work with objects and machines far exceeds their

capacity to be categorised as simply set design or stage properties. In many ways they vie with the human element and in some cases even dominate the action. What is the thinking behind this?

JR I wouldn't say that my machines are in competition with the performers, or that they make them insignificant. Machines may sometimes dominate but it is not the aim. I use them because that is where my passion is. That's how I tell my stories. I just love how objects, sculptures, machines, buildings etc, through their visuality are able to speak to us and I aim to find and use such language for artistic and dramaturgical purposes.

I try to give props, technicals and set a very important role in a performance. I try to bring them alive, in a way that is equal to the performers, to make them function in a way that they tell part of the story and effect the emotions of the audience, maybe even to become their heroes. At the very least the integration between props, set, performer, action and story can be strengthened.




Paolo Rapalino

Most often machines seem clear and straightforward in their function and reason for existence. Two machines which do the same thing can look very different though. We humans give them something else on top of their first function, they get meaning because of how we shape and use them. This mix of clarity of purpose and underlying meaning is very important. It is possible to tell a clear story but leave room for all sorts of other meanings and emotions. The beautiful thing for me now is that somehow using machines in performance gives the audience a lot of space to have their own associations, emotions and interpretations.

DM I wonder if there is a kind of comic nostalgia at play in some of the object-based performances that have been delighting festival audiences here recently? I'm thinking of *Royale Deluxe* and *Semola with Hybrid* in particular, both of which employ gross and overtly mechanical devices to great theatrical effect.

JR Nostalgia probably yes. Comic I don't know. In a way it is funny that I now love the shape of some cars which I hated five years ago. Our taste changes over time and because of what is available to us. Why do we love old steam locomotives and not so much the new electrical ones? Or the typewriter above a computer? I think it is a highly serious matter that we seem to enjoy simple machines, that our imagination can take flight when we see an old cane basket, for example. The other day I saw a father struggling to get a baby's pusher down some steps at Bronte beach. He said, "If only I had some bungy I could make springs in the trolley and jump it a few steps at a time!" Machines, contraptions, props, sculptures and whole sets can make a fantasy actual. Shapes and forms can be endless, changes in time and place can be very sudden without dramaturgical difficulty. It is possible to evoke a wish for freedom of imagination, to break free from the boundaries of the conventional.

Don Mamouny is a co-founder and artistic director of Sidetrack Performance Group. He initiated Contemporary Performance Week (CPW) in 1990 to expand the knowledge and practice of theatre and performance making.



Articulations is co-presented and financially assisted by the Festival of Perth. PICA wishes to acknowledge Healthway's generous sponsorship of Articulations to promote the Family Planning Association's "Play it Safe" message.

Articulations

A Festival of Perth event

Articulations is a program of lectures, forum discussions and artists' talks addressing the very real need for interaction, dialogue and debate around the processes and multifarious practices that constitute art (primarily visual art) practices.

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A Festival of Perth event

Cadaver by Adrian Jones - the disinterred body of Cadaver recalls events generally denied deep recognition in our history. Cadaver is supported by an investment from the state of WA through ArtsWA.

Maniacs of Disappearance - Today's Japan as Disseminator of Video-Messages - a set of contemporary Japanese video art, presented by the Japan Foundation.

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Brilliant Bunraku business

Suzanne Spinner encounters a Japanese-Australian hybrid at Playbox

Love Suicides is unquestionably an ambitious and complex work which arises from playwright John Romeril's mastery of visual and dialectical theatre and his deep immersion in Japanese theatre culture. Romeril is both a quintessentially Australian writer and the first local playwright (and still among the very few) to have addressed the Australian-Asian relationship. In *The Floating World* (1974), Les, the Australian POW, and his good wife Irene were so Australian you winced in recognition, while the Japan they encountered on their Cherry Blossom Cruise was nothing but a bad dream, located in Les' nightmares.

Love Suicides is set in boom town late 80s Perth, but the Japanese characters and the country they bring in their memories are almost more real than the Australia they visit. Romeril is so inside Japan and the female principle that Australia and the male are swamped and lost, receding into a dream.

The difficulty is in believing that Mark Paris, the Australian businessman, is a businessman let alone a major player. Much has been made of the connection with WA Inc and the cowboy tycoons of the 80s but in Paris we don't have Skase or Bond or Connell but a man with the sensibility and angst of a male artist and a sense of shame worthy of a Samurai—qualities notably lacking in the Australian high flyers and many Japanese businessmen today. Paris is frankly unbelievable, there is no sense he could cut a deal anywhere.

Love Suicides is a homage to the Osaka playwright, Chikamatsu (1653-1725), dubbed the Shakespeare of Japan, who

wrote in the genre of the double-suicide play for the emerging Bunraku puppet theatre. Bunraku makes the puppeteer a visible actor in the drama and creates a dramatic interplay between puppet and puppeteer.

In *Love Suicides*, the suicides are Paris, who is bankrupt and facing criminal charges, deserted by his wife and children and pursued by demons and creditors, and Ohatsu, a young Japanese woman educated and Westernised in outlook who is about to be married by arrangement and feels completely boxed in by her traditional parents. They met briefly in Osaka some years before when Paris was an international dealmaker, and she was the schoolgirl daughter of his business associate. They meet up again in Perth and realise that lacking a future, they share a desire to escape the present.

Paris' flimsiness, however, creates an imbalance in the psychology and poetics of the play; but the Japanese women are marvellous. The play belongs to Ohatsu who is present as an actor, as a puppet, and by extension as a puppeteer (Peter Wilson from Skylark). Ohatsu in turn animates through memory and recollection the Cinderella story of her dead friend Keiko whom we never see except as a manifestation by a dancer. Keiko's absence is vivid and potent.

As Ohatsu, Asako Izawa, a recent WAAPA (West Australian Academy of the Performing Arts) graduate, was outstanding. She managed to be what we imagine a modern Japanese woman is, a steel camellia, and yet utterly particular and convincing as a woman of her class and

culture. She carried the tragic weight and was the dramatic pivot of the action in the play and she stood out against the strong performances by the other two women—the narrator, the fantastically versatile Miki Oikawa and the superb Butoh dancer, Yumi Umiumare.

The triangulation of the main characters—Mark and Ohatsu as actor/puppet/puppeteer would have been better realised if Mark's puppeteer had been a woman as was originally intended when Spare Parts' Noriko Nishimoto was involved. The multiplicity of relationships and plays on doubling needed that additional gender inversion.

The rippling reality of character in motion is stunningly and subtly realised in the exchange between the animate and the inanimate—the actor as opposed to the puppet, the puppet as opposed to the puppeteer and the actor and, in some scenes, the puppeteers appearing to manipulate the actors as if they were puppets.

The music was a fusion of Western and Eastern, with a feel of the modern musical à la Sondheim interspersed with traditional Japanese music played on a koto. Its depth was revealed best in the lyric interpretations by Asako Izawa who gave the songs a Brechtian edge in her self-consciously Japanese accent which led



Miki Oikawa, Yumi Umiumare in *Love Suicides*

to odd and interesting stresses in the English words.

The writing has an authentic flavour to it, there is a coarseness and immediacy in the sexual scenes that refers to a Japanese erotic and a crassness in some of the lyrics, puns and jokes making it often feel like we are hearing a work that has been translated from Japanese into English. As a whole, it is overwritten in the detail and would benefit from some close editing; metaphors and similes tend to come in triplets when doublets would do, however there is no scene, element, or character that is superfluous. *Love Suicides* is an important new Australian play from a writer who continues to set benchmarks for both the ideas addressed and the forms essayed in theatre.

Love Suicides, written by John Romeril; directed by Bruce Myles; puppetry director Peter Wilson; designer Richard Jeziorny; lighting designer Philip Lethlean; composer Peter Neville; The Malthouse Playbox, Melbourne, November 12 - December 6, 1997

Circus in the ascendancy

Suzanne Spinner in awe of the Women's Circus' *Pope Joan*

The Women's Circus began in Melbourne in 1991, the brainchild of Donna Jackson, and was renowned as much for its wit and spectacle as its manifest feminist social agenda. In 1997, Sarah Cathcart was appointed artistic director and *Pope Joan* is her first full scale production. Jackson by all accounts was a hard act to follow but Cathcart has stepped out boldly and led the Womens' Circus into new territory.

Cathcart made her reputation as an innovative performer/creator of solo shows, so it is interesting to see how she deals with the mass, and there are masses of women. The circus inducted 40 new members this year and there were more than 50 including musicians on stage in *Pope Joan*, and as many again offstage.

The story of *Pope Joan*, possibly the first and certainly the only woman pope, is interwoven with the stories of Joan of Arc and numerous witches in an Herstory interleaved with first person stories from women in the circus about their own experiences of nuns, in schools and convents. There is no dialogue, only an intercutting of live monologues in which individual stories become part of a larger framework. The emphasis is on the movement sequences performed by the group and, from time to time, an individual performer briefly becomes a particular character.

It mixes the grandly mythical and historic with the ordinary and suburban trials of girlhood under the influence of powerful and intriguing women. And you are as often reminded of Madeline and the girls in two straight lines, or the whimsical linocuts of Eric Thake, as you are of the Salem witch hunts.

In *Pope Joan*, Cathcart was interested in "exploring physical composition—combining circus skills with an understanding of space, rhythm, form, performance skills and dramatic content", and she collaborated with choreographer Beth Shelton and with Anni Davey and Christina Branton to create the aerial element.

Shelton is an accomplished choreographer and one of the things she is particularly brilliant at doing is getting large numbers of people moving in interesting ways in big arenas, without your even being aware that it's choreography. It all seems to happen so naturally as one sequence flows seamlessly into another, but it's always changing and it's always perfectly judged, it just looks serendipitous.

The aerial work is what makes it circus, and it so easily crosses over into dance with ropes and trapezes. Some beautiful things were done with slack ropes and the women who were all garbed as nuns and you saw it as ringing and peeling church bells. Later things got tighter and tauter and the ropes became slip knots and nooses as the witches were strung up by their naked feet and swung there in front of us, like animals, live game hung to season after the hunt, and we were the villagers who'd come to watch the show.

However the *pièce de resistance* was, fittingly, the sequence depicting the ascendancy of *Pope Joan* herself. She rose on the backs of all those humble, nameless, undifferentiated women from whom she came. She literally walked all over them, as they prostrated themselves before her. A long line of women is stretched diagonally across the space. She begins her procession, walking on their flattened backs, but as she goes further they rise up and

her progress across their backs is made harder but she goes on until finally they turn their backs on her and she has to climb up and over them, one by one. Each step she takes is more careful, more measured, more decisive, more definite, and more dangerous for everyone.

Pope Joan had a wonderful quality of light and space, a spare, poetic and meditative aesthetic. The strength of the actual space, the Old Police Garage in Russell Street, was asserted and felt. It utilised a large rectangle with the audience on one side, looking down from a wide, low rake. You felt as if you were looking onto a vast walled courtyard or a medieval town

square with a campanile in the distance.

The lighting design by Efterpi Soropos was exquisitely simple and utterly powerful with a sense of sharp European sunlight painting deep, long shadows. The music under the direction of Kim Baston combined polyphonic harmonies of hymns and Latin chants with contemporary pops in a rich and vibrant blend of massed voices and an underscore played on an eclectic range of instruments.

The audience response was amazing—I did not go to the opening but on what I presumed was an average night in the second week, it was packed to the rafters and at the end they stamped and whistled like a footy crowd in the bleachers. Clearly the message is getting out; everyone wants to see ordinary women doing extraordinary things.

Women's Circus, Pope Joan, Old Police Garage, Russell Street, Melbourne, November 20 - December 6

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The line of fire

A new latino performance in Sydney

The flame ignites in the story of *la Malinche* based on the life of a Mexican-Indian princess whose mother sacrifices her to slavery so her brother can be king. Later she will be handed over to the conquistador Cortez as a gift. To survive she will learn Spanish and become his indispensable translator, then his mistress. Fatally, she will fall in love with him and warn him when the Indians plan an attack. For this, her own tribe will call her traitor, *la Chingada!* (prostitute). Cortez will marry a white woman and *la Malinche* will die alone and rejected, another symbol of the treacherous woman.

Later, *La Malinche* will be taken up as a more positive symbol by latino feminists. In Sydney's west, Rosarela Meza, Maggie Escartin, Miriam Marquez and Beatriz Copello in collaboration with the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre and Lucy's Out West Single Women's Refuge set up The Malinche Project to bring together latino women for drama and movement workshops. Jeannie Lewis, a singer with strong connections to the latino community leads the music sessions. For 40 latino women, meditation on the spirit of *la Malinche* fires strong emotions, shedding light on their own lives in Australia. Their stories are woven into words by poet Beatriz Copello.

And now the performance of the work, *Malinche's Fire*. Now Beatriz' bilingual magic realist play is the flame, fanned by the four performers—Rosarela Meza, Miriam Marquez, Zulema Cappielli and Carmen Salines, director Gail Kelly, composer Lea Collins, choreographer Liliana Correa and designer Julia Christie.

RT

Malinche's Fire, Belvoir Street Theatre Downstairs, March 4-8; Fairfield School of Arts, March 14-15



Larisa Chen and Chris Murphy in *Waters of Brightness* Andrew Worssam

winding paths, reflecting lakes, its views and its intimate pagoda retreats, for the eeriness of Hearn's preoccupations both personal and cultural, and their entwining. Ambitious at the level of ideas, *Waters of Brightness* also promises "physicality, dance, puppetry and filmic special effects". And the tea room serves more than tea for those wishing to relax before the show (a walking venture) while listening, appropriately for the performance's narrative, to a Pi Pa musician.

RT

Kantanka, The Waters of Brightness, director, Carlos Gomes; writer, Michael Cohen. Chinese Garden, Darling Harbour, January 29-February 15, 8.00pm Ticketek 9266 4800 Enquiries 9294 3033



Entracte, *Eclipse*, 1995

Bob Seary

Writing the ineffable

Currency Press and *RealTime* announce the first anthology of Australian performance, *Performing the Unnameable*

Performance does not lend itself easily to documentation. Works in which movement, sound, music, projections and digital media combine and where the word plays a secondary role, or no role at all, are not easily scripted, except as a descriptive act after the event, side by side with an often unilluminating archival video. Of course, these works might exist initially as scripts but quite unlike any playscripts that you have ever read. They might read as set of possibilities, actions, a list of instructions with occasional passages of provisional text. There are those who believe that performance scripts, in whatever shape, are so inadequate in evoking the actual performance as to be useless. There are those too who believe performance simply transcends the word. So why bother to collect performance scripts? Because there's some great writing in them, because they suggest to other performers ways of working, because they inventively document (rather than forget) significant performances, and because they reveal writers, writer-directors, writer-performers to have played a significant, if often ignored role, in the development of Australian performance.

Many performance works don't start from the writer, the writer is one of a number of collaborators, contributing as required by the evolving work and his or her interplay with other collaborators. On the other hand, a performance script can in some cases read like a playscript, albeit an unusual one, where a writer (often a writer-director) initiates a production. One way or another, the ideal performance script combines elements of the original set of ideas with descriptive documentation of the finished work.

Performing the Unnameable is a significant first—the first anthology of performance texts created by Australian performers, performance companies and writers. It will be published this year by Currency Press, Australia's Performing Arts Publisher, in association with *RealTime*. The book's timely arrival coincides with the growing study of performance in tertiary education and the programming of Australian performance in major arts festivals here and overseas. More than 20 performances from over the last 20 years are included in a large format book, with photographs and introductions to each text. In addition to scripts, *Performing the Unnameable* includes artists' observations about their works, and about how words work in relation to other media in performance.

The combination of scripts, artists' statements and photographs, and the consequent interplay of theory and practice, along with the sheer range of innovative writing make *Performing the Unnameable* a unique and much needed resource for the practitioners, teachers, students and audiences of Australian performance. Besides, it'll be a great read.

Editors Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman's great labour of love, *Performing the Unnameable*, pays tribute to the largely undocumented work of a generation of artists working across the boundaries of theatre, performance, performance art and new media. The anthology includes contributions from The Sydney Front, Open City, Jenny Kemp, Lyndal Jones, Sidetrack Performance Group, Richard Murphet, Margaret Cameron, Josephine Wilson, Legs on the Wall, Entr'Acte and many others. Date of publication to be announced. KG

Enquiries: Currency Press, PO Box 2287, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012, Australia; Tel 61 2 9319 5877 Fax 61 2 9319 3649 currency@magna.com.au

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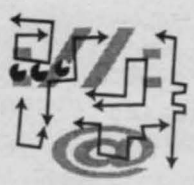
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Trackwork: a performance event on a train

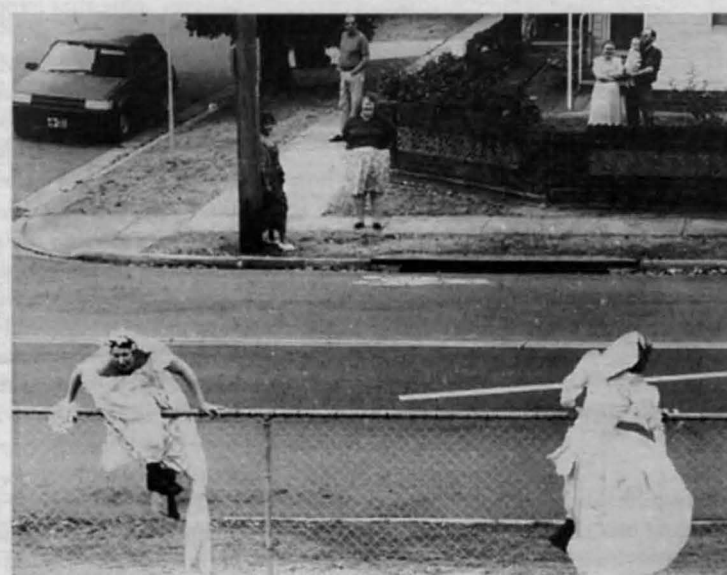
Photographer Heidrun Löhr
takes the trip with Virginia
Baxter →



Dance in the guard's compartment naked with a blue light. Plain clots and unformed lice patrol this train. (Defacement poem) → Waiting for the performance at Redfern station, a guard delivers a monologue to a woman who never replies. Starting on waste of public money he gradually leads into a diatribe/apology for Pauline Hanson. When he moves to the other side of the track, she turns to me and says "Why me?" A bride trails her dress along the grimy tarmac. → The cabin crew introduce themselves. "Passengers are instructed that should the carriage fall on its side, regulations restricting the placement of feet on seats will be temporarily relaxed". They take our imaginary food orders. → Lidcombe station. Watched by Western Suburbs Elderly Asians support group, Mr Thao Chau in blue satin suit performs a sword dance to boarding passengers while Terry Woo in silver lamé croons *Begin the Beguin* on the stairs. Opposite, two ballroom dancers do their best



to glide on asphalt. At the other end of the platform the amplified North African rhythms of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. And all the time the passage of trains interrupts sight and sound. → The things you see. The diva of Beralia, Hilary Oliver, singing from *Don Giovanni* with walkman accompaniment. Four, five six brides dumped onto the road from their wedding cars, weeping on the pavement. Some cars drive past without registering. → A junkie collapses onto the seat with her legs dangling over the side, her head on another passenger's lap. Just when we're wondering if she's part of the show she slouches off. Eyes everywhere. → On the journey to Granville, we're entertained by songs from the cabin crew—a Cambodian song of longing, and Rubena and Lily Siilata sing a song from Suva. A man in the seat opposite



mouths the words. Your mind drifts to the organisers who have had to negotiate the regulations of SRA and presumably a raft of other state authorities to allow the performers this small intrusion into public space. → We leave the train. Citymoon Youth Theatre performs a traditional Vietnamese folk tale of ritual marriage. A couple of hoons fall out of the Cabramatta Inn and angrily circle the audience. → In an antidote to the diatribe at Redfern, at Granville—scene of the 1977 bridge disaster—rappers take on more recent calamities shouting "Pauline Hanson Sux". → Gravity Feed advance and retreat from the yellow safety line with sheets covering their faces. Definitely a case for letting performers indulge your fantasies for you. On the other side of the platform, a graffiti artist completes his canvas cryptogram with the caption "Don't be scared of our art". In the waiting room, an exhibition of paintings and a small poem inspired by a sleeping passenger. → Trackwork, 50 performers, five trains, six stations was created by Urban Theatre Projects in western Sydney, November 29-30; December 6-7



The joys of the writing class

Terri-ann White contributes to *RealTime's* occasional series on the teaching of writing

1

Should I risk reading you an invented voice: that of my great-great grandfather in the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum in 1874, written by me? New and still-raw writing.

can i get?
out
a master insistent pressing down on
me every night
telling me over and over
horrible i never thought such
things before
killing and pulling it apart
it is the world and he wants me to do it
be his servant do it for him
he meek scared
up on top of this hill looking down
on fremantle
that busy town full of bastards my
children

well well here we are and you aren't safe
there's a lion in here for the ladies
a big steel trap for the men a bucket
for the babies fires
will roar through after the disease has
mangled anyone left
i will kill it must be done

blood will flow and then calamity
we are finished
a bad idea this life.

2

I'm caught between these two pleasures: the joys of my four two-hour writing classes each week, and the excitements that stay on hold—never properly activated—of writing a book that I have been 'making' now for three years. In any of the other occupations I have followed there was more clear time to get on with learning about fiction writing, more time to do it. In this job, which I am pleased to be in, I find difficulty in enabling my own work to move ahead. I don't come from an academic background—I hadn't tried this full-time teaching caper before until I started at the University of Western Australia at the beginning of 1996, so I don't have the experience of knowing how to say no. Or knowing what is a reasonable balance: teaching, research, pastoral care, the knockabout days. All that stern intention and seriousness, fidelity to ideas. Ours.

3

...I fall open with happiness.
David Mowaljarlai

Mystery and Manners. There are plenty of intangibles embedded in this marriage: creative writing in a critical site, the assumption of a different register of work. (Which is such rubbish anyway—what's the difference when it's done well?) The common and everyday passions. I'm not interested in writing on the other side of the brain, though, or anything else about finding the voice within. This, for me, is about discoveries of the world, and your voice through that. Being alive to it all.

4

Alison and Jane (not their real names) both come to me in week five of semester for advice or reassurance. They feel that they have become completely submerged in an obsession. And it is quite unexpected. They haven't before felt this obsession (although they have both certainly been in the thrall of love or mothering), didn't know that the commitment they wanted to make would be as strong as this.

There are enough stimulations racing across this course within the first few weeks so that at least a few students need to keep on talking, need additional support. They are making stories that have



Terri-ann White

been sitting dormant, somewhere inside them, for years. Or, if not stories, then the traces of making something with their own expression. That feeling of things bursting out, an exhilaration. They are primed, ready to go, and they have gone, and made reasonable first drafts. But I have asked a number of questions of their work—ordinary dumb ones about point of view and general management of the material—what is going on there, *why* that great gaping hole, which has opened up the whole field for them. They want to make something *good*, they are living with their characters, it's getting out of control. These stories may or may not reach publication 'standard'—that is immaterial: it is the striving that is going on, the grappling with the making, the language; memory and the pleasures of telling, that is what is valuable.

5

This thing that happens, just on the edge of consciousness, and usually in the responsible spaces of daily life. A blooming of family romance, transmitted as an involuntary picture from memory, a tic. Appearing, reappearing, on the edge of things. Fleeting. Flashes that can catch you unawares. Driving through the city and, suddenly, after all the recent optimism, what you realise you want to do, split-second, is to keep driving, right down and into the river. Coming out of a dream filled with good advice, entwined with a warm and beloved body, and suddenly, there it is. A recognition. Sure to be dismaying: so little there to learn from. Girls repeating their mother's history.

The inheritances of a past become mute, shamed into silence and stupidity. A childhood and then an adulthood without the referents offered through blood. Without sticks and stones, those grand *contretemps*, noisy tantrums. Any conflict in this family has been patched over and nobody can remember any detail of the reasons for sisters refusing to speak to each other for the rest of their lives, for half a century. Left for dead, or for conjecturing, isolated, curious members of new generations. Like me.

Memory tics that offer up outlines of bodies and events, of those stored distresses, sadnesses, and, uncannily, some of the pleasures. Reconstructions of the intricate lives of the people you follow in a family.

6

The student writing you like: the only reason I'm doing this job is because I am in the thrall of writing. Without sounding like a suckhole or simply without a critical faculty, I can always find something of interest in this writing by students. It might be the wrong turn: that potential for a telling that has been forsaken; it might be, usually is, the leap of faith into a new space—a bold move,

an imaginative spring-in-the step of language and ideas. All of the other things they bring into their work because of what they are studying: history, theory, politics, anthropology, incipient freedoms.

7

The writing you don't like: of course there will be writing that bores the life out of you. There is boring writing all over the bloody place, everywhere, and most of these students have never even tried before to write a grown-up story. But the beauty of attempting to write a story alongside reading texts in other parts of their program of study is the recognition of all that is required to hold together those disparate threads, the needs and the elements of telling a story. And how you might read work written right now, almost on the spot.

8

I am affected and influenced by the voices that move around the writing class. From the first week together, when we make declarations of our reading practices and obsessions, why we are here; to the second week when we all bring in a selection of favourite writing by someone else. It is hardly ever a flat or embarrassed session, even with shy and lumpy adolescents. Mostly they light up when they read a page of something that has stayed with them since reading it, that means *something* to them. All of the tricks and pieces of advice are just there to start and then keep the juices going: to inspire the student writer *by example*. To show, to offer, a range of ways to do things with words, to make a story live, to discover something about something. To do a mysterious little dance. And to do it in a rather more communal context than usual.

9

I'm sharing all of my passions with these current students, as I do every semester, not sure about the limits of sharing, what I should hold back for my own pleasure, whether this will mean that my favourite things, the work I love, will ever become depleted, whether it will wear down. Am I giving too much of myself? Only time will tell if my enduring passions remain intact, streaked onto my guts, indomitable, or if I start moving over them, resisting them, and deferring to new obsessions.

10

It's the end of my second year of full-time teaching. In this time I've taken on other responsibilities: running a special Honours course of my making, handling Schools and Publicity matters for my department, writing various things for student publications, looking after our Writer-in-Residence program for twelve weeks. And I've probably written only 10, maybe 15 thousand words of this novel in two years (I haven't properly counted): and each province of it still as loose as anything. But if I could suspend that anxiety and admit to the rich testing ground for voices that classes with first, second and third year students, some of whom will never write 'creatively' again and some who will be published, I should feel pleased that I am given access to knowledges and a dynamic that isn't possible just inside my head. As well as this, of course, is the need to re-acquaint myself with those materials that get me going: writing that moves me, so that I can share it with students, use it as a multiple launching pad for asking that question about *why* writing is important. And think about it as I grapple with my expression, my ordering of things.

11

Hard to beat the power of the words on the Certificate of Lunacy of Theodore Krakouer, my grandmother's grandfather,

signed by HC Barnett in 1873. Theodore was suffering from delusions, was in a state of delusional excitement, and told the doctor that *he hears a voice operating from his belly giving him messages from God Almighty to destroy the world*. And his death certificate in May 1877 gives cause of death as Softening of the Brain, Paralysis and Exhaustion. But that appears to be the task I have set myself in my fiction.

12

Your birthplace, where your family has continued to live in for five generations. How marks are made onto physical spaces, how we approach this home-place changing, ourselves; with subtlety, often without even noticing. How will you tell a story from this place, about it, about your family? The heroic versions, the broad historical sweeps, don't work. The borders of official histories already too defined, too excluding. You need a few tricks up the sleeve to manage those trajectories, those maps of forwardness, of progress, to be able to order the information that comes your way.

You might be best employed to try for little things: for imagined moments based upon loose evidence picked up along the path of research.

To live in a small place when it is a matter of adult choice can be to entwine yourself with the past, to admit that there is enough pleasure lodged in the familiar, the expected. To desire that stability, the rock of belonging involves a nostalgia, perhaps. The funny thing is that once you uncover the first detail of a secret, other messy stuff inevitably comes dumping in. And it's all been sitting there, close to hand, for years. At your fingertips, on the margins of your own memory. This is the way coincidence operates, a clustering of sources and influences, a chance remark at a party. Suddenly, everyone's your cousin or has happened upon one person in the family at some time in their life. A store of Perth stories that circulates for generations. And that seems to be a forward motion.

13

What does the university get out of this? Kudos, probably, when student writers or staff members win prizes or are published, or both. But much more than that, it appears to me, is the benefit of another slant on the pedagogical project, what a student can learn about learning by doing the work of a writing class. You can certainly learn about what is needed to make a story, and you may be able to learn about passion and collegiate spirit and how to enter a text as a reader and writer and discuss it. A repertoire of critical approaches. That parallel project of invention, play, wrestling with ideas and expression, alongside reading of theory and literature. The linking-in of ideas—about reading, about subjectivity, about the world.

14

The names, for me, are now incantations. Theodore Krakouer. Brina Israel. Sometimes, it seems that the two names are all I have from your lives, as a record of you. An unsatisfying yield from many hours of tracking you down in the public records and in the family store of memory and myth for what seems to be most of my life. Will I have to make up a character to fit what I want from you? My worthy, honourable, pioneering great great-grandparents?

Terri-ann White writes and teaches in Perth. Her first book, a collection of stories, Night and Day, was published in 1994 by Fremantle Arts Centre Press. This is an edited version of a paper presented at the second annual conference of the Association of Australian Writing Programs in Melbourne in October, 1997.

OnScreen

film, media and techno-arts

Feature

Rats in the walls

John Baxter, author of books on Fellini, Buñuel, Spielberg and now Kubrick reflects on the challenges of writing biography

Just before Christmas, having failed to convince my producer that the same effect could be achieved on the roof of Broadcasting House, I found myself standing in an icy wind deep in sodden Hertfordshire, recording the introduction to a BBC radio documentary about Stanley Kubrick, whose biography I had just published.

We'd hardly begun when cars began issuing from behind the three-metre tall hedges and fences that surround Kubrick's rural retreat, Childwick Bury. One of them stopped beside us. A bearded Kubrick clone in donkey jacket lowered the window and regarded us expressionlessly.

"You're John Baxter, aren't you?" he said at last. "I liked your book on Buñuel."

It was a defining moment in my career as a biographer of film personalities, but one that I'd heard colleagues describe in similar terms of disquiet. From the time of James Boswell, intimacy with one's subject has presented problems of loyalty and responsibility. The biographer of the late George Turner became disturbed about his failure to communicate for some days and, going round to his house, found him paralysed on the floor. Her intervention probably saved his life. But what did it do for her book?—which, as far as I can gather, has never been published. Was Blanche D'Alpuget's life of Bob Hawke better or worse for the fact that it reached the parts that other biographies didn't touch?

Biographers are something between executant and observer, friend and enemy, historian and psychoanalyst. We inhabit a twilight created by the shadow of our subjects. The place we choose to station ourselves within that shadow—on its outer edge, to enjoy some reflected glory, or in its deepest obscurity, where our subject's enemies (or, indeed friends; surprisingly often friends) can approach us, confident of anonymity—becomes the essence of our style. Few biographers who sit down for tea with their subjects, let alone sleep with them, can bear thereafter to reveal what they found when they flipped through the diary. Few who started by flipping through the diary accept the invitation to tea.

Journalists always ask, "Did X co-operate with you on this book?" How to explain that, for me at least, this isn't an option? That the sunny edge isn't the interesting place in the shadow. W.H. Auden, who knew from the gay underworld of the 30s how seldom authorized biographies told the truth, wrote in *Who's Who* that "A shilling life will give you all the facts", but went on to point out that such biographies, chock-full of information normally supplied by the helpful subject, don't explain why

*he sighed for one
Who, say astonished critics, lived at home:
Did little jobs about the house with skill
And nothing else; could whistle; would sit still
Or potter round the garden; answered some
Of his long marvellous letters but kept none.*

The man who accosted us outside Kubrick's home—long-time assistant Tony Frewin, as it turned out—didn't order us off. ("We thought you might be tabloid photographers," he explained.) On the contrary, he invited us to stay as long as we liked—"It's a public road"—and left with the suggestion that I do a book about Michael Powell, though he wouldn't be drawn on what he thought of the Kubrick book, nor what Kubrick thought.

Would it have been better had he invited us in? Or ordered us off? On the whole, I would have almost preferred the latter to the ambiguous position in which he left us, tolerated, but outside the fence. At least, from where I stood, I could see the world beyond Childwick Bury. And very often it's how a subject fits into that world which is the real story of a biography.

Biographers have traditionally had the benefit of that distance because their subjects were dead; conventional wisdom dictated that you couldn't write a 'life' until that life had ended. A few, like Donald Spoto, who's done books on Alfred Hitchcock, Laurence Olivier and Ingrid Bergman, still make it a rule never to write about the living, but they're in the minority.

The vogue for journalistic lives of the living is a product of investigative journalism in the 60s. Its arrival threw the field into uproar. Readers who had been happy to wait until the will was probated, the papers indexed, the heirs dutifully interviewed, now demanded estimates of careers still in full flower, historical perspectives on last week's headlines. The primary risk of the biographer was no longer bad reviews but libel suits.

The right to privacy became an issue, as did the negotiable value of an image. James Dean's heirs registered his likeness as a trade mark. As long ago as 1978, Woody Allen had Lee Guthrie's book about him withdrawn and pulped, not because it defamed him, but simply because it used published interviews and publicity material without his

authority. George Lucas's Lucasfilms has now claimed that, by virtue of non-disclosure agreements signed by actors in the original *Star Wars* trilogy, the company owns their every memory of the films.

In this climate of revelation, 'Authorized', once the ultimate recommendation, has largely become a synonym for 'anodyne'. But, while the label increasingly turns off potential buyers, publishers, particularly in America, continue to find it soothing. Some of the reasons are obvious. No authorized biographer will ever be sued for libel. Also, a living subject will probably lend his/her name and, maybe, presence to the book's promotion—as, for instance, Clint Eastwood did to Richard Schickel's enthusiastic study of two years ago.

The public failed to buy Schickel's book in the hoped-for numbers, sensing perhaps that more remained to be said about the King of Carmel, Cal. Now, ironically, an American publisher is refusing to issue the revisionist Eastwood biography it commissioned from a major writer in the field, and which reveals startling new information about the star's private and business life. Nor is any other reputable publisher prepared to take it over.

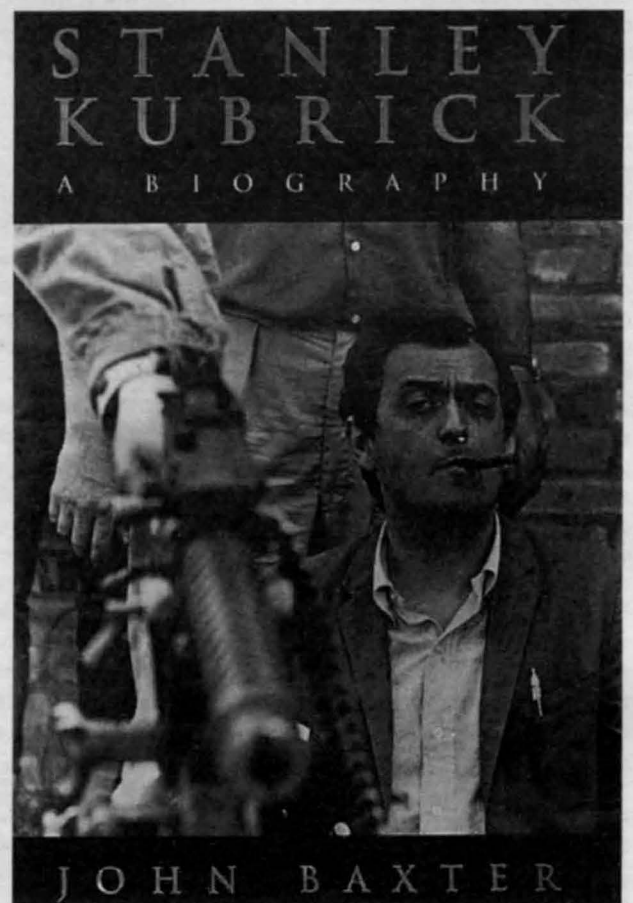
A few weeks ago, the writer, an old friend, came to Paris. We sat in Les Deux Magots over coffee and gloomily reviewed possible reasons for the general rejection. Not fears of libel, since the book is meticulously researched and documented. Not the risk of poor sales, since it can hardly fail to attract attention. No, the main reason, as far as one could gather, was a sense that publishers didn't wish to be unkind to an icon; that, even if the writer didn't mind remaining outside the sunshine of Clint's approval, they did.

This answer rang true. It explained why American biographies of the great dead are so often less sparing than those of the living; no dead actor is going to cut your chairman at the next MoMA opening. And, to my satisfaction, at least, it accounted for the problems that Europe-based writers experience in finding American publishers, and the hostile reviews that often greet their work when they do.

A few years ago, a New York agent counselled me that, if I wanted to do better in the American market, I should study two recent best-sellers; the lives of automotive executive Leo Iacocca and test pilot Chuck Yeager. Both, of course, weren't biographies but discretely ghosted autobiographies, by far the preferred form of most US publishers. Increasingly, however, American biography/autobiography is a field of its own, as distinct, and distinctively American as the self-help book, and almost as obsessed with the Feel-good Factor. The emphasis, even where the person spent most of their working life elsewhere, is on their time in the US. The author of the most recent American book on Kubrick, Vincent LoBrutto, devoted a third of it to Kubrick's childhood, but never bothered to go to Britain, where Kubrick has lived and worked since 1963. Joseph McBride did more than 200 interviews for his hagiographic on Steven Spielberg, most of them also about the early life, to which he devoted half of the book. Despite the fact that most of Spielberg's later films were made there, McBride never bothered to go to Britain either.

Should one be surprised? The embrace of the sunny, the optimistic and the chauvinistic by US publishers and biographers simply mirrors the prevailing attitude of its popular culture. European biographical methods, like European films, are more rigorous, their executants more sceptical, less easily seduced by a smile from their subject and an invitation to tea. The price of rigour, however, is a place at the edge of things; we're rats in the walls of the mighty. But isn't that where they keep the secrets?

John Baxter, Stanley Kubrick: A biography, Harper Collins. His next book is a biography of Woody Allen followed by one of George Lucas.



Essay

Trapped in a wwweb of deceit

Alan Thomas inside the Age of (X-file) Information

As we are told loudly and repeatedly, by innumerable voices in innumerable places, this is 'The Age Of Information'. Indeed the cacophony of voices telling us so seems in some sense to provide the proof of its own claims; the ever accelerating multiplication of sources, modes of access, of speed and reach of information that we are experiencing do indeed appear to be articulating a qualitative change in the cultural dynamics of our society and of the world at large. It seems significant, then, that one of the major claims made for the new information technologies, and for the internet and the world wide web in particular, is that by providing a non-hierarchical structure for the exchange of information amongst a (potentially) global audience, they democratise the access and control of information. The more traditional forms of media (television, radio, print etc.) operate as centralised sites of information distribution and control, working on a 'broadcast' model of one-to-many, thereby concentrating power at the top of a fixed information hierarchy where information flows in one direction only, from the top down. The new media, on the other hand offer us a 'netcast' of many-to-many, distributing the flows of information and their control horizontally as an infomatic field which organises and reorganises itself transversally from moment to moment (Deleuze and Guattari would call this form of organisation 'rhizomatic', and that of the traditional media "arboreal"; see "Introduction: Rhizome", in Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [trans. Brian Massumi], Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 1987). By facilitating mass participation in both the production and consumption of information, the ever accelerating spread of these new media technologies democratises information and the distribution of it, and thus society at large. Or so the story goes.

What this story leaves out, however, is that the 'democratisation' of information effected by the new media of the internet and the world wide web has as its corollary a parallel divorcing of that information from any identifiable legitimising or authorial source. Anyone with access to a computer is able to put information out there on the net, produce their own web page, contribute to discussion lists or internet relay chats and so on; this is precisely the 'democratisation' such media make possible. However, the *value* of that information remains at best ambivalent for those net surfers who ride its flows. With traditional, more centralised forms of media, it is the institution distributing the information, the corporation, the government, the university, as much as the individual signing her name to it that gives it its legitimacy, on the basis of that institution's history and reputation as a trustworthy (or otherwise) source; it is precisely its undemocratic institutional centralisation which allows it to be recognised and authorised as a 'reliable' source of information.

The democratic masses of information flowing on the net have no such institutional legitimacy; they are effectively anonymous, in practical if not literal terms (obviously there are many identifiable information sources/sites on the net, with clearly defined institutional allegiances that allow you to judge their value as an information source one way or the other. My claims apply more properly to those sources/sites on the net that more clearly fulfil the 'democratising' promise held out by the net—those that give a voice to non-institutional sources of information). In the absence of any mechanism of verification, claims made by such sources can at best raise questions or doubts, without being able to lay claim to the status of fact or truth. Moreover, given the democratic multiplicity of sources that flood the net, every topic has such a plethora of contradictory or conflicting claims made around it that for every piece of information from a legitimised source on the net (a government or corporate web site for instance) there will be 10 unlegitimisable ones contradicting it, undermining the legitimised source without being able to take its place. In effect, the multiplication of sources and sites of information made possible by the internet and world wide web produces not so much an increase in *knowledge* as an increase in *doubt*.

There is an important distinction to be made here between information and knowledge; knowledge is in essence a *structuring* of information via the binary opposition of truth and falsity, as determined by mechanisms of legitimation (ideology if you like). Information however, in its cybernetic sense, knows no negation, no oppositional structuring, no 'organisation' as such at all. The state of maximum information is the state of maximum indecipherability—what's called 'white noise' or static (white noise is basically the sound of every frequency heard simultaneously. In contrast, a pure tone consists of a single, distinct frequency). Any structuring or codification of this static into a communicable message involves a redundancy of information (since any system of communication/representation is implicitly a system of *repetition*) which necessarily decreases the amount of information present in any given signal, at the same time as it makes it possible for that signal to actually tell you something. The new media of the internet and world wide web present us with an ever increasing load of information of indeterminate value, while simultaneously undermining the traditional sources of legitimisation and authorisation; at the same time that the flow of information is increasing, our capacity to determine that information as true or false, to *structure* that flow, is undermined. The explosion of the infomatic field that characterise the 'Age of Information' brings with it a concomitant decrease in our capacity to *order* that information into a systematic pattern of truth and falsity, of determined *knowledge*. The age of information could just as accurately be called the age of noise, the age of static.

For a practical example of this on-line tension between authorised and legitimated knowledge and the unlegitimised flows of information made possible by the new media, you only have to look as far as the supremely paranoid TV creations of Chris Carter, *The X-Files* and *Millennium*. The shows themselves exist of course as part of the traditional media, their source clearly identified with Carter and the Fox network. They have, however, spawned a substantial on-line community; according to Steve Silberman, in an article in the on-line magazine *Hotwired* (<http://www.hotwired.com/special/millennium>) there are over 900 unofficial sites devoted to *The X-Files* alone. These sites aren't just devoted to providing information about the shows themselves; many take the material provided by the show as a basis for their own wildly divergent fantasies, creating their own thoroughly unauthorised plotlines that remould the content of the show to match

their own desires. There is, as Silberman notes, an entire "subgenre of these home generated parallel plot universes devoted to gay and lesbian plot developments, and gleefully X-rated contributions from the 'Gillian Anderson Testosterone Brigade'" (Anderson is the show's female lead; there's also a "David Duchovny Oestrogen Brigade" devoted to its male lead). A similar situation developed around Carter's other show, *Millennium*, when it was premiered in the US. This would seem, on the surface at least, to be a perfect example of the net's democratising potential; the mutation and multiplication of an originary legitimised source by an on-line community into a mass of chaotic and incompatible 'responses' which turn the original material to their own 'illegitimate' ends.

Perhaps it was this sense of their (copyrighted) material escaping from their control that prompted Fox to attempt to sweep the net clean of unofficial sites based on their shows, by threatening web-servers supporting these sites with legal action if they didn't boot the offending sites off-line. This attempt to maintain control of legitimation and authorisation of their product received a swift response from the on-line community, with the formation of numerous protests sites (featuring the slogan "Free Speech is Out There", itself a mutation of a well known *X-Files* motto), the posting of Fox's legal letters on-line, and the alleged crashing of Fox's mail server by the masses of e-mails from outraged fans (see http://www.yahoo.com/_News_and_Media/Television/Shows/Science_Fiction_Fantasy_and_horror/X_files_The/X_Philes_Millennium_Protest/ for a selection of links to sites dealing with this topic. For the official Fox response, see http://www.geocities.com/Athens/6975/fox_statement.htm). Much of the media coverage and on-line outrage in this exchange focused on Gil Trevizo, a student at the University of El Paso, Texas, who had set up an unofficial *Millennium* site even before the show had premiered in the US, and who then had his on-line access blocked by the University in response to demands by Fox. Recently however, his status as an on-line martyr to censorship has come into question on the same protest sites that his alleged plight generated; there are now claims that he has been manipulating the cyber-community to his own ends and is not to be trusted. (The site on which I saw this claim made seems to have disappeared in the space between my initial research and the final writing of this article. It's enough to make you paranoid...)

All the themes are here; the multiplication and appropriation of information on-line via the unlegitimisable masses, attempts by the site of institutional authorisation (in this case Fox) to control these ever multiplying flows of information and contain them within the traditional hierarchies of control, 'democratic' on-line protest over these attempts to limit and control the free flow of information, and finally the paranoid questioning of the truth status of the whole exchange by the very on-line community that generated it in the first place. Faced with this mass of conflicting claims, all focused in different ways precisely on the issue of the control of information and its legitimisation on the net, the only position one is left to take up is to doubt everything and everyone. As they say on *The X-Files*, "Trust no-one".

As such, I would suggest that superfluity of information offered by these new information technologies, divorced as they are from traditional modes of legitimation, does not of necessity lead us towards an increasingly transparent and/or democratic society. Despite the expanded range of access it offers for 'the masses' to a variety of information from a multiplicity of sources (which one might expect to free that information up from the kind of political cum ideological manipulation exemplified by the actions of the US military during the Gulf War), in the absence of a means of 'filtering' this body of conflicting claims to the truth through some authorising or legitimising mechanism, it pushes the 'masses' that it mediates towards what could be described as a state of *paranoia*. Unable to determine or choose any one given perspective as 'true', all come under suspicion. This is not to say that there is 'no longer' any truth; rather that our relationship to it has changed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *The X-Files* offers us an exemplary formulation of these new conditions of knowledge in an infomatic world as its motto: "The Truth is Out There". Perhaps there *is* a truth to the matter, perhaps there is genuine knowledge, but it is never *here* where I am, it is only ever *out there*, somewhere else, inaccessible and perpetually absent; here where I am there is only the static hiss of information flowing.

Allan Thomas (a.j.thomas@latrobe.edu.au) is a Melbourne based writer currently working in the Department of Cinema Studies at La Trobe University on a PhD on the non-significational content of film.

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Road movie blowout

Noel King reviews a big new collection of road movie essays

The Road Movie Book, eds Steven Cohen and Ina Rae Hark, Routledge 1997. 379 pp. \$ 34.95

By 1953, the US had 6% of the world's population and 60% of its cars. By 1959, 1.25 million Americans had died in car accidents, more than in all US wars combined.

Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*, Routledge, 1991

If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.

M. N. Chatterjee, quoted in Michael Atkinson, "Noir and Away: Notes on Two Detours", *Bright Lights Film Journal*, 15, 1995

After reading the Introduction and 16 chapters you'll be none the wiser on what constitutes a 'road movie' but you will have encountered some lively pieces of writing. Various genealogies are suggested, and the road movie is compared with other genres: the western, the musical, the screwball comedy, the film noir. As the articles cast their taxonomic net over their supposed sub-generic object, the unity of the collection seems to depend on the mantric repetition of 'road movie' across a series of often fascinating discussions of quite different films.

Although the grab-bagness of the articles means their coherence derives from an agreed-in-advance conceptual object, I was surprised to find no mention of Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey*, which seems an obvious historical-theoretical point of entry to any reconsideration of the 'road movie'. And in a collection which presumably purports to offer the latest word on the topic, it seems odd that no article refers to Mark Williams' collection of short essays, *Road Movies* (Proteus Books, 1982). Some essays overlook earlier work on the films they are analysing. So a piece which mentions Joseph Lewis' *Gun Crazy* (1950) only in passing cites Jim Kitses' definitive analysis of that film in the BFI Film Classics series (*Gun Crazy*, BFI, 1996) while an essay which discusses *Gun Crazy* at length makes no mention of Kitses' work. Two sets of editorial eyes should have identified oversights of this sort when assembling the collection.

This slightly pedantic bibliographical point indicates the nature of this critical enterprise. Various established critical paradigms (landscape-geography, hybrid genres, queer theory, nationalism/community, gender/genre, masculinities, Baudrillard's America) are applied to a new object, the 'road movie'. Given the professional-institutional location of most of the contributors (the US academic system) it would be silly to deny the reality of the road they must drive in order to secure tenure and/or academic acknowledgment and advancement. The result is a slightly tendentious, occasionally ponderous anthology which enlarges sundry c-vs and offers readers...what? Well, readers receive the upside of grab-bagness; the 'road movie' becomes a generous umbrella under which some lovely pieces of writing gather.

Ina Rae Hark's engaging discussion of *Midnight Run*, *Rain Man* and *Planes Trains and Automobiles* (as "buddy-road movie"), together with her claim that these films critique yuppieism, links her with Jane Feuer's recent work on Reaganism, television and yuppies (*Seeing Through the Eighties*, Duke UP, 1995). As the chronotope of the road overlaps with the trope of the formation of the couple we hear of "outlaw couples", couples defined by Otherness. Sharon Willis, who has written on *Thelma and Louise*, here turns her attention to *To Wong Foo*, and *Boys on the Side*; and Katie Mills reads Araki's *The Living End* as "an AIDS road film"—but overlooks Ida Lupino's *The Hitchhiker* (1953) and Agnes Varda's *Vagabonde* (1985) when she says that *To Wong Foo* is "as far as I can trace...the first road feature directed by a woman". Robert Lang has a good piece on *My Own Private Idaho* and the "new queer road movies" and Pam Robertson, author of *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp From Mae West to Madonna* (Duke UP, 1996) writes well on *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *To Wong Foo*.

When Barbara Klinger contextualises *Easy Rider* by referring to the 1956 National Highway Act which generated the vast system of interstate highways in the US, I was reminded of Edward Dimendberg's "The Will to Motorization: Cinema, Highways, and Modernity", (*October* 73, 1997, pp 91-137), especially the section where he mentions Norman Bel Geddes' *Magic Motorways* (Random House, 1940) and comments on Hubert Cornfeld's "highway caper film", *Plunder Road* (1957). Klinger's historical-historicising approach is similar to Steven Cohen's exploration of "Showbiz culture and roadtrips in the 1940s and 1950s", where he makes the Hope-Crosby-Lamour *Road to Morocco* and *Road to Utopia*, and the Claudette Colbert-John Wayne *Without Reservations* (1946) seem very interesting pieces of cinema. Elsewhere in the volume the *Road To...* films receive a more predictable processing from a camp-queer perspective and it's clear they are in line for an approving critical reappraisal.

I enjoyed the way Mark Alvey's discussion of *Route 66* (1960-64) placed that program in terms of then-current US television formats. The action-adventure/serious drama format merges with the semi-anthology, so that the travels of two Corvette-driving urban hipsters is linked to the earlier western series, *Wagon Train* (1957) and to (*Route 66* writer) Sterling Silliphant's earlier *Naked City* (1958).


Across the essays all the usual road film suspects turn up (*It Happened One Night*, *Sullivan's Travels*, *Easy Rider*, *The Living End*, *Thelma and Louise*, *My Own Private Idaho*) but sometimes the predictable turn is accompanied by an unexpected emphasis,

as in Julian Stringer's delightful discussion of Russ Meyer's cult-camp sexploitation classic *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, which is addressed mainly to make a case for the neglected Meyer gem, *Motorpsycho!*.

Although there are several references to non-American objects—Bennet Schaber's opening essay mentions Hitchcock's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1939) and Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934), Angelo Restivo's piece focuses on the Italian autostrada, everyday life, advertising and modernity by way of a reading of Dino Risi's *Il Sorpiso* (*The Easy Life*, 1964), and Melbourne academic and novelist Delia Falconer writes on the *Mad Max* trilogy—it would have been nice to see more road movies from other cultures mentioned.

I also yearned for styles of writing not on offer here. I was nostalgic for something as readable as Greg Ford's great review of Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* 25 years ago (*Film Quarterly* 25, 2, 1971-72) and John Flaus' lovely review of the same film in *Metro* (1997); I hankered for something like John Belton's "Film Noir's Knights of the Road", (*Bright Lights Film Journal* 12, 1994), and Rick Thompson's piece on Mitchum's *Thunder Road* (1958), reprinted (disguised as a "translation") in a recent *Metro* ("Maudit: The Devil got Him First", *Metro*, No. 111, 1997). I wanted to read something that linked pleasure in cinema going with pleasure in writing; writing which produced pleasure in its reader by way of a feel for the sentence, the phrase, the quirky formulation that seduces, informs and, occasionally, amuses.

There's not much of that on offer here but the virtue of *The Road Movie Book* is precisely its wide sweep. This permits readers of many ideological persuasions and paradigm interests to find their place under the umbrella. And any collection that can tell you that Hitler loved Capra's *It Happened One Night*, and make you want to watch (in my case) *The Road to Morocco*, *The Road to Utopia*, *Without Reservations*, *Motorpsycho!* and old episodes of *Route 66*, has to be an OK thing.



AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION

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Assistance is available for one off screen culture projects which are not in receipt of regular funding from the AFC and fulfil the aims of the ICD program.
Deadline: Friday 27 February 1998.

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Tel: 02 9321 6444 or 1800 226615. Email: l.hall@afc.gov.au

Essay

Prostituting noir

Patrick Crogan reveals *LA Confidential*'s critical engagement with film noir

The biggest laugh in *LA Confidential* is had when Lieutenant Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) mistakes Lana Turner (Brenda Bakke) for a prostitute who has been 'cut' and costumed to resemble Lana Turner. Even the two investigating detectives, Exley and Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey) have a chuckle to themselves over the incident when they return to their car. At a narrative level this incident indicates a thawing in the deadly serious demeanour of Exley and his passage towards a more pragmatic response to the evil ambiguities of the film noir world, ambiguities he is desperately trying to overcome.

This situation gag is a rich one that operates at a number of levels. The embarrassing misrecognition of the real Hollywood star for the counterfeit whore is all the more funny for happening to the tight-assed Exley, who obviously doesn't go to the movies (or to sleazy bars) to relax. Then there is a Hollywood 'in-joke' at the expense of Lana Turner who had achieved scandal sheet notoriety in her day (the day of the film's diegesis). Media-engineered notoriety is an important thematic and

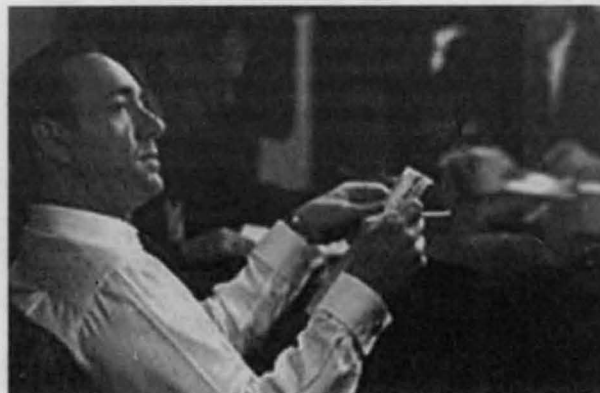


Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce, *LA Confidential*

plot element of *LA Confidential*. This Lana gag responds ironically to the manufacture of sensational incidents by Sid Hudgens (Danny De Vito) for his "Hush Hush" column. There is a complex symmetry between the contrived 'sinnuendo' and exposed indiscretions that are splashed across *LA Confidential*'s pages and Lana Turner's insistence, on being discovered carousing with a low-life punk who acts as muscle for crime bosses, that she is the real Lana Turner and not some prostitute remade in her glamorous image. The Hollywood star and the profoundly costumed whore who resembles her are variations, then, of a mode of constructed identity; they share in a false objecthood that stands in for the artificial Hollywood/LA world of *LA Confidential*. We are in the terrain here of a classic film noir theme: woman as artifice, as destabiliser of social hierarchy and subjecthood and consequently as threat to the 'true'.

And this is to be expected because *LA Confidential* is noir through and through—albeit in a distanced, theatricalised fashion. Of course, one of noir's central characteristics is its theatricality; the pulp fiction plots, the characters who are damaged goods with their sick hearts on their sleeves or with masks hiding further masks and murky pasts, and the famous chiaroscuro lighting. All of these elements made noir foreground its thematic and meta-narrative preoccupations. But in *LA Confidential* it is as if theatricality is being theatricalised. Character motivations, *mise-en-scene*, narrative and thematics are all 'virtual noir', a simulacrum of noir film that is in some ways more noir than noir. The seamy underbelly of noir LA is exposed more plainly—nudity, foul language and a more explicit representation of sexual 'perversity', such as the Betty Page-esque S&M pictures and details of the DA's homosexual liaison—even if the noir ambivalence between exploitation and censure is maintained in the brevity of these shots and the film's overall exercise of a pre 70s restraint. The use of the Australians Guy Pearce and Russell Crowe for the two principal roles in the (very fine) ensemble cast seems to me at least partially related to their slightly alien American accents—their simulation somehow contributing to the distanciation sought in the creation of the milieu of 1950s LA.

LA Confidential's most obvious (and most remarked) antecedent is Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974). Set slightly earlier in the 30s, *Chinatown* consciously imitates the noir films about corrupted (and corrupting) American urban life. But Polanski revisits noir in the manner of an evocation or invocation. His is a 'calling in' of noir modes and themes which amounts to a spiralling that both returns to and transforms the noir world via cross fertilisation with Polanski's eastern European penchant for the Kafkaesque. Also, stylistically Polanski adapts noir rather than attempting to reconstruct it as a convincing recreation. By contrast, *LA Confidential* director Curtis Hanson is intent on doubling noir in a kind of facsimile, using modes of documentary film and news reportage in its opening and closing sequences to provide a simulated authentication of the film's noir 'fax'. While this is a fairly conventional



Kevin Spacey, *LA Confidential*

means of promoting the audience's suspension of disbelief and engaging them in the fiction, in this film such a framing resembles the kind of narrative scene-setting that introduces virtual reality rides—and it serves the same function of enhancing the virtual illusion.

And this returns me to the Lana gag, because beyond (or beneath) the laughs this joke provides and the narrative function it serves, it provides a leitmotif of the simulated authentication that characterises *LA Confidential*'s engagement with noir film. The Lana Turner character provides just such an authentication of the film's fictive world—really early 1950s LA/Hollywood if Lana is there—as well as of the film's noir themes described above, those of woman/the social as masquerade and false identity. But this authenticity is a shaggy dog story: of course, it is not really Lana Turner. The laughter obscures momentarily the most ironically reflexive moment in the film, a moment where one can glimpse the film's theatricalisation of its noir thematic project. This results from its doubling, through the Lana Turner gag, of the very processes of falsification that the noir film seeks to control and eliminate.

Let me get at this another way. Exley's misrecognition of Lana Turner for a prostitute made to look like Lana Turner is set up by the preceding discovery of Pierce Patchett's (David Strathairn) prostitution ring specialising in whores remade in the image of movie stars like Rita Hayworth and Veronica Lake. The prostitutes stand in for the fictional personas of the famous stars in an ironic play on the literal meaning of prostitution: to cause to stand in public. This is the situation that backfires on Exley. And it is this danger of misrecognition, ambiguity and indeterminacy, thematically identified with prostitution in the film, that *LA Confidential* struggles to neutralise in typical, or rather, virtual, noir fashion. But inasmuch as the film repeats this dangerous game of re-making in the Lana Turner gag—and, as I have been suggesting, in its whole *modus operandi* with respect to film noir—*LA Confidential* prostitutes prostitution, including its own, causing it to stand in public.

This would be to say that *LA Confidential* prostitutes film noir rather than saying that it simply is film noir. This is what is most fascinating about the film for me. Some critics have celebrated the film for its ambitions to engage (as *Chinatown* did) in meditation on the social and political interconnections of the seamy noirish world of corrupt police, district attorneys and big business that is, the world of those who prostitute their talents and positions for unworthy purposes (another, related sense of 'prostitution'). But this kind of critical approach considers the film in terms of its virtual noir themes without struggling with the complexities of its prostitution of noir. In attempting the latter one may come a little nearer to the ethical impulse that drives the noir film and allows for its eternal return in Hollywood. To speculate, this impulse might be thought of as linked to an effort to re-consecrate prostitution, to restore its mythic function of communal restitution by means of a controlled substitution/sacrifice that would represent to society its regulation of the evil, the impure and the indeterminate. In the midst of one's immersion in *LA Confidential*'s compelling engagement with noir's symbolic terrain of shifting prostituted identities, one may glimpse in virtual form that which fuels the narrative effort toward this restorative doubling of prostitution.

Philip Brophy is on holiday.
His Cinesonic column will appear in the next edition of *RealTime*.

I don't need to talk to the converted

Lester Bostock on the experience of Indigenous filmmakers at the recent International Documentary Conference

I go back to the first documentary film conference held at McLaren Vale in South Australia 1987. At that conference the Indigenous workshop was seen as a side issue and not included as part of the main conference. Although there were only a handful of Indigenous filmmakers there, they actively participated in the conference. In looking back to that time I felt that the Indigenous component was included as an afterthought, with the 1988 bicentennial activities being discussed at length.

Over the years this has been the pattern when dealing with Indigenous issues. There does not seem to be a place for Indigenous filmmakers within the mainstream filmmaking community, and they are always seen as something of a nuisance. Often the attitude of mainstream film funding bodies and television management is that Indigenous filmmaking is second class and doesn't rate unless there is a white filmmaker in charge. This attitude is often reinforced by the way some people in the film and television industry view Indigenous films.

There are some filmmakers who have made names for themselves using Indigenous subjects, some winning awards for excellence. Not to say that these films are disrespectful or badly made. The latest in a long line of films on Indigenous issues are *Mabo*, *the Life of an Island man*, and *After Mabo* which was previewed at the conference. As I stated at one of the panel sessions, there

are many films made about Indigenous people going back to the early days of the silent era. It is ironic that the first film footage shot was of the Murray Island (the home of Eddie Mabo) people in 1898 and not long after the invention of moving pictures. Over the years Indigenous people have always been the subject of film, from early anthropological film up until today. In recent years Indigenous people have started to take control of their images by making their own films about what concerns them.

The development of the Indigenous film sector has grown from a handful of filmmakers a few years ago to the current crop of who are now working as professionals in the mainstream film and television industry. Among these filmmakers are those who produced the first short film series *From Sand To Celluloid* and they all have gone on to make other films. Add to this the Indigenous production groups such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Media Association (TAIMA), MURRIIMAGES, and Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities (BRACS). We also see the development of Indigenous magazine programs on television such as *Blackout* on the ABC and *ICAM* on SBS, as well as the National Indigenous Documentary Fund scheme managed by the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia

(NIMAA) that was broadcast on ABC, with the next series coming soon on SBS. With this growth in Indigenous films and video and the continued interest in Indigenous subjects there have been put in place protocol and guideline policies for filmmakers when filming in Indigenous communities.

This leads us now to the most recent documentary conference held in Brisbane. The 1997 conference was called *New Frontiers*. What that title meant I was not quite sure, but from an Indigenous perspective frontiers mean invasion, slaughter and genocide practices.

The large influx of Indigenous filmmakers at the conference ranged from CAAMA, TAIMA and BRACS people to independent filmmakers. There were more Indigenous people on panels and taking part in workshops than in the past. Even though there were Indigenous workshops, they were on at the same time as many of the other workshops such as the multimedia session, the pitching sessions and the workshops where the overseas broadcasters were outlining what they require in the ways of program content. Therefore many of the Indigenous filmmakers who wanted to take part in these other workshops were caught up in panel discussions in the Indigenous sessions.

What was missing from this conference was the general assembly gathering where everyone would meet together. As an Indigenous person with

Brisbane being part of my tribal lands, I felt insulted that the conference did not open with the Indigenous welcome to open proceedings, followed with a series of keynote speakers to set the theme of the conference, where all the delegates could hear the point being made before going off into workshops, then reporting back to a plenary session. Many of the delegates did not have the opportunity to hear what the concerns and issues of the Indigenous group were, especially their concerns as filmmakers. This was emphasised in one of the Indigenous sessions when one of the panellists stated, "here again we seem to be talking to the converted; what we have to say should be heard by the main body of conference". This comment sums up the frustration that Indigenous filmmakers have when dealing with the film and television industry.

Finally the venues in which all the workshops were held were too far apart and getting to them was impossible not only for me but for other conference delegates who had difficulty getting around—so much so that towards the end of the conference I gave up trying to attend some of the workshops.

Lester Bostock is President of Metro Television with many years in the media industry. In recent years he has been very active in media training, especially encouraging Indigenous people to enter the film and television industry.

Macro and micro diversity

June Cullen reports on the *New Frontiers* documentary conference in Brisbane

The 5th International Documentary Conference, *New Frontiers*, held in Brisbane over four days last November, had an impressive attendance of over 500 delegates. Such numbers led to an energetic feel on opening night which set the pace for the rest of the conference. The reception was a raucous event of consumption and anticipation as Indigenous performers, members of the opening ceremony, wove their way through the intense crowd. In accordance with the unwritten law of conference events, the venue acoustics failed to live up to expectation. The audible excitement of the crowd coupled with poor amplification meant it was difficult to hear the speakers. Keynote speaker, Phillip Adams, intended to give his address on the 'second-class citizen' status ascribed to documentary makers in the world of cinema. However, given the circumstances, he very wisely stood down, making copies of his speech available to be picked up at reception for those interested.

It was in this environment that the conference program accomplished its promise of encountering numerous frontiers. Practitioner, academic, professional, novice and policymaker alike were well served by what the program offered. However it would be a mistake to judge the conference solely

on the number and variety of strands. The sessions were vigorous and extremely productive in collegial exchange. A stronger indicator of the success of the conference was the dialogue the sessions prompted that extended beyond session times. One aspect of the highly charged debates at the international deals forum was the constraints which funding ultimately applies to cultural form. Discussion was prompted about the benefits and different requirements for European versus Asian co-productions.

A look at the history of Indigenous involvement in conference events usually reveals little recognition of issues: sessions have a tacked-on feel in the overall program, often without proper consultation with appropriate cultural bodies. For the November conference this was obviously not the case. There was a healthy representation of Indigenous material across strands and a number of screenings with Indigenous content. This gave the Indigenous component its rightful place as a natural and legitimate part of any Australian conference, as opposed to an afterthought.

Christine Morris from the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, in her paper "Ethnography and Indigenous Law", said her interest was not exclusively with Indigenous forums

per se but what the non-Indigenous sessions had to offer Indigenous people on issues such as copyright. Morris' particular interest was the pitching sessions where prospective documentary makers argue their cases for funding. The 'pitch' is very much culturally bound and determined by market forces. These sessions struck terror into the hearts of those who attended and required leather hides on both sides of the divide. Morris' suggestion was that a reversal of roles at such a session (Indigenous panel and non-Indigenous pitchers) would be interesting—stimulating debates that might work for both sides.

There were many outstanding aspects to the conference. One was a Chinese film that accompanied a paper presented by David Yuyi Wang, "New Tendencies Toward Awareness of the Populace in 1990s Chinese Documentaries". This session unfortunately did not have a large audience but the film encapsulated the fundamental elements of the documentary tradition outlined in *State of the Art?/Art of the State?* (1997)—the documentary report produced for the conference: "The Documentary tradition has been an inclusive one. As Grierson's contemporary, Alberto Cavalcanti, put it, 'three fundamental elements exist: the social, the poetic and the technical'".

Locating the conference in Brisbane worked well not only to promote local documentary production interests but to establish those interests as part of a wider national production paradigm. South Australia lobbied well throughout the conference for the 'prize' of hosting the next conference in Adelaide in 1999. It is hoped that they have the same option to orchestrate the event themselves rather than a being based solely on national interest. The Brisbane base melded well with national and international delegates. There were also doco newcomers to the field with the attendance of several of the *Race Around the World* contestants. It was a success of diversity with a micro and macro focus.

New Frontiers, International Documentary Conference, November 20-23 1997, Brisbane Australia

Phillip Adams' keynote address and several other papers are available on web page <http://www.peg.apc.org/~qdox>

June Cullen is the School Administrative Officer for Film, Media and Cultural Studies, Griffith University. She has tutored in Film & Media and Australian Studies. She is currently completing a PhD on cinema in Ireland.

Preview

Where the digirati meet the literati

Mark Amerika, keynote speaker at ANAT's FOLDBACK in the 1998 Adelaide Festival, interviewed by Vicki Sowry

As one of few events in this year's Telstra Adelaide Festival tackling the nexus between technology and art, the Australian Network for Art and Technology's FOLDBACK project is bound to cause quite a commotion. Intended as both a celebration of ANAT's tenth anniversary and as an opportunity to interrogate some of the central issues in new media art, FOLDBACK is a transmedia event focussing on media, techno-sound and screen culture. Featuring real-time performances by flesh and data bodies, the event will utilise virtual media to bring together a range of participants from some of ANAT's most successful projects who continue to pioneer developments in cross-disciplinary art.

publishing projects, AltX (<http://www.altx.com>), a venture which uses hypertext as a mode of constructing literary narrative. Tell us a little bit about what hypertext publishing is and how AltX uses this tool.

MA The first thing I would say about hypertext publishing is that it moves away from the Gutenberg-inspired print-publishing paradigm and enters more computer-mediated network environments. Ted Nelson, in the mid 60s, came up with the term "hypertext" to help describe a new kind of electronic text that practices multi-linear sequencing, that branches out and makes references by way of hotlinks.

VS You've indicated in the past that hypertextual publishing "suggests an alternative to the more rigid, authoritarian linearity of conventional book-contained text". At the same time you are the author of several books yourself. What do you perceive are the tensions between the two modes of publishing?

MA Good question. The first, most obvious tension, is the struggle that takes place in what Walter Benjamin might have called "the literary production of our time". My experience is that there is a kind of 'false consciousness' being promoted today via outmoded literary forms like, for example, the novel. Having written and

VS Tell us about GRAMMATRON and Hypertextual Consciousness, two of your most prominent works? Will we be seeing them in FOLDBACK?

MA Yes, I hope to be able to, in the context of my remarks, showcase parts of GRAMMATRON (<http://www.GRAMMATRON.com>) and perhaps HTC and AltX too. GRAMMATRON started as my third novel. I had written about 30 or 40 pages of narrative that took place in a near-future cyberworld where writers and artists were becoming hypermedia avatars teleporting their multimedia work to immediate global reception. This was in the very early part of 1993, way before Netscape, MSExplorer, Real-Audio, Java, etc. The more I looked at the story, the more I realised that this world was going to soon become our collective reality and I immediately decided that, instead of writing another cyberpunk novel, I would reboot the project and build it more as a "public domain narrative environment".

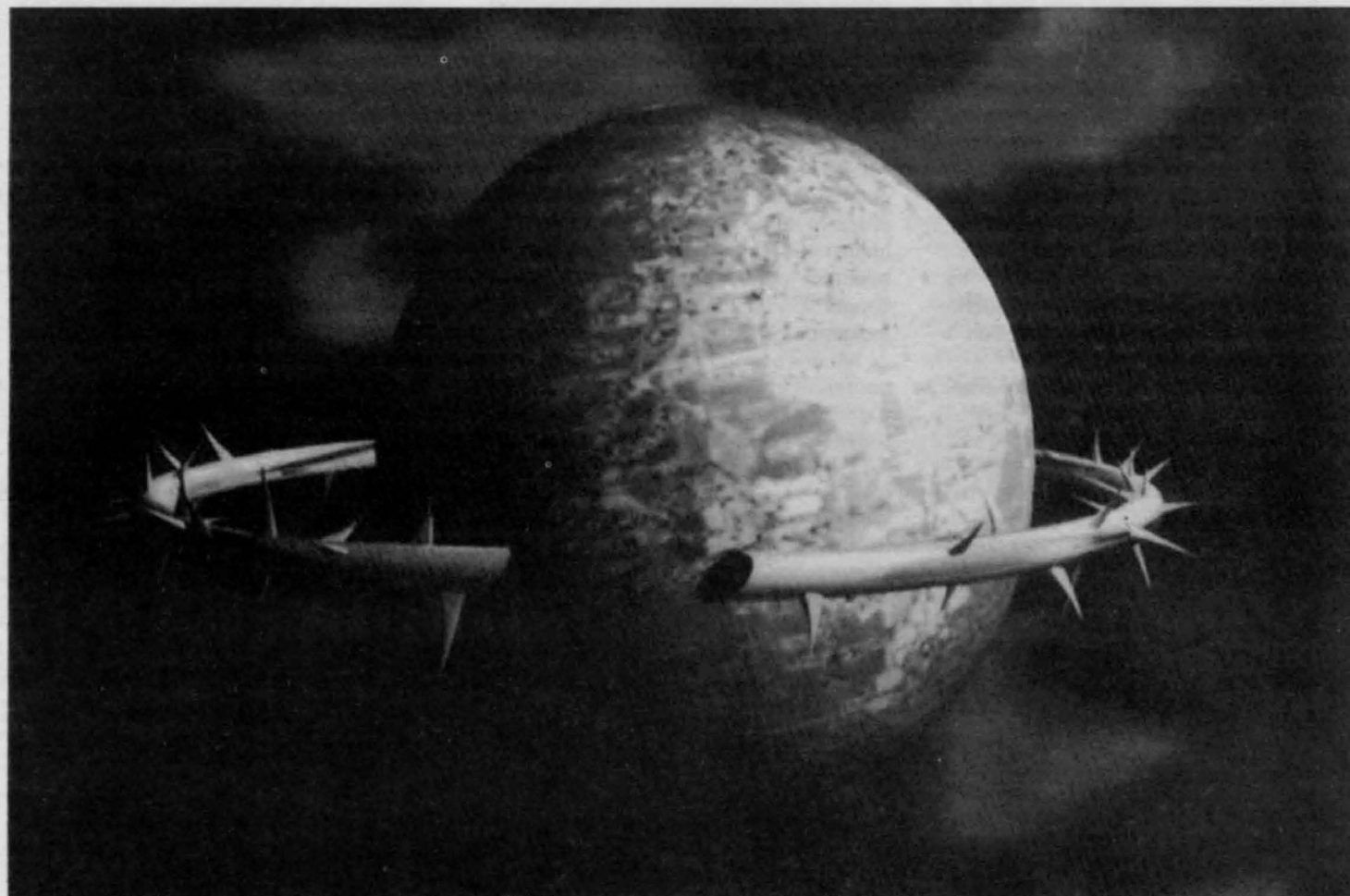
The day that I released the current 1.0 version of the project on the net, it was written up in the *New York Times* and soon thereafter many other international media sources covered it too, thus bringing in a huge audience, more than my books by far. But what's been most interesting about the project's reception is that it's had much more effect, much more attention, in the art world, especially the electronic arts, than in the literary world, which sometimes looks like it is a flailing cockroach that's just been sprayed with chemicals.

As for HTC, it's the companion theory guide, a kind of critical manifesto for a new way of writing critical theory. I think it's time to start playing around with theory more, not shy away from it, especially since most artists and/or intellectuals are, in the end, slightly turned on by it. That's why I decided to use both abstract language and the language of desire and sexuality throughout its screen action.

VS You'll be embarking on a national tour following FOLDBACK. Are you aware of collaborative writing projects which are using online media in Australia?

MA Yes, I'm aware of some of them. I've published many voices from Oz on AltX, starting with Ken Wark and Rosie Cross (*geekgirl*) in early 1994 and Francesca di Rimini (aka *gashgirl*) and members of the Electronic Writing Ensemble like Linda Marie Walker, Teri Hoskin and Jyanni Stefensen, as well as young radical writers like the group Mindflux and many others. I'm also looking forward to finding out about many of the other high-energy writing projects that are developing around the country and will be seeking ways to increase the amount of collaboration and exchange that is already taking place between AltX and emerging new media artists in Australia.

ANAT and Ngapartji, FOLDBACK, Ngapartji Multimedia Centre, 211 Rundle Street, Adelaide, 1998 Adelaide Festival, March 8 12 noon
<http://www.anat.org.au/FOLDBACK>



ANAT, FOLDBACK

As coordinator of FOLDBACK, Director of ANAT, Amanda McDonald Crowley explains, "One of the things that strikes me is that media art is often referred to within a visual arts context only. It is important to remember that most artists working in this area really do work in very cross-disciplinary ways. The artists included in this event are all exploring and critiquing new modes of communication. They are pulling apart and reinventing the ways we are being told we can use communications technologies and exploring collaborative modes of art production in exciting new ways".

Taking place on March 8, FOLDBACK will form a bridge between the themes explored at Writers' Week and Artists' Week. Drawing connections between the often divergent cultures of art and writing, FOLDBACK will include renowned cyberwriter, the USA's eponymous Mark Amerika, elaborating on the frictions between hard and soft publishing, the mechanics of hypertext and the correlations between electronic art and writing.

VS You are the primary catalyst behind one of the first online

These links usually give the reader the option to choose what route they would like to follow. The thing about hypertext published on the world wide web that makes it somewhat gestalt-shifting is that once it attaches itself to a globally interconnected protocol like the internet, the boundaries between composition, publication and distribution start melting into each other. Writers become network-publishers, hypermedia curators, net art distributors etc.

When AltX started in late 1993, we were just learning about the potential of hypertext and we began making links to long documents that most people could just print up and read. But we soon came to realise that 'true' hypertext is something that cannot be printed—rather, it can develop into something more collaborative and multimedia. So with AltX, the model we developed for our 'project' or 'work-in-progress' is the network. We see the network-publishing space as transforming the computer from a word-processing machine (an electronic typewriter) that spits out paper and/or floppy disks, into something more immediate ie a hypermedia composition tool that is simultaneously a publishing and distribution tool.

published two fairly popular yet very avant-novels, *The Kafka Chronicles* and *Sexual Blood*, I know the contemporary book world pretty well and still read a lot of books and respect a lot of the writing coming out of the alternative press scene. But the mainstreaming of so-called 'literary' books as mass-media by-products, especially these 'suspension-of-disbelief' linear narratives, disgusts me.

The most interesting literature, to me, is that literature which breaks out of the mould of conventional realism and its need to predictably tell a story with 'real' characters, plots, settings, etc. Sorry, but my life doesn't read like this. It's much more multi-digressionary and has moments of linkage or connectivity that come to light due to associative thinking, parallel processing, collaborative networking, intuitive writing etc. And so what better way for younger, more adventurous writers who know this to be true—but have been quite literally bound by the mainstream book publishing industry—to break out of this rigid structure than to start experimenting with both their writing practice and their political or cultural work vis-a-vis the web?

bit.depth

Could I please have your attention? asks Jonathon Delacour

Attention can ground an economy because it is a fundamental human desire and is intrinsically, unavoidably scarce.

Michael H. Goldhaber,
"Attention Shoppers!" *Wired*, Dec 1997

When *Wired* first came out a few years ago, I read it from cover to cover.

Nowadays I still buy the magazine each month but no longer feel compelled to read every word: my attention has shifted elsewhere. Still, every now and again, concealed amongst the lifestyle advertising and self-referential American bullshit, there's an occasional gem. The December 1997 issue contained such a piece, by Michael H. Goldhaber, about the attention economy.

Goldhaber's central thesis is that in a world of material abundance (defined as "the US, Western Europe, Japan, and a growing list of other places"), attention is the only truly scarce commodity. For all our vaunted ability to multi-task (for example simultaneously eat dinner, watch TV, and talk on the phone with a friend), it is close to impossible to devote what we might call "quality attention" to more than a single activity at once. It's this kind of attention that Goldhaber sees (correctly) as becoming increasingly valuable.

In Goldhaber's, as in any economic model, there are haves and have-nots: stars who attract attention and fans who pay attention. But, it's a little more complex than that. Because cyberspace

is so huge, anyone with the requisite drive and tenacity can now compete for a global audience. On the other hand, this vast pool will throw up increasing numbers of players, ensuring that the competition becomes even more ruthless.

In the world of old media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines), this relentless drive for attention is played out every minute of the day. A celebrity profile in a weekly magazine: "When she's not fighting off an alien with its tail between her legs, Sigourney Weaver is at home fighting dust. She talks to Marianne MacDonald about housework, her husband and her height". *New Idea*, you might think, or *Who Weekly*. But no, it's the *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend* magazine of January 3.

You don't have to read past the first couple of paragraphs to figure out that the "profile" is just an extended advertisement for Ms Weaver's new movie, *Alien Resurrection*. Actually she has two new movies (*The Ice Storm* is the other). "But", writes the journalist, "we are here to talk about *Alien*". Just so. And, once you've read this puff piece, and been subjected to the relentless barrage of newspaper and television commercials, there'll be a TV special (*The Making of Alien Resurrection*), appearances on the *Today* and *Midday* shows, newspaper reviews, radio interviews, and probably a segment on *The Movie Show*, all telling stories about

Sigourney Weaver and *Alien Resurrection*.

The line between news, opinion, and advertising is now so blurred that almost no media coverage is untainted by marketing imperatives. Marketing is concerned solely with creating and keeping customers. In other words, getting and holding our attention (or loyalty, which is essentially the same thing). If we accept Goldhaber's proposition that attention is scarce and therefore valuable, then attracting attention is difficult and frequently expensive. So it's hardly accidental that the marketing budget for a movie like *Alien Resurrection* usually equals and occasionally exceeds the production budget, the money it took to actually make the film.

The fourth in the *Alien* series, *Alien Resurrection*—despite its higher production and marketing costs—will inevitably return a far greater profit than Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm*. Why? Primarily because of branding. Both movies offer the Sigourney Weaver brand but, despite the success of *Sense and Sensibility*, the Ang Lee brand can't compete against the combined weight of the *Alien*, Winona Ryder, and Ripley brands. In fact, I suspect that the Ripley character (a tough, tenacious, resourceful, courageous woman) has probably done more for feminism than Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, and Gloria Steinem

together (and they comprise three formidable feminist brands).

Nothing attracts and holds attention like a successful brand. Coke, Pepsi, Madonna, Nike, Picasso, Adidas, Mercedes, Miles Davis, BMW, McDonalds, Louise Bourgeois, KFC, Microsoft, Salman Rushdie, Intel, Sony, Peter Greenaway, Arnotts, Claudia Schiffer, Vegemite, Grange, Cathy Freeman, IKEA, Jane Campion, Peter Carey, Russell Crowe, Kylie Minogue, Susan Norrie, Mike Parr, Bettina Arndt, McKenzie Wark...Faced with too much information competing for our scarce attention, we rely on the safety of a known and trusted brand.

There's an old line that the reason academic politics is so bitterly contested is because the stakes are so small. I used to think that was true and that the art world was similar too. But the internecine warfare between artists or academics (or movie stars) is simply the Cola war writ large. The stakes are huge.

Long term success in any endeavour means getting and holding an audience's attention. The key to success for individuals—as for cola manufacturers and movie producers—will increasingly depend on building a successful brand. Whether corporate or personal, successful brand building depends on telling the right story, for, as marketing analyst Michael Moon says: "Every brand tells a story, but not every story creates a brand". But let's leave storytelling for next time...

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Report

Dissolving boundaries

Ned Rossiter witnesses *Women on the Verge of New Technology*

Thinking I'd arrived late to the opening address by Zoë Sofoulis for the conference of the multi-component event *Women on the Verge of New Technology* (hereafter *WoVNT*), I took a back seat at Kulcha, scanned the room, as one does, and quickly came to the realisation that it was not women but men who were 'on the verge' of this cultural-technological situation. I was one of perhaps five men in a venue otherwise filled with women, maybe 60. An audience this size, regardless of sex, translates as a successful event for a critical arts happening in Perth.

In the terms suggested by Sofoulis in her paper which drew on "actor-network theory" (ANT) by Bruno Latour and Daniel Stern's psychoanalytic notions of 'inter-subjectivity', male or female positionality shouldn't make a difference based on binary distinctions. With ANT, the space of culture and society and everything else in the world is no longer defined through core-periphery, interior-exterior models; humans are no longer defined as subjects negotiating a field of objects, or by their gender identity or biological sex, but rather as elements of varying intensity performing strategic connections within networks that might include artworks, institutions and new technologies. (See Zoë Sofoulis, "Interactivity, Intersubjectivity and the Artwork/Network", *Mesh* 10, Spring, 1996. See also Bruno Latour, *On Actor Network Theory: A Few Clarifications*, <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/stt/stt/ant/latour.htm>) However, the problematic of consciousness, and hence human agency, still lingers with Latour's notion of strategic connections: without

consciousness, how can either a human or non-human actant have a strategic capacity? We start heading down the path of proto-subjectivity here...and I don't wish to go there, just yet.

The relationship between women and technology can be thought of in terms of the extent to which artworks produced by women, among others, are commodified, and the effect this has in terms of institutional-market cooptation. This prompts the question, what becomes marginalised as some artworks, artists, curators, administrators and academics ascend the ladder in the emergent culture industry of all things digital? Despite the deification of the internet and, by association, computer generated art, for its capacity to abolish the banality of geographic distance and almost overcome the download weariness of time-lag, the traditional Melbourne-Sydney cultural-economic nexus maintains its monopoly on who and what gets a guernsey. That is to say, cultural forms and practices still take *place*, constituting a verge beyond which a different culture happens as a provincial one. Herein lies the apparent incommensurability of the time of new communication technologies with the *dreck* of everydayness.

On paper, *WoVNT* appeared as a diverse, comprehensive and ambitious event. Along with its central act—a two day conference with speakers from academic, administrative, performance, and 'Digitart' practitioner backgrounds—*WoVNT* included a web design workshop; demonstrations on the use of digital technologies in Yamaji and Nyoongar historiography, biomedical research, and

stock marketeer entertainment; and Leah Irving's video installation whose representation of Millias' 'Ophelia' engaged wistfully with but didn't exactly challenge the 'gaze' of this viewer as he circumambulated her outer electro-sensory reaches. Unfortunately the 'virtual component', *TechnoLust: Desire and Technology*, never virtualised. Computers were stolen from Antwerp's MCA a few days prior to transmission, preventing big-name lectures by the likes of Constance Penley, Rosi Braidotti, Linda Dement, Vivian Sobchack, and Claudia Springer, and video and CD-ROM programs from coming on-line.

Domestic Disturbances did its Perth leg of a national tour, with a selection of digital art and films, some of which had made an appearance at PICA last year in the *techné* exhibition, and a number of which have been commented on in previous issues of *RealTime* (see also *Mesh* #10, 1996). A 'video lounge' featuring work by Perth-based artists was supposed to be there for the sitting, but on the two occasions I made the trip to Kulcha and the Film and Television Institute (FTI) this wasn't to be. At Kulcha, Fremantle's mayor had booked the venue for a 'VIP only' elevated viewing position of the Fremantle Festival parade. I was able to get in the front door as some pretty inebriated and sunburnt VIP folk staggered out, only to discover that removalists had beat me to whatever was the video lounge. And, for whatever reason, *Domestic Disturbances* and the video lounge were not to be found at the FTI.

What is a reviewer to do? Obtain a partial show-reel copy, of course. Brigitte Priestley's *CARNA l/ge ISM* is a sound-image loop that is kind of like Yoko Ono's orgasm piece overlaid on images of metal more twisted than Cronenberg's meditation on Ballard's *Crash*. Vikki Wilson and Rick Mason of Retarded Eye contributed *The Only Machine*, a complex foray into the cul-de-sac of aesthetics. While Kim McGlynn's *Lip*

exemplifies a central theme taken up in the conference: 'women' have a stronger investment in the experiences to be had in the processes of production, rather than in the end product itself. McGlynn takes the trope of liquid identity and puts it to work, scanning her 'menstrual cunt' into the computer, then composing a flower shape which is swallowed up by a mouth with a digi-prosthetic tongue.

Rather than being preoccupied with issues of positionality, Isabelle Delmotte concurred with a kind of liquid-machinic-becoming in her conference paper: "To me women are more likely to allow time to grow and pulse without having an urge to expel the fruits of their patience for no other reason than the ephemeral approval of others". Nonetheless, the dominant criterion of most funding bodies is the delivery of end products. Performer and composer Cathy Travers hinted at the special position performance art may have in its synthesis of processes of production with the product itself. As Travers spoke about and performed extracts from her composition work for the performance group skadada, the following refrain persisted in no other place than my head: does the movement of the performer determine the placement of sound, or does the movement of sound determine the place of the performer? No doubt those working in sound composition and performance art have a ready and possibly dismissive answer to this, but it seemed to me to be a wonderful example of locating a dialogical communication whose expression occurs in the dissolve of boundaries.

Women on the Verge of New Technology; Event Director, Colleen Cruise with Cinematrix, Kulcha and FTI, November 20-December 14, 1997.
<http://www.imago.com.au/WOV>

Ned Rossiter teaches in the Department of Media Studies, Edith Cowan University.

Review

A scandal in Bohemia

David Matthews reviews ABC TV's *Bohemian Rhapsody*

Sometimes, a television documentary can take something you thought was familiar and completely transform it, to reveal aspects you never imagined were there. And that's just when it's really bad.

For a lot of viewers in their thirties *Bohemian Rhapsody* was just this kind of Alice in Wonderland experience. There, once you'd got past the rather interesting recollections of the Sydney Push, the Ern Malley affair, Kenneth Slessor and so on, were some familiar figures: academic and newspaper columnist McKenzie Wark, writers Catharine Lumby, Justine Ettler and Edward Berridge. All in their thirties, bohemian, and they don't care who knows it. All telling us what inner-city thirtysomething life is like these days. Trouble was, most of us didn't recognise it. And worse, some of us are getting tired of having the usual suspects enlist us with their consensual "we". Some of us—I'm referring to people who do not know nor have they ever known the lyrics to *The Brady Bunch* theme song—don't want to be seen as preoccupied with the inanities of 70s TV culture, or with inventing slogans rather than having opinions, or with working too hard on our postmodern *élan* to be political.

Let me coin an easy slogan (why should I miss out?) and say that 1997

has been the year of generationalism. It's been the year in which people in their late twenties/early thirties, broadly involved in the world of ideas, have hit back at what they perceive to be cultural gatekeeping by an entrenched older generation which won't let go of the reins. This has provoked a great deal of debate, some of it productive. I don't need to go into the merits and demerits of the debate to point to two of the deep ironies it has produced. First, the commentators in their 40s and 50s who have been under attack have replied by writing from the security of their newspaper columns to say that of course there isn't an older generation of cultural gatekeepers. And secondly, a small group of younger commentators have practically deafened us with their clamorous talk about how they don't have a voice.

It is only a small group which ever gets consulted in these matters, and this group is working so busily to entrench itself that it seems likely to form the next generation of cultural gatekeepers. The makers of the ABC's *Bohemian Rhapsody* haven't helped at all by imagining that talking to one tiny inner-city Sydney clique enables them to represent what urban-dwelling Australians in their thirties are thinking these days. By doing this, they conspire with what

such commentators as Wark and Lumby are already doing, which is presuming to speak for a generation. For all their talk of postmodern pluralism, they are stating a position and then asking the world (or the ABC, at least) to believe that this is what we are all thinking.

So McKenzie Wark comments, "We didn't have Vietnam, we had *Countdown*". It's a cutely chiasitic little statement, this: it's catchy, it's memorable, it has a little bit of bathos; it's got politics, it's got popular culture, and it's a bit daring.

In fact, the only problem that I can see with this statement as a representation of my generation is that it is complete crap. It is based on a false opposition (wouldn't it be possible to have both?), and it is too hopelessly glib to cover varieties of possible experience. Until I was about seven years old (in 1970), I believed that a radio news bulletin was something which began with a report on what was going on in Vietnam, before it moved on to other events. Going on anti-war protests seemed to be something you just did. But the point is not to generalise from my experience; I grew up in a very specific moment, that of the highly politicised urban middle-class of Dunstan-era Adelaide. It was a privileged life, in many ways, one which enabled people to get righteous about things like

Vietnam. Others, no doubt, whose lives were less comfortable than Adelaide was in those days had other struggles to focus on and were indifferent to Vietnam.

This, surely, is the point: I am angry not because my experience isn't represented in Wark's statement, but because you can't represent a generational experience with one vacuous slogan—however cool it makes you sound when you mouth it in a bar on TV. When you make these kinds of slogans and assertions, you have to make them weighty by claiming to speak for a majority. If you went round saying "I didn't have Vietnam, I had *Countdown*", for example, you would run the risk of being thought of not as a cultural commentator, but as a rather tiresome nerd. Simply by adopting a consensual "we", you give such statements a little gravity. Gravity, that is, but not weight. As it happens, I do think that a number of our older commentators in the mass media are about due to be humanely disposed of. But if my generation can only follow them up with self-aggrandising vapidty, then the future of cultural commentary (and documentary TV) in this country is bleak indeed.

Bohemian Rhapsody, directed and produced by Tony Moore, ABC TV December 3, 1997.

David Matthews teaches in the Department of English, University of Newcastle where he works on medieval literature and Australian Studies. He is a book reviewer for The Australian and The Australian Review of Books.

Radical re-coding

Cathy Cleland reports on the ANAT-Performance Space *Code Red*

Code Red was the third in a series of Australian Network for Art and Technology initiated events over the past few years bringing international new media artists and theorists to Australia to engage with Australian practitioners and theorists. The previous initiatives, *Virogenesis 1 & 2*, curated by Francesca da Rimini, played on the metaphor of viral infection and replication, with international guests, Graham Harwood, Matt Fuller and E. "Gomma" Guaneri, spreading their own strain of subversive politicised commentary on new media culture and production and finding willing hosts and co-conspirators in the Australian new media community.

Building on the successes of these earlier events, *Code Red*, curated by Julianne Pierce, brought together an impressive lineup of international and Australian-based theorists and artists to interrogate and critique contemporary information culture. Following the theme suggested by its title, *Code Red* acted as a timely alert or call to arms for the Australian new media arts community drawing attention to the growing

media activism" in the face of an international climate of increasing media monopolies, surveillance and censorship. "New media is a dirty business, full of traps and seductive offers to work 'for the other side'", he cautioned, suggesting that artists and activists need to develop and defend spaces on the internet which are independent of both state and commercial interests. By way of example he discussed the practice of a number of autonomous organisations in Europe which are working to promote access to and critique of new media.

Jeffrey Cook (Australia) also spoke of the need for techno-activism and the importance of a critical art practice in maintaining "a radical position in the homogenous soup of mainstream media and information". The imminent prospect of webTV threatens to undermine the most positive and productive feature of the internet, its facilitation of many-to-many communication with active participation by users to a dumbed down space for endless re-runs of sitcoms, commercials and infotainment. Free speech and expression of ideas on the

internet are also under threat in Australia from a proposed web rating system that would require ISPs to ensure that all the websites they host carry a rating which will distinguish 'safe' from 'unsafe' websites. This would allow browsers to lock out 'undesirable' sites leading to further marginalisation of much of the more challenging and creative content.

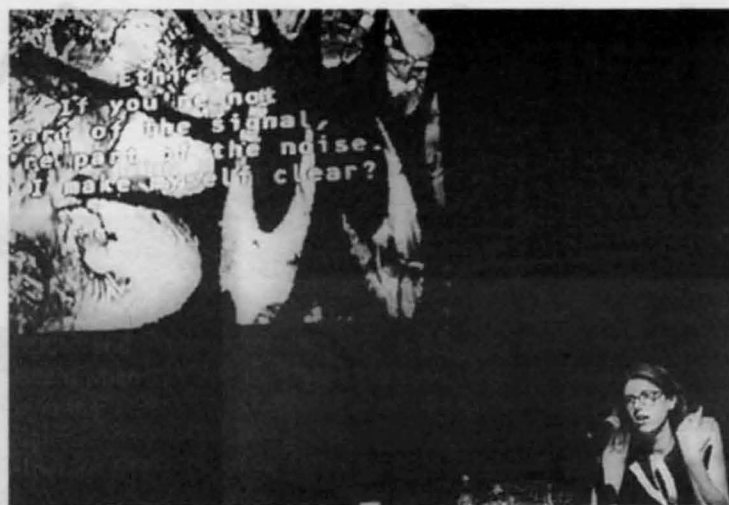
In her presentation, "Luminous", Linda Wallace (Australia) took a pragmatic approach to the vexed questions of corporate/state funding for artists, challenging notions that corporate money is "dirty" and state money "pure". She emphasised the fundamental importance for artists of the work itself and "having the space and time and funds to create it". She drew on her own experience of seizing opportunities in either the state or corporate sector and performing the difficult juggling act of "taking the funds but still having the

space to speak freely".

The final two presentations were by artists. Australian new media artist Brad Miller's "Art in the Age of Collaboration" discussed and advocated the collaborative art practice that is a feature of much new media work such as Miller's own collaboration with theorist McKenzie Wark in the production of the CD-ROM *Planet of Noise*. In "The Production of Visibility", Cornelia Sollfrank (Germany) described strategies for parodying and subverting the power structures and advertising images of the media, business and public authorities. Using a technique of "over-coding", she takes already existing media images from advertising and promotional material (a technique she calls "ready-aesthetics") and subjects them to a process of "concept-hacking" to make visible their latent power-strategies. Cornelia is also a founding member of the German new media performance group Innen who use similar techniques and have successfully infiltrated European computer fairs posing as trade fair assistants handing out mousemats with subversive messages to unsuspecting delegates.

In addition to the main conference, *Code Red* included a number of artist projects and presentations in The Performance Space gallery. Visiting from Slovenia, Marko Peljhan's exhibition and performance piece *178 EAST—ANOTHER OCEAN REGION* was the culmination of a two week residency at The Performance Space researching Australian telecommunication laws and using satellite technology to intercept transmissions in the radio space above Australia. Part of this research resulted in a guest appearance by Adam Cobb (Visiting Research Fellow, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra) and the grafting of a satellite dish onto the roof of The Performance Space. Marko's performance elicited audience complicity as participants were required to sign a confidentiality agreement stating they would not seek to record or disclose any of the intercepted material they were eavesdropping on.

Also dealing with themes of surveillance and privacy was Australia-based Zina Kaye's (*Humble Under Minded*) *Psychic Rumble Part 2* which recorded and broadcast over the internet ambient sounds and mutated snatches of



Linda Wallace

Heidrun Löhr

conversation from The Performance Space gallery. Another event taking place in the gallery on the day of the conference was an on-line performance *The Word: The Wall* directed by Ann Morrison exploring the anarchic lives and environments of three virtual characters.

One of the most productive and useful features of *Code Red* was its facilitation of on-going debate and discussion between conference delegates and participants. Issues raised in the conference itself were followed up on subsequent days with two roundtables. The first (led by Geert Lovink and Australian media theorist McKenzie Wark) focussed on new media theory and strategies for communication and critique, the second (led by Cornelia Sollfrank and Julianne Pierce) discussed cyberfeminist practice and the creation of a 'global' cyberfeminist movement, issues that were the focus of the First Cyberfeminist International held during last year's *Documenta X* in Kassel.

A *Code Red* outcome of particular interest to the Australian new media community is the creation of a new Australian/Asia Pacific email mailing list. The list [:::recode:::](mailto:::recode:::) will be hosted by autonomous.org (System X) with support from ANAT and will be a site for critical commentary and debate by practitioners and critics on contemporary new media, online and digital culture as well as providing an outlet for publishing material online. Those interested in subscribing to the list or who want more information should contact the list moderator: owner-recode@autonomous.org

Code Red was a project of the Australian Network for Art and Technology and The Performance Space curated by Julianne Pierce with support from the New Media Arts Fund of the Australia Council, the Goethe Institut, ABC Radio and the Arts Law Centre of Australia.

Kathy Cleland is a Sydney-based curator and writer.



Geert Lovink

Heidrun Löhr

commercialisation and state/corporate control of contemporary media and information culture as well as suggesting strategies for intervention and resistance. It is only possible to give a small taste of these presentations here but if your tastebuds are stimulated keep an eye on the ANAT website

<http://www.anat.org.au/projects> where the papers will be going up soon and you can find links to related websites.

In his keynote address, "Strategies for Media Activism", Geert Lovink (Netherlands) outlined his personal commitment to "cyber pragmatism and

Review

Virtual empire

Diana Klaosen reports on a public multimedia event across Tasmania

Empire state was an enterprising multimedia event staged in December across Tasmania (Launceston, Burnie and Queenstown), by Empire Studios, a production group dedicated to making electronic media more widely accessible. The Hobart-based artists in this collective are mostly recent graduates of the School of Art in Hobart and have experience across media such as video, film, photography and computer-generated image-making.

Matt Warren is a member of one of Hobart's more successful alternative bands. Mixed-media artist Sally Rees is probably best known for her anthropomorphic sculptures. Sean Bacon is a photographer and video artist. The work of Tim Stone and Stephanie Carnevale includes painting, video and computer-generated image-making.

With its intriguing 'space-race' retro logo and promotional material, and its

combination of video, light-works, internet, soundscape and large-scale light projections, *Empire state* is an ambitious collaboration. At each of its sites, large-scale projections from sources including the work of local artists and schoolchildren, were screened onto the exteriors of local landmark buildings. The installation incorporated a light show and was given an aural dimension by the inclusion of contemporary recorded music. In Queenstown, musicians Annette Van Bethlehem and Karen Burgess sang on a phone link-up amplified to the audience.

The project was not presented in Hobart, but its closing in Queenstown (a mining town on the remote west coast) was relayed to Hobart via a live internet

broadcast set up at CAST, coinciding with the opening of CAST's inaugural Member's Exhibition and so ensuring a ready-made audience.

The whole performance took two hours and created a festive atmosphere amongst onlookers, many of whom had never previously experienced any experimental or performance art. It was admirable that *Empire State* was presented in regions which have too few opportunities to host major arts events and exhibitions, even those of the more conventional variety.

Empire Studios, Empire state, Launceston, Burnie, Queenstown; December 4-12, 1997

Other NSW artists available for touring

Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre combines the skills and techniques of Western dance forms infused with and shaped by traditional dances from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Between 1992 and 1994 the company toured to Nottingham, Berlin, Tokyo, New Zealand, Bogota, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Jakarta and Seoul to claim the title of Australia's most toured company. A second performing group, AIDT Cultural Ensemble, was subsequently formed to allow the company to concentrate on major touring. Artistic director Raymond Blanco has created many works with the company including *On the Spot* (1994), a homage to five black women, and *Warup Kodimir* (1996), based on a legend from the Torres Strait Islands. In 1997 AIDT collaborated with Sidetrack Performance Group on *Frontier Stories* and with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra on *Edge of the Sacred* for the Festival of the Dreaming. **Contact:** PO Box 15 Millers Point, Sydney NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9252 0199 Fx 61 2 9251 9161

The Australia Ensemble is internationally recognised as one of Australia's finest chamber music groups. Consisting of seven of Australia's leading instrumentalists, the Ensemble is able to engage other outstanding musicians to enable it to present some highly unusual and varied groupings of performers as well as the standard chamber music repertoire. **Contact:** Stephen Bowden Tel 61 2 9385 4872 Fx 61 2 9313 7326

AustraLYSIS is an international ensemble performing new music and polymedia both composed and improvised. The ensemble has premiered and/or commissioned more than 100 compositions from all over the world with particular emphasis on compositions from Australia and the UK. The ensemble arranges collaborations with some of the most imaginative performers involved with contemporary music in Australia and creates jazz and improvised music and especially sound, text, performance art and music related to other artistic media such as the visual arts. AustraLYSIS is now primarily a creative rather than an interpretative group, focussing on electroacoustic and computer-interactive music and polymedia. They have recently developed techniques for control of rhythmic, timbral and harmonic interaction using computer-interactive networked technology in the AustraLYSIS Electroband. **Contact:** Roger Dean and Hazel Smith, 135 Nicholson Parade Cronulla NSW 2340 Tel 612 9523 2732 Fx 612 9527 2137 r.dean@hri.edu.au

The Bell Shakespeare Company is a dynamic young theatre company presenting contemporary readings of the works of Shakespeare. In 1997 they toured two highly acclaimed productions including Jim Sharman's *The Tempest*. "Richly satisfying and immensely entertaining," (*The Age*) In 1998 two new works will be added to the repertoire—*Henry IV*, directed by Artistic Director, John Bell, and Barrie Kosky's *King Lear*. As well as mainstage works, the company runs a comprehensive education component, special schools performances, teachers' workshops and a publishing programme. They currently tour interstate and extensively in regional Australia and have plans to explore further touring



Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre



Theatre Physique



Chroma



Tess de Quincey

"One of the most enchanting and engaging stage adventures I can remember. Yet again, Armfield casts brilliantly, eliciting huge, magical performances from everyone." (*Cloudstreet*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1998) **Contact:** Rachel Healey, General Manager Company B, Belvoir St Theatre, 25 Belvoir Street Surry Hills NSW 2010 Tel 61 2 9698 3344 Fx 61 2 9319 3165

de Quincey/Lynch

Besides their solo and duo work, Tess de Quincey and Stuart Lynch are co-directors of The Performance Union choreographing group performances in Europe and Australia. They have been a working partnership since 1992 prior to which they were members of the Japanese performance company Mai-Juku directed by Min Tanaka. Recent works include: *Segments from an Inferno*, a six hour performance installation which premiered in Sydney in May 1997 and *Compression 100*, a series of 100 collaborative performances around the city of Sydney. *Epilogue to Compression* was shown at the 1996 Copenhagen Dance Festival. Tour repertoire includes *Document*, a solo for specific space; *Paradance-Fable*, a solo in collaboration with Jean Baudrillard; *Identity*, a duo on an ethnographic body as multi-media performance; *Solo 3*, *Inferno 2* and *The Tinsel Devils*, triptych for duo; *Segments from an Inferno*, a six hour group performance-installation around Dante's *Inferno* and *The Most Black River*, group performance homage to German poet Else Laske Schule. "It's like dancing turned inside out and it's rarely seen on an Australian stage." (*The Australian*). "They have an exceptional feeling for the provocative and the beautiful." (*Extra Bladet*, Denmark) **Contact:** Tess de Quincey, 8 Joly Parade, Hunters Hill NSW 2110 Tel 61 2 9817 4542 Fx 61 2 9817 1440

Elektra String Quartet integrates visual and sonic arts, jazz and rock-based improvisation in their performances of works by Australian composers—Westlake, Armiger, Dean, Pollack, and artistic director Romano Crivici. They have toured extensively in Australia, recorded for the Australian Broadcasting Commission and worked with dance and theatre companies. **Contact:** Justin MacDonnell Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW Tel 61 2 9310 3716

Etcetera is a stylish theatre ensemble integrating illusion, music, visual imagery and technology in a distinctive and popular performance style. They have created works for festivals, corporations, night clubs, art galleries and can devise individual events for any site and situation. Over the past fifteen years, Etcetera has performed at every major Australian arts festival and participated in numerous international tours including London, Quebec, Montreal, Vancouver, Singapore, Jakarta and Monte Carlo. Their repertoire includes: *The Men in Grey*, an outdoor animation in which five identically dressed men in grey suits move through a series of surreal routines; *Overshadowed*, a theatre work about property and identity, combines comedy, music, puppetry, illusion, movement and projection; *The Penguins*, another outdoor work, featuring a sartorially splendid family on a visit from the South Pole. "An outstanding illustration of the brilliance which springs from flawless ensemble work. This is polished, humorous and exhilarating theatre." (*Telegraph*) **Contact:** Marguerite Penner Productions, 9 Telopea

centred around a Tabernacle; *Trace Elements 3*, a performance by Alan Schacher and Rik Rue, Nuremberg, Germany; *Dynamic Amorphism*, a collaboration with computer artist Horst Kiechle who will design and construct a total cardboard environment as the theatrical site, to be manipulated by the performers as a living architecture around the audience. **Contact:** Reckless moments, PO Box 7162 Hutt St Adelaide SA 5000 Tel 61 8 8232 3990 Fx 61 8 8232 1886 reckless@adelaide.on.net

Griffin Theatre Company is dedicated to producing bold, new Australian plays. The company's focus is on developing new stage writing at their home at The Stables Theatre in Sydney but also in larger scale productions and co-productions at other venues throughout Australia. Artistic Director, Ros Horin produces work which explores new ground in terms of theatrical form, style and content. Recent works include Joanna Murray-Smith's *Honour*, Andrew Bovell's *Speaking in Tongues*, highly acclaimed productions of Timothy Daly's *Kafka Dances*, Hilary Bell's *Wolf Lullaby* (national tour 1997) and Jennifer Compton's *The Big Picture*. Available for touring: *Wolf Lullaby* (in association with Performing Lines), "A dark, disturbing work that ventures into difficult territory. Rivetting theatre" (Adelaide Advertiser) and *The Big Picture*, "I really loved this play. It's got a huge heart. You can see the cast thriving on its riches." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) **Contact:** Lisa Hamilton, General Manager, Griffin Theatre, 13 Craigend Street, Kings Cross NSW 2010 Tel 61 2 93321052 Fx 61 2 93311524

HotHouse Theatre is a radically restructured regional theatre company run by a directorate of 12 artists located equally in Melbourne, Sydney and Albury-Wodonga. Working in the old Butter Factory in Wodonga, each year Hothouse produces three seasons of work with one in development. Productions include works for the theatre as well as performances in unusual venues such as their recent *Waterworks* performed at the Albury Swimming Centre. The company creates professional productions as well as opportunities for community participation. It also runs an extensive workshop program and plans co-productions with other regional companies. **Contact:** Charles Parkinson, Fiona Barber, HotHouse Theatre 609 Hovell St Albury NSW 2640 Tel 61 2 6021 7433 Fx 61 2 6023 2201 hothouse@draget.com.au

Jazz Coordination Association of New South Wales. For information about touring NSW jazz artists and groups. **Contact:** Eric Myers, Pier 5 Hickson Road, Millers Point NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9241 1349 Fx 61 2 9241 3083

Kinetic Energy Theatre Company is a multi-disciplinary performance group founded in 1975 by Graham Jones and Jepke Goudsmit. Their work is a synthesis of dance, drama, music and visual imagery. Major full-length productions include *Litoral Zone*, *Dong XI*, *Eccentrics*, *Who Dies?*, *Who Lives?* and *Undiscovered Land: Voyages 1 and 2*. The company complements its public performances with educational work and annually tours interstate. In 1995 they embarked on their first international tour comprising a five-week residency of performances (*Who Lives?*) and lectures sponsored by the Theatre Academy in Amsterdam. In 1996 they staged a cultural exchange program with Indonesia comprising

1998 and will tour regional New South Wales. **Contact:** Janet Robertson, The One Extra Company Limited, Seymour Theatre Centre, PO Box 553 Sydney NSW 2007 Tel 612 9364 9468 Fax 612 95189308 website www.oz.com.au/oneextra

Open City, for over a decade since its creation by writer-performers Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch in 1987, has created intimate epics drawing on everyday conversation and on the lives of the performers and their collaborators. Key works include touring productions *Photoplay* (Sydney, Adelaide, Canberra, Goldcoast 1989/94/95), *Tokyo Two* (Sydney, Melbourne 1992), and *Shop & The Necessary Orgy* (1995 Sydney Festival), a performance with interactive technology, video and music by Bill Seaman and sound by Virginia Madsen. "...a rare chance to encounter work of superb intelligence and radical beauty." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) "...trenchant and elegant work; an interaction between performance and technology; between expectations and conventions both of theatre and gallery." (*Sun Herald*) Premiering in 1998 is *MondoLingo* a live performance with interactive CD-ROM on how to speak Australian Englishes of the early 21st Century. **Contact:** Keith Gallasch, Virginia Baxter 84 Womerah Avenue, Rushcutters Bay NSW 2011 Tel 61 2 9332 4549 Fx 61 2 9361 6154 opcit@real.com.au

Orchestras

Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. **Contact:** Bruce Applebaum, General Manager Tel 612 9363 2899 Fx 612 9327 2593; **Australian Chamber Orchestra.** **Contact:** Tim Walker, General Manager Tel 612 935 4111 Fx 612 9357 4781; **Sydney Symphony Orchestra.** **Contact:** Mary Valentine, Managing Director Tel 612 9334 4644 Fx 612 9334 4646

The Partyline is a group of female performers exploring the semiotics of female bodies and space. While the performers and director Gail Kelly have extensive experience in physical theatre—some of the same performers appear in the famous Club Swing—Partyline prefers flexibility of terms when it comes to form. In their premiere work *Appearing in Pieces* (1995) words formed only part of the texture of the piece along with sound, music and, especially, the physical language of the performers' bodies. In 1997 they created *Whet Flesh*, an erotic exploration of body contact, fluids, science and sex, a collaboration between the company, a composer and three visual artists working with new technologies. **Contact:** Gail Kelly, The Partyline, PO Box 645 Glebe NSW 2037 Tel/Fx 61 2 95522865 rea@mpx.com.au

The Performance Space is a contemporary arts complex focusing not only on the performing arts but visual arts and new media. An international conference program has been established and off-site and touring programs are now a major part of the organisation's annual activity. The Performance Space comprises a large, highly versatile theatre, a smaller studio and a gallery. The theatre program supports a diverse range of performance activities but is committed to the support and promotion of those artists and companies seeking to develop original performance. As a multimedia venue, The Performance Space supports work that challenges traditional art form divisions, representations and processes. A number of the works included at this year's Adelaide Festival

outside the field of jazz. **Contact:** Peter Rechniewski PO Box 96 Glebe NSW 20 Tel/Fx 612 9566 4487 march@oz.com.au

Sydney Alpha Ensemble is dedicated performance of the virtuosic large chamber music of the 20th Century. Since 1991 it has brought to Australian audiences the rare opportunity to hear classic 20th Century works by Xenakis, Ligeti, Boulez, Messiaen, Kagge, Webern and Stockhausen. The ensemble has also developed its own repertoire of chamber works by Australian composers including Rolf Chernin, Lumsdaine, Lim, Banks, Smetani, Butterley and Finsterer. Having worked hard to establish its capacity to play the "unplayable" the ensemble is now sought out by composer-conductors, performers and music-theatre companies alike. **Contact:** Julie Owens, Sydney Alpha Ensemble PO Box 1320 Neutral Bay NSW 2089 Tel 0411 988 59

Sydney Theatre Company features works from the classic repertoire, Australian plays (both new and extant), musicals, contemporary works from overseas and most recently, popular entertainments and dance productions such as Dein Perry's *Tap Dogs* at the Wharf Theatre and at the Sydney Opera House. Regular national touring is undertaken each year with recent successful seasons including Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Eileen Atkins' *Vita and Virginia* and David Williamson's *Dead White Males*. In 1998 STC plans to tour its very successful production of Peter Whelan's *The Herbal Bed* and two recent plays by David Williamson—*Third World Blues* and *After the Ball*. In 1998 the company produced the world premiere of Dein Perry's *Steel City*. **Contact:** Robert Love, General Manager, Sydney Theatre Company Limited PO Box 777 Millers Pt NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9250 1700 Fx 61 2 9251 3688 extstc@sydtheatreco.com

Synergy Percussion, five outstanding musicians—Michael Askill, Ian Cleworth, Alison Eddington, Rebecca Lagos and Colin Piper—with a repertoire spanning traditional and contemporary percussion from all over the world. Synergy is dedicated to the performance of Australian music and has been responsible for the world premieres of over 50 new Australian compositions. Since their inaugural concert in 1974, Synergy has performed from Perth to Paris. They present an annual subscription series of concerts in Sydney, touring nationally and internationally for Musica Viva Australia and have released seven CDs. They have also been involved in a number of collaborative performances, most recently with the Sydney Dance Company in *Free Radical*. **Contact:** Synergy Percussion, PO Box 41 Chatswood NSW 2057 Tel/Fx 612 9428 2960

That Was Fast creates dance-driven performances, combinations of dance, poetry, film, video and theatre. Since they founded the company in New York in 1985, Karen Pearlman and Richard Allen have collaborated with artists across many media, created theatre/dance works as well as broadcasts, videodance works, and tours to over 100 venues on three continents. Now based in Sydney, That Was Fast's repertoire includes *Excerpts from the World* in which Pearlman and Allen perform pieces from their repertoire illustrating principles and ideas behind the works. *TV Dance* is a collection of five half-hour videodances with an introductory documentary in which dancers and

opportunities in Australia and overseas. **Contact:** Jill Berry, Marketing Manager, The Bell Shakespeare Company Limited PO Box 10 Millers Point NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9241 2722 Fx 61 2 9241 4643

Brink Productions' working model reflects a desire to push the boundaries of theatrical practice both in creative and operational terms. Working as a small independent ensemble prioritizing the company's artistic needs, Brink produces innovative theatre as well as multimedia and film projects. Their premiere production of Howard Barker's (*Uncle*) *Vanya*, an exhilarating re-working of the Chekhov classic, was a sell-out success in Adelaide prior to its highly acclaimed season in Sydney. In the pipeline is a season of works including *Mojo*, by young British playwright Jez Butterworth, and an all-female version of Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* for the 1998 Adelaide Fringe; a production of Barker's *The Europeans*, a new work at Wharf 2 in Sydney and the launch of Brink Film. "Not so much deconstruction as detonation...It is the intelligence of (*Uncle*) *Vanya* which takes its discourses to the brink, so to speak." (*Adelaide Review*) **Contact:** Michaela Coventry, 54 Horton Street, Marrickville NSW 2204 Tel 61 2 9564 0146 mobile 0412 535 548

Kate Champion is a dancer-choreographer who devised and performs *Face Value*, a physical theatre work that takes the audience past the facade and into the intimate terrain of one woman's rites of passage. Performed on an ingenious set, the work is highly physical and wryly humorous. It premiered at The Performance Space in Sydney and tours to Northern Rivers Performing Arts Centre in 1998. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186. perline@oz.com.au

Chrome is a smoothly athletic trio presenting mobile performance vignettes in public places using precision movement, song, dance and instrumentation. This is a group which transforms ordinary settings into places of discovery and is effective up close with a small crowd or playing to an audience of thousands. Repertoire includes: *The Sharks*, an exploration of contemporary beach culture; *The Lizards*, a commentary on geography inspired by the Australian outback; *Brylchrome*, looking at all that is crass, sentimental and ludicrous in life and love in the eyes of three legends of rock n roll. **Contact:** Marguerite Pepper Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9699 2111 Fx 61 2 9699 9405 exportoz@peg.apc.org

Company B Belvoir St Theatre produces contemporary Australian theatre with an emphasis on new writing and work by and about Aboriginal Australians as well as contemporary music-theatre and radical interpretations of classics. Artistic director Neil Armfield directs an ensemble of some of Australia's finest performers. The 1998 season includes two new Australian plays, one a five hour adaptation of Tim Winton's novel, *Cloudstreet*, the other *Welcome to Broome* by Richard Mellick. The company hosts a new physical theatre work by Legs on the Wall, a double-bill of operatic black comedies; *Love Burns* by Louis Nowra and composer Graham Koehne and Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*; as well as Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and David Hare's new play, *The Judas Kiss*.



Gravity Feed

The Bell Shakespeare Company

The Flying Fruitfly Circus

Matthew Doyle and Colin Offord

Stuart Lynch

Freewheels Theatre Company has developed a strong reputation for creating highly relevant theatre with young people as its main protagonists and focus. Freewheels also works to more general audiences from its base in the Hunter region of NSW. In 1993 the company commissioned Nick Enright's *A Property of the Clan*, a play based on the murder of a local teenager. The play became an equally successful film (*Blackrock*). Director Brian Joyce is committed to commissioning local writers and generating new work. Since 1995 Freewheels has toured nationally with 450 performances of their adaptation of John Marsden's *Letters from the Inside*. In 1996 they produced Alana Valentine's play about the selling of the 2000 Olympic Games, *Swimming the Globe* which they plan to tour to Kuala Lumpur in 1998. **Contact:** Brian Joyce, Director, 83 Lakeview Street, Speers Point NSW 2284 Tel 61 2 4958 5244 Fx 61 2 4965 8456

The Flying Fruitfly Circus features children from 8 to 18 years of age who attend the National Centre of Circus Training in Albury-Wodonga on the NSW-Victoria border. Since 1979 the Circus has continuously toured Australia and overseas. It produces mainstage shows in stadium venues, theatres and tents. It tours regional areas, performs indoors and outdoors in large and small venues. In October 1997 they premiered their new show *Outburst! Children of the Sun* directed by Kim Walker with assistant director Mr Lu Guang Rong. In 1998 the Circus will be touring to Melbourne, Sydney, New Zealand (for the NZ Festival of the Arts), Colombia (for the Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Bogota) and will host residencies from Circus Ethiopia and the children of the Nguu community of the Northern Territory. **Contact:** The Flying Fruit Fly Circus, 609 Hovell Street, Albury NSW 2640 Tel 612 6021 7044 Fx 612 6021 7238 fruitfly@dragnet.com.au

Gravity Feed is an all-male performance ensemble specialising in site-specific performance events for both theatre and non-traditional venues. They create scenes of maniacal energy, atmospheric intensity and sublime beauty which open the doors of perception. The performances aim to establish a consolidated body with which to face the audience; inscribed on that body is the legacy of Jewishness: of persecution, wandering, intellectual intensity and life-crisis humour. The five performers—Alan Schacher, Denis Beaubois, Ari Ehrlich, Tim Rushton, Jeff Stein—are joined by sound-artist/composer Rik Rue and writer William McClure; together their work transgresses traditional categories. The events are not so much repeatable as re-workable, ranging from performative-installation to works which employ elemental materials and a dense and atmospheric sonic wrap. Gravity Feed offers to create new site/venue/occasion-specific work *in situ* with a turn-around of as little as three to six weeks. The repertoire includes *In the House of Skin* (1996), a house of mortality in which the struggle between man and matter is used as a functional metaphor for "the compulsive, obsessive behaviour of man and his imprisonment within working society" (*Beat*). Works in progress include *The Gravity of the Situation*, a mobile indoor/outdoor work

workshops in Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Medan. "Riveting images, dance, drama, sculpture, sound and music are finely crafted. Everything used ingeniously, everything has meaning, nothing is superfluous." (*Dance Australia*) **Contact:** Graham Jones, Jepke Goudsmit, Kinetic Energy Dance Company, The Edge Theatre Laboratory, Cnr. King and Bray Streets, Newtown NSW 2044 Tel 612 9516 1954

Machine for Making Sense is one of the most distinctive musical ensembles in Australia. A co-operative between five dynamic sound artists (Rik Rue, Stevie Wishart, Jim Denley, Amanda Stewart, Chris Mann) creates a powerful, interactive, organic machine exploring the parameters of sense. The Machine's synthesis of polemic and chaos has found acclaim in Europe, US and in Australia as one of the most original developments in contemporary performance. "Wonderful, daring and bravura talent...the sonic avant garde is not dead in Sydney" (*Sydney Morning Herald*) Machine is a multi-faceted event. In a sense Machine is a biological computer. **Contact:** Lisa Herbert, Level 1/11 Randle Street Surry Hills Tel 612 9212 1758 Fx 612 9212 1716 chime@oz.com.au

Music Theatre Sydney produces contemporary Australian opera and music-theatre works; their premiere production was *Iphis*, a comic opera by Elena Katz-Chernin (composer) and Richard Toop (librettist). **Contact:** Justin MacDonnell Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW Tel 61 2 9310 3716

New Music Network. For information about new music groups in NSW, **Contact:** NMN PO Box N690 Grosvenor Place, NSW 1220 Australia Tel/Fx 621 9331 8487 harpo@dot.net.au

Colin Offord blends microtonal and timbral melodies, sound colours, cadences and rhythmic repetitions to create highly disciplined work charged with internal energy. Working solo or in collaboration with other artists (including recently William Yang and the Meryl Tankard Dance Company) he has toured extensively throughout the Pacific, South-East Asia, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, USA. "Stockhausen meets World Music—a cultural clash which is different, daring and never uninteresting." (*Rolling Stone*) **Contact:** Natalie Newton, Spiral Sound Tel 61 2 4784 2552 or www.artsite.bluemountains.net.au

The One Extra Company, founded in 1976, presents a program of two to three contemporary dance performances each year reflecting a range of themes and styles. Executive producer Janet Robertson curates a program that combines research and development activities with productions which showcase leading Australian choreographers, dancers and designers who are offered space to create new work at the company's home at the Seymour Centre in Sydney. The 1997 season included a major work by Sue Healey (*Suite Slip'd*) and shorter works by Garry Stewart (*Fugly*) and Lucy Guerin (*Remote*). These productions are available for touring. In 1998 the company will launch a new work, *Territories* devised by Darwin-based choreographer Sarah Calver exploring two journeys, of an English woman in the 1800s and a Filipino bride in the 1980s. *Suite Slip'd* has been invited to Danspace Theatre in New York and to Boston in

(*This Most Wicked Body*, *Burn Sonata* and *Hungry*) had their premieres at The Performance Space. Recent touring productions: *Four on the Floor*, the first national tour of independent dance/performance artists to be supported by Playing Australia; *Over the Top—Australians Up North* presented four artists from cLUB bENT, The Performance Space's Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras cabaret season, which toured under the auspices of Performing Lines to the UK; and the 1996 Sydney Festival production *The Aboriginal Protesters...* toured to Weimar and Munich Festivals. **Contact:** Zane Trow, Director, The Performance Space, PO Box 419 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012 Tel 61 2 9698 7235 Fx 61 2 9699 1503 tps@merlin.com.au website <http://www.culture.com.au/scan>

The Seymour Group comprises seven core members who collaborate with other artists and organisations across Australia enabling the ensemble to perform a range of innovative works ranging from larger instrumental and chamber opera works through to jazz and hybrid art performances. **Contact:** Justin MacDonnell Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW Tel 61 2 9310 3716

Sidetrack Performance Group works from its base in Marrickville, one of Australia's most celebrated culturally diverse localities. Formed in 1979 by Don Mamouny, in the 90s the company adopted experimental creative strategies and a rigorous physical training program under the guidance of Mémé Thorne and has produced ensemble works for theatres as well as outdoor spaces. A number of these works (*The Drunken Boat*, *Idol*, *The Measure*, *Heaven*, *sit.com*) toured Australian and international festivals. More recently Sidetrack's works blend the socially engaged popular style of the earlier Sidetrack with the innovation of the more recent past. Current works range from the dramatic to the poetic, the highly physical through to performance installation. Most works include live and pre-recorded video and sound components and explore contemporary uses of narrative. They include: *Plane Truth*, a spectacle about an airport; *Frontier Stories* (made in collaboration with the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre); *Country Love*, a look at the ways in which Australian sensibilities are mixed with memories of other times and places; *Burying Mother* which conjures up the complexities of exorcising the "bad mother"; *Nobody's Daughter*, a performance installation for a woman attempting to fashion her identity. **Contact:** Paul Cate, Sidetrack Performance Group, 152 Addison Road Marrickville Tel 612 9560 1255 Fx 612 95609167 sidetrac@sidetrack.com.au

Sydney Improvised Music Association. SIMA's success has been the promotion of contemporary jazz in Sydney. They have nurtured the development of a number of NSW bands who have subsequently had very successful international tours including Clarion Fracture Zone, The Catholics, Wanderlust, Ten Part Invention, The Engine Room, The Mike Nock Quarter, The Bernie McGann Trio and Mark Simmonds Fireboppers. Interstate bands have been invited to Sydney to perform at SIMA concerts which many see as the central forum for a new wave of highly distinctive Australian jazz. SIMA has also worked to integrate the promotion of local music with projects involving international acts and has presented local contemporary improvisation series

choreographers discuss the works. It is suitable for broadcast and can be toured alone or as a package with the artists on hand to follow up with workshops. **Contact:** Karen Pearlman, Richard Allen, That Was Fast, PO Box 522 Surry Hills NSW 2010 Tel 61 2 9699 1147 Fx 61 2 9699 1169 rjallen@acs.itd.uts.edu.au

Theatre of Image founded in 1988 by theatre designer Kim Carpenter, creates a distinctive visual style of performance combining images, words and music with inventive use of contemporary production techniques including film, video, animation, sound, light, costume along with shadow, rod string and glove puppets. The company has also developed a mainstage theatre for young people. "Theatre of Image holds a unique place in the Australian theatrical landscape—it explores more than any other company the visual element in storytelling on stage." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) The company's 1998-2000 production schedule includes three works for children: *Jake and Pete* based on the book by Gillian Rubinstein; *The Happy Prince* adapted by Richard Tulloch; *Grandma's Shoes* by Libby Hathorn with composer Graeme Koehne; and, for general audiences, *Exotic Pleasures* adapted from two short stories by David Malouf and Peter Carey and *Bird of Passage* by Darryl Emmerson with music by David Chesworth. **Contact:** Neil Hunt, General Manager, Theatre of Image 4 Clifton Reserve, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Tel 61 2 9360 4734 Fx 61 2 9360 6256 kcarpent@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au

Theatre Physical, founded in 1995 combines athleticism with spectacular choreography and original music. The company performed their *Miss Haversham's Dream* at the 1996 Melbourne International Festival and subsequently at the Sydney Festival, Festival of Perth and the Summer European Festival circuit in 1997. **Contact:** Marguerite Pepper Productions 9 Telopea Street Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 612 9699 2111 Fx 612 9699 9405 : exportoz@peg.apc.org

The Umbilical Brothers, two virtuosic physical comedians who create illusions of stage rage using mime and sound effects. "The vivid world they create is surreally awful, chaotic and murderous." (*The Australian*) They have appeared all over Australia and in award-winning performances at many international festivals. In 1999 they'll record the sound track and effects for an animation series with Polygram Entertainment and begin their first explorations into live performance in the US. In repertoire: *Heaven By Storm*, "An exquisitely crafted one and a half hours of physical humour and sheer imaginative brilliance" (*The Australian*) and *Don't Explain*: "It is funny because of the comic distance created by their extraordinarily skilful technique." (*The Australian*). **Contact:** Marguerite Pepper Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9699 2111 Fx 61 2 9699 9405 exportoz@peg.apc.org

William Yang is a major Australian photographer who performs engaging and idiosyncratic monologues about his own life and about Australian culture. His works *Sadness* and *The North* have toured throughout Australia and internationally to great acclaim. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186 perline@oz.com.au

NSW artists at the 1998 Australian performing arts market

Bangarra Dance Theatre has developed a dance language which fuses aspects of traditional Indigenous dance and song with contemporary movement. Bangarra performed its first work *Praying Mantis Dreaming* in 1992 followed by *Ninni* in 1994 and the immensely successful *Ochres* in 1995. The company has toured extensively throughout Australia and internationally. Their most recent work, *Fish*, premiered at the Edinburgh Festival in 1997 and in Australia for the 1997 Festival of the Dreaming. The uniqueness of Bangarra's work lies in its hybridity. The traditional songs and dance featured and adapted in the choreography of Stephen Page and the music of David Page come from the cultural library of the Munyarryun clan from the Yirrikala community in Arnhemland. Djakapurra

Tyler Coppin is a respected actor and the writer of *Lyrebird: Tales of Helpmann* which he performs at the 1998 Adelaide Festival. This is not just another stage biography but bends and twists incidents from the life of Sir Robert Helpmann into an hysterical-historical entertainment. "Quintessentially Australian, very, very funny and also a great testimony to one of Australia's most remarkable and eccentric artists" (Robyn Archer). The production will transfer to the Railway Street Theatre in Sydney and in April to the Riverina Theatre Company with further touring in the planning stages. **Contact:** Christine Dunstan Productions Pty Ltd, 118 Trafalgar Street, Annandale NSW 2038 Tel 61 2 9552 3648 Fx 61 2 9552 1309

erth—environmentally recycled theatre combine a maniacally energetic performance style with giant puppets, stilts and pyrotechnics. They began as a youth arts company in Ballarat and moved to Sydney to work on the 1994 Sydney Festival, recreating the Kelly gang as giant pyrotechnic stilt puppets in Nigel Jamieson's outdoor spectacle *Kelly's Republic*. The company



REM

Deborah Leiser is a performer with a strong interest in physical theatre. She trained in dance, corporeal mime and performance techniques and is a teacher of movement and the Tadashi Suzuki Method. Her solo performance *Hungry* is a controversial work based on the performer's experience of growing up female and Jewish. The daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Leiser has created a performance set inside and around a gigantic torah, the holy scroll that contains the laws for Jewish conduct—a scroll that women are forbidden to touch. Musical score by Elena Katz-Chernin with chanting by Australia's only female cantor, Janece Cohen, and images by computer artist Michael Strum, design by Tim Moore. "Eloquent theatre of artistry and intellect." (*Sun Herald*) *Hungry* will be performed at the 1998 Adelaide Festival of Arts. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186 perline@oz.com.au

MARA! Music specialises in cross-cultural fusion with an Australian flavour. Originally a folk/jazz ensemble performing Anglo/Celtic

domestic, global and futuristic. REM has performed throughout Australia and internationally in the UK, NZ, USA, Fiji, Korea, Singapore. "It's richly textured theatre: an integration of gesture, movement and image; of simple, powerful language, of lighting that creates focus and establishes atmosphere; and music, sometimes melodic, often strange, raw and compelling." (*Sun Herald*). Repertoire includes: *Grasshopper's Journey*, a pop myth produced in conjunction with Seoul Arts Centre and Sydney Opera House; a number of works woven from Dreamtime stories and mythologies of the Pacific Islands such as *The Story of the Firechild*, *Buralga* and *The Kookaburra Who Stole the Moon* which recently completed successful seasons in the UK. During 1998 the company will work with Aboriginal performers Maureen Watson, Mark Atkins and Tanya Ellis in *Kicking up the Dust*, a wry account of seven generations of Australian social and domestic history. **Contact:** Marguerite Pepper Productions, 9 Telopea Street Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9699 2111 Fx 61 2 9699 9405 exportoz@peg.apc.org

NSW artists at the 1998 Adelaide Festival

Tyler Coppin see above

Nikki Heywood see above

Deborah Leiser see above

The opera Project see above

Leah Purcell see above

Stalker Theatre Company see above

The Song Company see above

RealTime is Australia's leading contemporary arts commentator: appearing in print, on-line and live. Now in its fourth year and with a team of perceptive and idiosyncratic writers, many of them practising artists, *RealTime* appears bi-monthly as a 44 page free street paper, ranging

NSW moveable ARTS

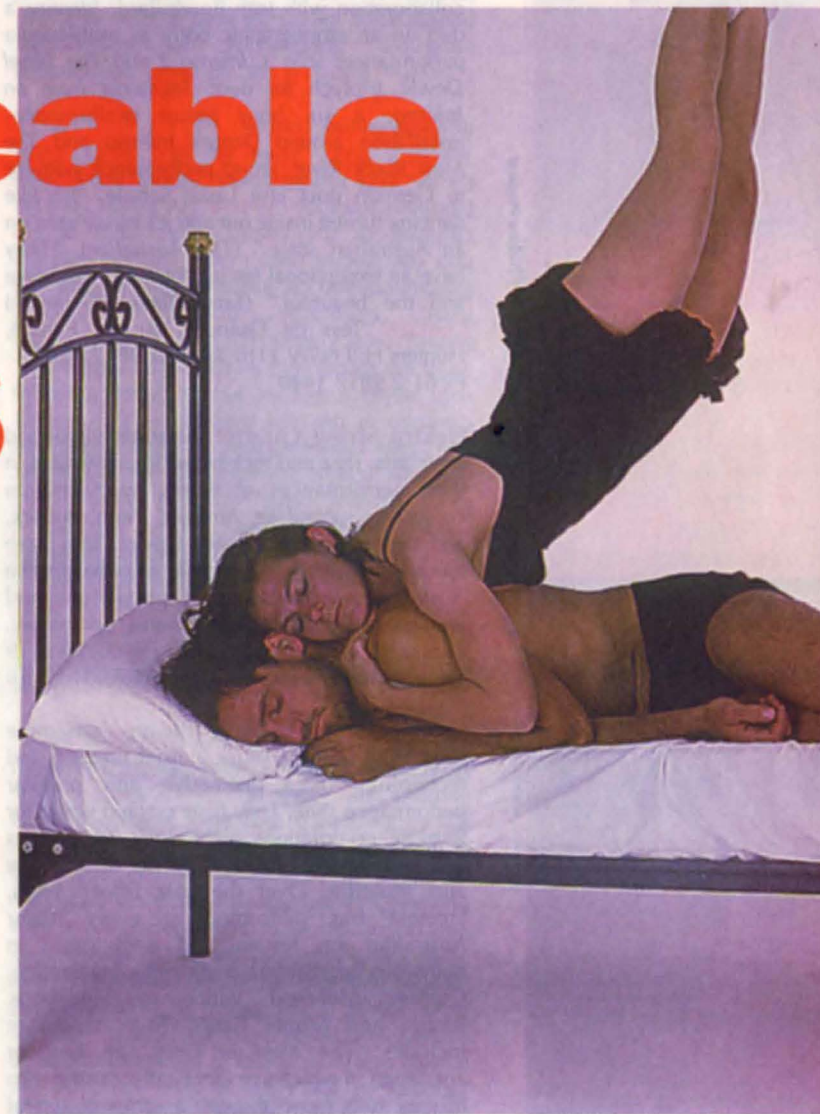
a selection of touring artists and companies from New South Wales including those appearing in the 1998 Australia Council Australian Performing Arts Market and the 1998 Telstra Adelaide Festival



Leah Purcell

Manyarryun, a respected Song-man within his community is the family's representative at the heart of Bangarra and both dances with the company and has a major creative and cultural influence on the company's work. "We get a flavour of centuries-old experience mixed with contemporary energy. Bangarra is a dance

has toured to most of Australia's larger arts and music festivals as well as countless smaller regional events. The company prides itself on producing new images and innovative shows each year. As erth gains in popularity so does the desire to use more and more objects that are not traditionally used for performance—abseiling



Legs on the Wall



Stalker



traditional and western European mediaeval music, Mara and Lou Kiek have diversified their repertoire such that a typical MARA! concert now includes songs in around ten languages. Improvisation is central to the group's arrangements. In 1997 MARA! completed their eighth European tour. They've appeared in every

Stalker Theatre Company is renowned internationally for its audacious outdoor physical/visual performances and hybrid works developed in collaboration with artists in Australia and overseas. Stalker established a reputation for extraordinary feats on stilts in works such as *Tom, Gert, Angela, Fr. Moching*

across the arts with attention to innovation, hybrid forms and, in its *OnScreen* supplement, film and new media arts. *RealTime* also appears on-line via its website, and live at arts festivals. At the 1996 Adelaide Festival four editions of *RealTime* were produced responding directly

company with a language like no other. (*The Guardian*). In repertoire: *Fish, Ochres, Bangarra Showcase* (incorporating traditional as well as contemporary material from previous and current productions). **Contact:** Carla Theunissen, Bangarra Dance Theatre, The Wharf, Pier 4/5, Walsh Bay NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9251 5333 Fax 61 2 9251 5266 bangarra@oz.com.au

Paul Capsis is a versatile performer renowned for his spectacular vocal ability and stage presence. His last two cabaret shows, *Burning Sequins* and *Whole Lotta Capsis*, have performed to sell-out houses internationally. For the 1998 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, Paul Capsis teams with director Barrie Kosky for *The Burlesque Tour* which promises to be operatic in emotion, theatrical in style and confronting in context as Paul Capsis with a group of musicians under the musical direction of Peter Crosbie "roams the back alleys of our Zeitgeist and takes his audience into a dark, glistening world of madness, sexual transformation and desire". **Contact:** Marguerite Pepper Productions, 9 Telopea Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9699 2111 Fx 61 2 9699 9405 exportoz@peg.apc.org

The catholics is one of Australia's most distinctive contemporary music groups. The seven piece ensemble led by composer and bassist Lloyd Swanton takes the vibrancy of pop music with its catchy tunes and dance orientation and combines it with indisputably authoritative jazz technique. The group is very popular in Australia (1995 Mo Award for Best Jazz Group) and increasingly outside their home country. Their three albums have been released in the US to critical acclaim and their second album *Simple* was released in Europe where it was nominated for the Deutsche Schallplattenkritik Award. In 1994-95 they toured to major jazz festivals in Canada and Europe to further acclaim. In 1996 they performed in Thailand as part of the King of Thailand's Silver Jubilee celebrations. "The blend of happy-go-lucky melodies, bounding rhythms, clever arrangements and strong improvising seems to be irresistible." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) "The groove was huge...Great tunes too. It's easy to fall in love with the Australians' boiling rhythms, jiving guitars and tart horn choruses, but there's more to the music." (*Coda, Canada*) **Contact:** Lloyd Swanton Tel/Fx 61 2 9337 4451

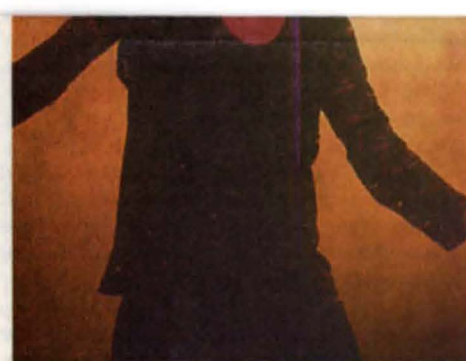
Deborah Cheetham is a performer and accomplished opera singer who, with writer Phillipa McKay and director Cathy Downes, created for the 1997 Festival of the Dreaming *White Baptist Abba Fan*, a funny and forthright performance based on incidents from the performer's own life. From a forced removal from her Aboriginal family, to her upbringing in the strict confines of a white Baptist family, to her eventual reunion 30 years later with her birth mother, Deborah Cheetham weaves into the events of her life songs by Saint Saens, Catalanni and Dvorak. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186 perline@oz.com.au

gear, rockwork machinery, jumping costumes. In 1997 the company produced Morgan Lewis' *Sport and Porn*—an Aussie epic and began developing their new work, *Virus*, in collaboration with Pablo Percusso. "Undoubtedly one of the most bizarre events to hit Sydney...the puppets and puppeteers are excellent." (Steve Lacey, *The Beat*). **Contact:** erth, 41 Gerard Street, Alexandria, NSW 2015 Tel 61 2 9319 2845 erth4now@hotmail.com

Michael Kieran Harvey is regarded as one of Australia's finest pianists. He enjoys a busy international touring and recording schedule, appearing at major festivals in Germany, Poland, Spain and the USA. In 1993 he won the prestigious Ivo Pogorelich International Solo Piano Competition in California. He has commissioned works from Australian composers and is involved in collaborative performances with other musicians and artists including the percussion ensemble Synergy. His two compact disc recordings, *Michael Kieran Harvey* and *Inspired 20th Century Piano Music*, reveal Harvey's interest in 19th and 20th Century piano music. **Contact:** Louise Godwin, Music & Management Promotions, 6 Smith Street, Richmond VIC 3121 Tel 61 3 9427 9012

Nikki Heywood is a multi-disciplined artist with a background in theatre and movement, and extensive vocal and performance training. Major influences include Body Weather and other Butoh techniques which she is working to integrate into a contemporary Australian performance language. She is the writer/director of *Burn Sonata* in collaboration with an ensemble of some of Australia's most experienced contemporary performance practitioners—Clare Grant, Benjamin Grieve, Claire Hague, Dean Walsh and Tony Osborne. *Burn Sonata* is a striking combination of naturalistic and stylised movement in which the six performers explore the subject of physical and psychological abuse in a domestic setting, transforming brutality to a level of metaphor and poetry with original music by Garry Bradbury. *Burn Sonata* will be performed at the 1998 Adelaide Festival of Arts. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186 perline@oz.com.au

Legs on the Wall is one of Australia's leading physical performance companies blending acrobatics, dance, aerial and circus skills in narrative frameworks. The company creates works for theatre as well as site-specific aerial spectacles and street performances. They have toured extensively in Australia and to South America, UK and Germany. They have five shows in repertoire—*All of Me, Clearance, Expendable, Temptation* and their most recent work, *Under the Influence*, directed by Kate Champion. The five highly skilled performers collaborate with a variety of directors, writers, composers and technical artists to create new works and special projects. "Just extraordinary...gravity-defying spectacle that combines physical theatre skills with a rare emotional eloquence." (*Guardian, UK*) **Contact:** Cathrine Couper, Legs on the Wall, Hut 24, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville NSW 2204 Tel 61 2 9560 1222 Fx 61 2 9564 6061



Paul Capsis



Nikki Heywood



Sydney Dance Company



Deborah Cheetham



erth

They play small and mega venues and each year perform hundreds of concerts in schools. In 1995 MARA! won the Australian Recording Industry Award for Best Australian World/Folk/Traditional Release for their album *Ruino Vito*, now licensed in Japan and Germany. Their new album *Sezoni* was runner up in the same category in 1997. **Contact:** Jane Birmingham, MARA! Music PO Box 672, Burwood NSW 2134 Tel 61 2 747 6848 Fx 61 2 744 6967

Bernie McGann Trio (Bernie McGann, Lloyd Swanton, John Pochee) have been playing together since 1983. All highly regarded musicians, between them they have won every award possible in Australia and are now building a reputation in Canada and the US for highly original music that never plays safe. "McGann exhibits a fierce, infectious rhythmic drive, a perpetually fresh lyricism and a sophisticated conception of phrasing on both hard-bop chestnuts and his solid originals alike...one of the most exciting imports at this year's festival." (Chicago Jazz Festival) **Contact:** Bernie McGann 61 2 9569 8925 Fx 612 9351 4817

The opera Project is a collaborative forum of experienced Australian artists from the fields of music, dance and performance under the artistic direction of Nigel Kellaway and Annette Tesoriero. Its project is not to create new operas within a traditional model but rather to create innovative theatrical works that provide an alternative 'operatic' expression. Repertoire includes *This Most Wicked Body* which will be performed at the 1998 Adelaide Festival, a cabaret work *Choux Choux Baguette Remembers* and *The Berlioz—our vampires ourselves*, an exploration of the inherent eroticism of the voice and its relationship to the body, focussing on Hector Berlioz' song cycle, *Les Nuits D'Ete*. "Informed, provocative, funny, oozing with exquisite music and unorthodox sexuality, it operates on dozens of planes." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) **Contact:** Nigel Kellaway, Annette Tesoriero 72 Margaret Street, Newtown NSW 2042 Tel/Fx 61 2 9516 3762

Leah Purcell is a performer, singer and raconteur. With Scott Rankin, she created *Box The Pony* which premiered to wide acclaim at the 1997 Festival of the Dreaming. She uses drama, song and standup to tell the story of a girl not unlike herself who grew up in a family of champion boxers on an Aboriginal mission in Queensland, worked in a slaughterhouse and eventually rode out of town. "While she doesn't shirk from plumbing the depths of her early misfortune, overall the play is raw, cheeky, celebratory and very funny." (*Sydney Morning Herald*) Leah Purcell performs *Box the Pony* at the 1998 Adelaide Festival of Arts with music by Steve Francis. **Contact:** Performing Lines, Suite 6/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016 Tel 61 2 9318 2186 perline@oz.com.au

REM Theatre creates cross-cultural cross-artform theatre. Combining simple stories and characters with magical aural, visual and dramatic techniques, the works are designed to stimulate the imaginative senses while dealing with concepts and attitudes that both children and adults understand. Performance derives from storytelling traditions and the subject matter principally from myths and dreams—

(with Catalan visual artist Joan Baixus) and *Mimi* (a collaboration with artists from the Kunwinjku people of Western Arnhem Land and urban Aboriginal performers from Perth and Broome). Their latest work, *Blood Vessel*, incorporates aerial acrobatics on bungee ropes within an 11 metre high, 8 metre wide installation. Inspired by the works of William Blake and Peter Greenaway, *Blood Vessel* combines performance with film, sound and installation. **Contact:** Tony Burns, General Manager Stalker Theatre Company, Hut 24, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville NSW 2204 Tel 612 9550 9887 Fx 61 2 9564 6061 stalker@zip.com.au

The Song Company, established in 1984, is acknowledged as Australia's leading a cappella ensemble. Their repertoire covers a range of vocal music from 12th century to present day with a strong focus on new Australian work. The company operates full-time presenting an annual subscription series in Sydney with regular tours throughout Australia and abroad. It has a commitment to education under the umbrella of Musica Viva and is well-known through its broadcasts and recordings. Since 1990, under the leadership of Roland Peelman, the company has been actively building a new repertoire through commissions as well as performing classics of the 20th century such as Stockhausen' *Stimmung* and the Berio *Sinfonia*. The ensemble has also distinguished itself in a number of new music-theatre productions, notably in 1994 *The Burrow* by Michael Smetanin and Alison Croggan, *Quito* by Martin and Peter Wesley-Smith and for the 1997 Sydney Festival, *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*, a new opera by Colin Bright and Amanda Stewart. **Contact:** Eugene Ragghianti, General Manager, The Song Company Pty Ltd, PO Box 553, Broadway NSW 2007 Tel 61 2 9364 9457 Fx 61 2 9692 8581 songcompany@flex.com.au

Sydney Dance Company, formed in 1969, is among Australia's leading contemporary dance companies. Led by Artistic Director Graeme Murphy and Associate Director Janet Vernon, the company has developed an extensive repertoire of original dance works which are often intensely theatrical. The company began to tour in 1980 and has since performed all over Australia and extensively internationally, appearing in many of the world's leading venues. Since 1977 commissioned works have appeared in two annual seasons of immensely varied works at the Sydney Opera House, the company's performing home. Graeme Murphy has choreographed over 32 original works for the Sydney Dance Company including the recent highly regarded *Free Radicals* with Musical Director, Michael Askill. "The enjoyment came from Murphy's joyous choreography, the stunning performance of his dancers, and very very much so—the exhilarating percussion." (*The Australian*). *Free Radicals* toured successfully to New York last year—"Above all, Mr. Murphy knows how to make things happen on stage". (*New York Times*) **Contact:** Leigh Small, General Manager, Sydney Dance Company, The Wharf, Pier 4, Hickson Road, Walsh Bay NSW 2000 Tel 61 2 9221 4811 Fx 61 2 9251 6904 sdc@sydneydance.com.au

themes. A direct result was an invitation for a team of *RealTime* writers to work with British writers to produce special issues of *RealTime* as part of LIFT 97 (London International Festival of Theatre). In 1998 *RealTime* returns to the Adelaide Festival, as part of the official program. "In a Britain where arts and style journalism are frequently indistinguishable it is sometimes refreshing to find out that they do things differently elsewhere". (The Observer) "RealTime gave voice to the idea that LIFT really can create a community of artists, ideas and aspirations." (LIFT) **Contact:** Virginia Baxter, Keith Gallasch, RealTime PO Box A2246 Sydney South NSW 1235 Tel 61 2 283 2723 Fx 61 2 9282 2724 website www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/opencity@rtimearts.com

From the Ministry

This directory offers a sample of the performing arts companies in New South Wales which are available for touring. The 60 entries represent the diversity of the performing arts in Australia's premier state and include contemporary Indigenous performance like Bangarra Dance Theatre, Leah Purcell and Deborah Cheetham; Australia's only ensemble mainstage theatre company, Company B; Australia's leading multimedia and cross-artform venue, The Performance Space (premiere site for three works for the 1998 Adelaide Festival), and outstanding vocal and music ensembles such as The Song Company and MARA! Over half the directory's entries can be classified as contemporary performance, demonstrating the strength of this area of work in New South Wales.

Even a cursory reading of this impressive list of dance, theatre, music and contemporary performance companies reveals that many have toured nationally and internationally to acclaim.

The Ministry for the Arts is a New South Wales Government agency which offers grants in support of the arts and provides advice on the cultural development of the State. Its objective is to support, foster and encourage the arts in New South Wales and to promote standards of excellence, innovation and cultural diversity.

The Ministry cultural grants program in the performing arts provides financial support to professional theatre, dance and music organisations. The 1998 program provided \$8.5 million in grants to 162 performing arts companies and performance projects in New South Wales.

The directory has been a project of *RealTime*—published by the performance company Open City—for the Ministry for the Arts and the Ministry is proud to be able to promote the performing arts in New South Wales through an established client and performing arts organisation.

NSW Ministry for the Arts. Contact: Program managers: Kim Spinks, Theatre and Dance; Music, Victoria Owens. Level 23, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrar Place, Sydney NSW 2000. Tel 61 2 9228 5533 Freecall 1800 358 594 ministry@arts.nsw.gov.au



Review

The relativity of visible things

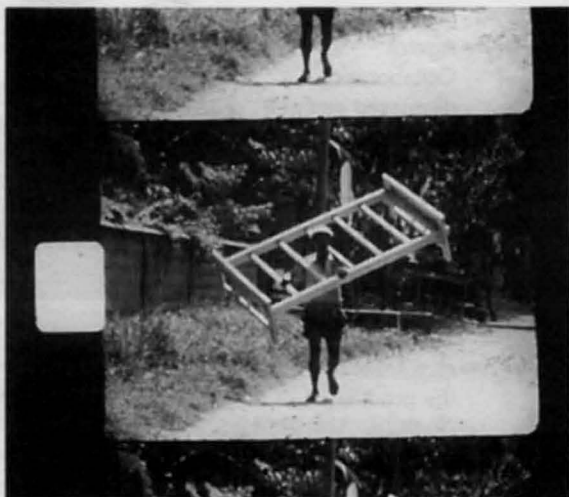
A three-screen film-performance by the Cantrills about Bali and Java at La Mama, engages Anna Dzenis

In the past artists represented things they had seen on earth, things they liked seeing or might have liked to see. Today they reveal the relativity of visible things; they express their belief that the visible is only an isolated aspect in relation to the universe as a whole, and that other, invisible truths are the overriding factors. Things appear to assume a broader and more diversified meaning, often seeming to contradict the rational experience of yesterday. The artist strives to express the essential character of the accidental.

Paul Klee in Felix Klee, *Paul Klee*, George Braziller Inc. 1962

The Bemused Tourist is the ninth film-performance work the Cantrills have presented at La Mama since 1977. Previous work includes their meditation on Baldwin Spencer, *Edges of Meaning*; works dealing with the Australian landscape, *Fields of Vision and Passage*; as well as Corinne Cantrill's deeply moving and evocative autobiographical *Journey Through a Face*, later to become *In this Life's Body*. More recent works have included *The Berlin Apartment* and *Projected Light—On the Beginning and End of Cinema*.

The Bemused Tourist is one of the most recent productions in the career of a couple who have been working as filmmakers since 1960. From 1990 to 1994 Arthur and Corinne Cantrill travelled, as tourists, extensively in Bali and Java, using a Super-8 camera to trace the contours and outlines of a landscape, documenting the rich and diverse cultural activity. They recorded the stories in the faces of countless people as they worked and played, and also, precisely because they filmed so incessantly and compulsively, charted the changes in this part of the world over this time. A selection of these films was projected singularly and simultaneously onto three screens strategically positioned along one wall in La Mama. By using multiple screens the telling of stories goes beyond simple facts. Conventional images of rice paddies, a bungalow where they stayed, a man walking with containers of



Arthur & Corinne Cantrill, *Walking to Yeh Pulu*

rice crackers, women carving wooden flowers, or their son Ivor getting a haircut, become more than just records of events and activities. The juxtaposition creates a field of memory fragments where different times and spaces coexist—a metaphoric, sensory mosaic where we find dreamy movement, colours, dancing feet, industrious fingers, a laughing mouth and inquiring eyes—a striking pictorial panorama of impressions placing the viewer in a position akin to being a tourist in a foreign land.

The film-performance of *The Bemused Tourist* provided an expanded experience of the cinema. My sense of this began from the moment I entered the theatrical space of La Mama. The walls were lined with delicately detailed batiks, the floor was covered with a woven hand-made rug, and a number of wood carvings were positioned around the room. A familiar environment was now made intriguingly strange, inhabited with Indigenous artefacts—treasures and memories—from another part of the world. The presence of the filmmakers contributed a feeling of intimacy. Arthur Cantrill sat at the back of the theatre, in charge of the projectors and related technology. Corinne Cantrill began centre-stage performing a ritualistic welcome by scattering four kinds of rices onto the rug on the floor;

an acknowledgement of the Indonesian culture, their traditions and lifestyle. This image of rice being scattered would recur in the films, becoming, in the way of all images, something more and something else—at one moment representing the life of a culture, only to suddenly transform into swirling, abstract shapes, patterns and lines: a metaphor of energy, activity and flow. Later it formed their authorial signature, "The Cantrills". After her introduction, Corinne sat at a small table on the right-hand side of the theatre—where she narrated reflections,

observations, memories and impressions, as if reading from her diary.

And so I found myself drawn into an image-repertoire, through a cultural corridor, and a very personal voice. The screening was divided into four parts. Part One was *Bali Film* (1990), a racy, fast-paced mapping of a geographic locale, a view from a vehicle, past rocky mountains, through rice fields, in and out of temples and sacred sites. Shown parallel to this were the short films *Wing-Wei to Singaraja*, *In the Shadow of Gunung Batur*, *Walking to Yeh Pulu* and *Making Trees from Trees*. Part Two, *Days in Ubud* (1991), was more contemplative, showing people going about their daily tasks—working in rice fields, carrying food and water, carving wooden objects. Parallel to this film were screenings of *The Pause Between Frames* and *Ramayana/Legong*—a vibrant dance performance filmed in the Royal Palace. Part Three, *Jalan Raya, Ubud* (1994), evidenced significant change in Ubud. Busy streets, laden with traffic, modern buildings springing up in the form of a concrete jungle, a stark contrast to the lush greenery of the Ubud we have only recently seen. Time has wrought many changes—there is an oppressive and jaded quality to the cityscape. Part

Four, *Java* (1991), is positioned to illuminate contrasts between Bali and Java. In this section, three films are shown—*View from the Marco Polo Hotel, Jakarta*, *Agung Gives Ivor a Haircut* and *From Bogor to Bandung*.

The first image I recalled seeing in the films was that of a rocky incline with waves crashing against its darkness—the sight of an untamed landscape, a world with its own unique reality. In the final moments of the film the camera travels down a street of pop-culture facades—cartoon-like, postmodern pastiches. These are instances of import culture which could be found anywhere in the world—except that no longer is there a feeling of uniqueness. The camera has crossed and criss-crossed physical and personal boundaries continually creeping closer to the people and their faces. The fascinating distance between looking and mapping a foreign terrain has been traversed, gradually allowing for a more human intimacy—a different way of knowing. Poignantly, the journey of the bemused tourists has also travelled towards feelings of disenchantment. With inescapable self-awareness, Corinne's voice reflected on how, as tourists themselves, they have also helped to create the trappings of modernisation to which their camera has borne witness.

The Cantrills are simultaneously dreamers, historians, artists of modernity, characters, readers and auteurs who have transformed their observations into filmic poems. These texts offer many possibilities which can now be read by myriad participants in this reverie of another culture/world.

The Muse of photography is not one of Memory's daughters, but Memory herself. Both the photograph and the remembered depend upon and equally oppose the passing of time. Both preserve moments, and propose their own form of simultaneity, in which all their images can coexist. Both stimulate, and are stimulated by, the inter-connectedness of events. Both seek instances of revelation, for it is only such instances which give full reason to their own capacity to withstand the flow of time.

John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society Ltd., 1982

Preview

Worth its weight

Festival Director Richard Sowada estimates the significance of the FTI's 12th Annual WA Screen Awards

The Annual WA Screen Awards accepts entries in two divisions, industry and emerging. For the industry sector, there's an open competition awarding prizes in genres (drama, short drama, experimental, animation, music video, commercial, education/training/corporate, documentary, digital media and "best overall") and craft (direction, writing, editing, cinematography, sound, original music, art direction and acting.

Festival guests include filmmaker David Bradbury presenting "Tales from the frontline", an account of guerilla and investigative documentary filmmaking including excerpts from his films and with the involvement of the Jabiluka Action Group. Cynthia Mann, the AFI's exhibition manager will discuss marketing and distribution for independent filmmakers, and Claire Dobbin from the AFC's Development Branch advises on how to get feature projects off the ground. There are workshops on experimental animation, super 8, AVID, script editing and soundtracking.

KG How important are the Annual WA Screen Awards to West Australian film and video makers?

RS What I try to do is put local film and video making in an international context with work from around Australia, the UK and the USA. Because there is no international film festival in WA it's an opportunity for local makers to see progressive work from elsewhere. It's crucial for emerging artists.

KG How do you encourage them in the award structure?

RS There are sections for those under 30 years of age, those in training at tertiary level, and everyone can be judged in the open section. The emerging filmmakers division offers craft awards to student filmmakers or those under 25 years of age. There's also the Festival of Perth Young Filmmaker of the Year Award of \$5000. Just as important is the screening of every work submitted over a three day period.



Adam Lynton, *Wish*

KG That could be a trial for audiences.

RS Sometimes it's hard work, but you find some real nuggets, and this year there's quite a volume of quality work, particularly in experimental work from tertiary education. It's not as gruelling as you'd think and for the makers it's vital given the current limits on exhibition—the worst it's been. That's one of the main reasons why we choose to avoid a deliberate curatorial policy in this area.

KG You also screen commercial, educational, training and corporate work as part of the event. Is the separation between these and the other sections rigid?

RS I break the divisions down, for example, by showing some commercials in other programs and experimental work

in the mainstream program.

KG Are the Awards regarded as significant by the local film and video industry?

RS Eight hundred attended last year's opening, if that's any indication, and we got excellent press. There was solid attendance at the workshops and forums which I see as important for demystifying the industry for emerging filmmakers.

KG Are feature films part of the Awards screenings?

RS There are only a few feature films slated for production in 1998 and only one, I think, coming out of 1997 and yet to be shown, so it's not the right moment for them even though they are given a place in the forums. It's the documentary screenings that are really well attended and it's the range of work and genres that is important in the Awards and in encouraging established filmmakers and developing younger ones.

The 12th Annual WA Screen Awards, presented by the Film & Television Institute (WA), February 27 - March 2. Enquiries 09 9335 1055

Review

The aniconic and digital image

Heather Barton rethinks the spiritual and soft space in Malaysian New Media Arts at the *First National Electronic Art Exhibition*

There is, it might be argued, a kind of 'techno-orientalism' surrounding new technologies when thinking the machine, soft-space and the digital-image in the western psyche: a pairing of high end technology with Asia in the western imaginary, if you will, however empirically inaccurate.

It gives rise to a ponderous situation where westerners operate with a technology and therefore a thinking which they do not 'own'. When using new imaging technologies in the visual arts—if the modernist Greenbergian axiom around form and content and a Benjaminian assertion regarding the complex form of training imposed by modern technology can be indulged—what results is a kind of 'blank canvas' at the heart of thinking the digital image.

It was in this light that encountering the *First National Electronic Art Exhibition* at the Malaysian National Gallery in Kuala Lumpur raised particular considerations. If granted the license to think speculatively for a moment, one might wonder if the aniconic formulation of the image particularly in traditional Muslim art as it influences contemporary artists working with multi-media technology in Malaysia, does not somehow afford a greater propriety towards the digital image (if this is not to engage in a kind of [techno-]orientalism itself of another order).

The confounding of historical concepts of representation and analogy in western philosophies of the image are well documented in relation to the digital image (Binkley, T "The Digital Dilemma", *Leonardo*, Supplemental Issue, Pergamon Press, Japan, 1997). What marks eastern philosophies of the image, particularly within the Islamic tradition, is the aniconic as opposed to iconic relation to the image that exists in the west. The aniconic are those images and symbols relating to deities that are non-figurative or non-representational.

Within Islam, Allah is inexpressible therefore non-representational. "No vision can grasp Him..." (*Qur'an* [Koran], 6:103). The spiritual order determines the aesthetic-formal order. Stylisation techniques exercised in calligraphy, illumination, geometric pattern and arabesque form the foundations for a tradition where the artwork in fact functions as a 'cosmogram'. Not only does the aniconic concept of art in Islam make for an art practice arguably predisposed to a knowledge and use of the digital image—"knowledge and use" here in the Deleuzian sense of 'savior' which is an ability to make active, "a knowledge by description", "a competence to produce" rather than reproduce (Deleuze, G. *Negotiations*, Columbia University Press, USA, 1995). But the 'cosmogrammatic' nature of the artwork when applied to the digital image overrides criticism often raised in relation to the electronic image in the west: that it is slick, glossy, dazzling, decorative, all surface and therefore superficial.

Surface ornamentation is the core of spiritualising

enhancement, not a superficial addition in the Islamic concept of the artwork. This is not to add foreign elements to the shape of the object but to bring forth its potential, ennobling the object. "Through ornamentation the veil that hides its spiritual and divine qualities is lifted." (Esa, S. *Art and Spirituality*, National Art Gallery, Malaysia, 1995) In Islam, beauty is a divine quality, God is beautiful and loves beauty. Beauty in art is that which generates the sense of God. Since beauty is a divine quality its expression has to be made without showing subjective individualistic inspiration. There is therefore no distinction between the material and spiritual planes. In creating beauty the artist is engaged in a form of spiritual alchemy and in doing so the soul of the artist undergoes a process of spiritual cleansing. This raises some very different notions around the artwork than those generated in the west around questions of abstraction, the sublime and the beautiful.

This is also not to say that the works exhibited during the *First Electronic Art Exhibition* in Kuala Lumpur were traditional in terms of technique or concepts. Far from it. The works that drew upon traditional methods or concepts did so with a rigorous critical distance and engagement. Nor were the traditional methods and form that were used and conceptual frameworks employed exclusively Muslim. Hindu, Taoist, animist and Christian traditions and metaphysics also come into play in Malaysian culture. But most contemporary artists in Malaysia have trained under a western art history syllabus with the majority, it seems, completing graduate degrees in the west. So there is certainly an engagement with western art history and art markets but often put to work in relation to eastern systems of ideas.

Mohd Nasir Bin Baharuddin's four monitor video floor piece, for instance, works precisely in this manner. It encourages a deceptively pious response, although for a westerner one is even less sure why. The viewer is ceremoniously positioned by the work—submitting to its lure, sitting submissively at its feet, as it were,



Hasnul Jaimal Saidon, *I'm Trying to Locate*, black & white video projection

Peter Spillane

encircled by silent monitors across the soft opaque screen of which, runs a fluid arabic calligraphic script. The effect is mesmeric and contemplative. However as the artist, who is also the curator at Gallery Shah Alam, points out to a Muslim observer there would be questions as to why the monitors containing sacred script have been placed on the floor, indicating a lack of reverence. The script, however, is not from the Qur'an but Jawi, an arabic script spoken in Bahasa Malaysian (which is also written in a roman script) and which in fact many Malaysian Muslims do not even read themselves. And the text, far from being the word of god is everyday diary extracts. Baharuddin's trick is a gentle one and works along side the temporal enquiries of the work, which are figured so that the piece never 'begins' as such. An allusion perhaps to the 'awan larat' (arabesque), a pattern so interconnected that it is impossible to trace the beginning of each motif. Within the installation the viewer is placed in one physical position but one which triggers many different and simultaneous readings of the position. The space in the midst of the monitors is also the space of the traditional cross-legged village story-teller, but the 'audience' of monitors tell story fragments that becomes the viewer's, the 'centre-piece's' own, confusing the places of teller, told and tale.

Hasnul Jaimal Saidon's CD-ROM work, *Ong* (slang for "hot streak"), from his solo show *Hyperview*, was shown along with his *I'm trying to Locate*, a video-projected, corner piece that creates the optical illusion of a three dimensional space out of a flat wall. The black and white piece uses Chinese pictograms, English and Bahasa scripts over a textured electronic weave evoking traditional Songket. Textiles, historically have a sacred and ceremonial function as does calligraphic script which is said to be "the divinely written pre-eternal word which brings the faithful into immediate contact with the Divine Eternal Writer of fate and from there even profane writing has inherited a certain sanctity." (*Islamic Calligraphy*, Leiden, 1970) This work and the others exhibited, while either overtly concerned, less so or not at all, with contemporary interpretations of traditional Malaysian cultural forms, never dip into parochialism. The works could function in the context of any international gallery in addressing the medium to be read along side works by

Gary Hill, Mary-Jo La Fontaine or Eder Santos.

Hasnul, who also heads the Fine Arts Programme at the University of Malaysia, Sarawak, curated the exhibition with Nirajan Rajah whose on-line work *The Failure of Marcel Duchamp/Japanese Fetish Even!* is available on <http://www.whgb-leipzig.de/waterfall/>. The piece is a parody of Duchamp's *Etant Donnes* which, in Rajah's words, interrogates the ontology of imaging while marking the problem of cultural constituencies on the internet.

The historical component of the exhibition saw the mounting of a posthumous retrospective of the work of Ismail Zain, a veteran in the field of computer art. Ironically computer art was being produced by Zain and others in Malaysia before video art, which did not come until after computer art had been explored and developed. In producing collages reminiscent of early political photo collage, Zain said of his work "in digital collage there are no harsh outlines. The new medium is much more malleable, like clay". (Noordin Hassan interviews Ismail Zain, *Ismail Zain retrospective exhibition catalogue*, National Art Gallery of Malaysia, 1995)

Ponirin Amin, one of the country's leading printmakers exhibited a number of woodcut/computer prints, as did Dr Kamaruzaman Md. Isa. The strong traditions of printing, textiles and woodcutting saw these forms being integrated with computer generated elements to produce object based works, which ironically overcome the complaint among artists operating in the west have about the lack of collectability and therefore saleability of work in new media.

Other works included those by Wong Hoy Cheong, the Matahati Coterie, British, Kuala Lumpur-based artists David Lister and Carl Jaycock, a 3D animation using wayang puppets, screen and live performance as well as pieces from YCA (Malaysia's Primavera) and winners from the Swatch Metal Art Award, Bayu, Kungyu and Noor.

Heather Barton attended the First Malaysian National Electronic Art Exhibition through a Museums Australia International Promotions grant. As a result of the grant, an artist's residency at a post production house has been offered for an Australian multimedia artist in Kuala Lumpur. An exhibition of Australian multimedia art will be shown at the Malaysian Media Arts Festival in 1998 and components of the FMNEAE may be exhibited in Australia.



Hasnul Jaimal Saidon, *I'm Trying to Locate*, black & white video projection. Peter Spillane

Preview

What's on in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Film Festival?

Queer Screen's 1998 programming looks intriguing and potent, especially on the documentary front



Andrew Tasakos and Mark Finley in *Crocodile Tears*

Chris Bennion

Queer Screen, in association with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, presents this year's Mardi Gras Film Festival from February 11-22 at the Pitt Centre and the Village Roxy Parramatta. The Festival includes a range of features, documentaries and special events.

Melissa Lee's documentary *Mary's Place* examines homophobic violence by looking at the Mary's Place Project, a community mural project which responds to the many violent attacks on gays and lesbians in Sydney's Darlinghurst. The name comes from a lane in Darlinghurst: originally called Floods Lane; it was renamed in recognition of a woman who was bashed and raped there in a homophobic attack.

Canadian filmmaker Margaret Westcott explores three centuries of gay life as she weaves together lesbian history and cultural life in Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, Montreal, Vancouver, New York and San Francisco in *Stolen Moments*. The film, narrated by Kate Nelligan, chronicles the 'buried' stories of lesbian culture, with insights on sexual politics, feminism and life from writers such as Leslie Feinberg, Nicole Brossard and Audre Lorde.

Witches and Faggots, Dykes and Poofers, directed by The One in Seven Collective, captures a seminal moment in Australian gay culture, a gay liberation protest march on June 24, 1978, the first Gay Mardi Gras in Sydney, in which police clashed with marchers. The film

takes a look at the oppression of homosexuals throughout history beginning with the Middle Ages, when social and sexual 'deviants' were burnt at the stake. It also examines more contemporary oppression, such as the illegal and provocative anti-gay behaviour of the New South Wales police force and the response of the gay community.

From the US comes *Pride Divide* directed by Paris Poirier. This doco explores how homosexual men and women have joined forces against homophobia, yet have been divided over issues around sexism in the gay pride movement.

In a special festival event, patrons will have the opportunity to meet the cast and crew of *Buck House* at the world premiere of the first gay and lesbian sitcom created by gays and lesbians. The first four episodes of the sitcom, directed by Brett Harrison of Queer Vision, will be screened at the Festival. *Buck House* can also be seen on the web from late February at www.queervision.com.au

Keith Howe, gay television historian, will introduce a special presentation of *It's Our ABC Too* which charts the way the national broadcaster has covered gay related issues and depicted gay and lesbian characters throughout its broadcasting history. Through an analysis of gay icons like Molly Meldrum and Kylie Minogue, the ABC's coverage of the AIDS debate, telecasts of the Mardi Gras and the depiction of gay characters like Dr. Martin Rice in *GP*, Howe explores how the ABC has reflected the moods and demands of the heterosexual and homosexual audiences.



Kathleen Chalfant, Joanna Merlin and Yvonne Rainer in *MURDER and murder* Esther Levine

This year's Festival is also strong on features. It includes Alain Berliner's *Ma Vie en Rose* (winner of Best Foreign Film at the recent Golden Globes) which tells the story of the cross-dressing seven-year old Ludovic. Sara Moore's *Homo Heights* features comedian Lea Delaria and queer icon Quentin Crisp in their first leading roles in a feature film. Sean Matthias' feature film debut *Bent* is an adaptation of Martin Sherman's play of the same name. Set in the midst of Hitler's wartime oppression of gays, it focuses on a gay man trying to pass as straight in the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau (the Broadway version starred Richard Gere). *Bent* features Lothaire Bluteau (*Orlando, Jesus of Montreal, Black Robe*), Mick Jagger (as a transvestite club owner) and, as a storm trooper, Jude Law (the Bosie of the recent film, *Wilde*). RT

For further information call 02 9332 4938 or check info@queerscreen.com.au

Newsreel

Million dollar movies announced by the AFC and SBS

Fresh Air, an inner city comedy from writer/director Neil Mansfield and producer Rosemary Blight, has been announced as the first of five Million \$ Movies. Million \$ Movies is a joint initiative of the Australian Film Commission and SBS Independent in association with Beyond Films, the Premium Movie Partnership and UK Channel 4. Five films will be made under the initiative, each with a budget of \$1 million.

Fresh Air, written by Neil Mansfield over six years, was supported in the first round of the Australian Film Commission's New Screenwriters Scheme which gives opportunities to new writers. Bill Bennett acted as Neil's mentor under the Scheme and will retain that role during production. *Fresh Air* will commence production in March 1998.

www.screenarts.net.au

Australia's first and only national online directory for digital screen art on the web has been launched—screenarts, developed by the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT) in association with the Media Resource Centre and Sydney Intermedia Network. screenarts provides a central point of access to the digital art which Australians are producing online. screenarts takes the web tourist to a host of important exhibition sites, such as Linda Wallace's survey of Australian interactive art, *aliens.au*, presented at Video Positive in the UK earlier this year, Lloyd Sharp's eye popping *Fun With Fluids* and the ever expanding online oeuvre of *nervous_objects*. Providing an insight into the innovative applications of the web for Australian digital screen artists, screenarts is both easy to use and flexible in the hands of even the most inexperienced user. This first stage of the directory links to Australian online exhibition sites for a diverse range of digital art, experimental film and video. As screenarts continues to evolve, the site will archive exhibitions no longer online, allowing the directory to

become a more complete and functional resource of historical as well as current Australian digital screen art on the web.

Western Australian Screen Awards

The 12th annual Western Australian Screen Awards are to be held at Perth's Television and Film Institute from February 27 until March 2. The awards will feature a three day festival component, exhibiting all works produced in the state during 1997. Prizes will be issued to films in a diverse range of categories from animation to documentary and drama genres. For further information contact Peta Kalatzis or Richard Sowada on 08 9335 1055 or e-mail to fti@fti.asn.au.

Global TV decision makers come to the West

Western Australia will host some of television's most influential program buyers and makers from around the world at the Third Annual Big Picture TV Conference. The conference will investigate topics from youth TV to new sources of finance, making co-productions work, multimedia success stories, and the potential of Pay TV. As well, \$20 000 worth of development money will go to the winner of the *Big Pitch*, a public contest for documentary makers to impress producers and distributors with an idea for a potential Australian/Canadian co-production. For more information contact Rebecca Bird at ScreenWest on 08 9382 2500.

Australian films at Clermont

Five Australian films screened at the Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival, held in France from January 23-31. The films were *SKUD* directed by Donna Swain, *TWO/OUT* directed by Kriv Stenders, *Shared Affair*, directed by Cameron Hay, and *The Two-Wheeled Time Machine* directed by David Lowe.

Cafe Provincial Comedy Film Festival

The fourth annual Cafe Provincial Comedy Film Festival will be

held in Fitzroy on Sunday April 5. Films must be no longer than 10 minutes and stand to win cash and in-kind prizes to the value of \$7000. For more information call Danielle Johnstone 03 9416 0122. Deadline for entries March 6.

Queer Screen

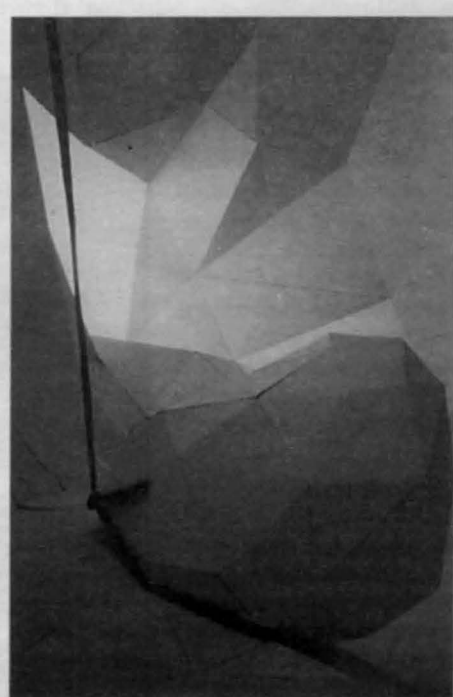
Queer Screen presents the 1998 Mardi Gras Film Festival, showcasing the queerest booty of film production from around the world. The festival program includes a features section, as well as the *My Queer Career* competition and will screen at the Roxy Parramatta as well as the city Pitt Centre. February 11-22. For more information contact Marise Williams on 02 9331 3165. For program see above.

Nothing moral about moral rights legislation

There is continuing outrage amongst screenwriters over the proposed moral rights legislation, which they say will serve only the commercial interests of producers, and argue that such legislation will mean that Australian stories will ultimately rest in the hands of foreign distributors. For more information contact Virginia Gordon at the Australian Writers Guild 02 9389 5515.

SInevent: Constructing the Amorphous: artist's talk by Horst Kiechle

Kiechle is a computer artist whose "...deranged web diagrams...can, despite appearances, be built." (*Architecture Australia* March/April 1997) Coinciding with his installation at the Darren Knight Gallery in Waterloo (ends February 21), Sydney Intermedia Network (SIN) and Powerhouse Museum are pleased to present this opportunity to further explore Kiechle's remarkable virtual and actual environmental geometries. Based on projects realised during the past three years, the artist will present an overview of what is possible in the area of CAD (Computer Aided Design), computer animation, Virtual Reality



Horst Kiechle, *Amorphous Construction*, 1998

display options, and Automated Manufacturing. The main focus, however, will be on VRML, the 3D equivalent to text and image browsing through the World Wide Web. *Constructing the Amorphous*, Sunday February 22, 2pm, Target Theatre, Powerhouse Museum, 500 Harris St, Ultimo. Further information phone SIN (02) 9264 7225, email sinsite@ozemail.com.au

Real Fluxus: the art of new situations

Nicholas Zurbrugg interviews Eric Andersen about intermedia performance

The Danish artist Eric Andersen's abbreviated biography reads: "Born 1942, London. Musician, composer and self-taught artist presenting intermedia works since the late '50s. Associated with Fluxus since 1962. Involved in participative mail-art, developing chain letters as a basis for sharing of identity, working with non-objects, random audiences and communication not conditioned by media or accepted technology. Cooperating with private enterprises and public institutions, he has established a vast number of experiments concerning non-interpersonal operations. Has produced close to 100 publications, one of them including a town".

I'd first met Andersen at a sound poetry festival in Bologna earlier this year, where he encouraged spectators to walk about with his performers. This was not exactly 'sound poetry' as I understood it, nor the tightly crafted process that I'd associated with Fluxus events. I was a little puzzled. How exactly did he envisage intermedia performance?

We met once again in December 1997 outside the Queensland Art Gallery, prior to the opening of its epic exhibition Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-Garde, a three-quarter million dollar donation of original pieces and multiples on fabric published by Editions Francesco Conz, including Andersen's giant 160 x 5000cm screen print *The Banner*, which he'd wanted to suspend from a helicopter above Brisbane's skyline in an aerial performance. The QAG set this up. Brisbane City Council turned it down. Too risky.

NZ Did Fluxus have a special aesthetic?

EA No, Fluxus was essentially an international network—an internet long

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Eric Andersen, *The Banner* (detail), screenprint on cotton

before the internet—linking artists envisaging intermedia art not as a production but as a process. We don't care about art. We just do our work. I think it is a desire to make constant innovation, never to rest, never to find a niche or a style or a consensus about anything. This is the intermedia perspective.

NZ But weren't Fluxus events characterised by brevity, wit and precise scores?

EA No, many early pieces in 62 and 63 went on for hours and were extremely boring. And many scores came after the performance and were merely a report about something we did—a way of keeping each other informed about what was going on in our heads and what we were doing, put down in a minimum of words.

NZ Weren't early Fluxus performances predominantly musical?

EA Not really. We couldn't get into theatres and museums, but sometimes we could get a hand on a concert hall. So that's why we put a lot of musical instruments into it. If other institutions had invited us we would have been happy to do work in museums or art galleries.

NZ Isn't Fluxus characterised by its choice of ephemeral materials?

EA No. I can guarantee that if someone had offered us \$1,000,000 to do something in marble or iron we would have done it. We adapted to situations and used whatever materials we could find. Intermedia can take any shape and can take any scale. It can last for seconds, or like my piece *Idle Walk*, it can last for years.

In 1982 I invited 165 people to dinner at the Royal Palace in Copenhagen. They could choose what they ate, choose the music, and could veto two other guests. 63 people participated, and after using their collective vetoes, minus 21 guests were left. According to the laws of probability this couldn't have happened—I had a miracle on my hands! So I asked the Palace to make this day a public holiday. This wasn't granted, so ever since I've celebrated it with an *Idle Walk*. Sometimes it's in Copenhagen on the right day—29th August. Sometimes on the wrong day, in the wrong city, such as Chicago, where it was presented simultaneously by four TV

stations. Sometimes five or six times per year. I hope that it will go on forever.

NZ Did you anticipate working on this cosmopolitan scale?

EA Yes, I was convinced of that. I was based in Copenhagen but I was sure that most of my work would take place outside Denmark. It's part of being a nomad and opening up new situations. This is what is most important to me—to open up new situations.

NZ So intermedia art is an art of new situations?

EA Yes. Intermedia's point was to make a social circumstance, to be a social thing, where the performer and the audience interact with each other, and form this special social sphere where other rules apply than normal rules and normal social conventions. It's not a technique to produce an object or to pinpoint a situation.

NZ Isn't Robert Wilson's intermedia art very precise in focus?

EA I don't think that Robert Wilson is intermedia, I think that he's multimedia. Multimedia is where you take existing media—where you take theatre or dance or visual

elements or music—and fuse them together, but the elements still remain themselves. Music is still music, and dance is still dance, and theatre is still theatre. It's just people pretending something, building a fiction.

NZ And intermedia?

EA If you indulge yourself when you perform you lose the aspect of intermedia, and you go into a more conventional position of a poet or an actor. So you have to be very self-detached. In intermedia when you have sounds they are not music, they are sounds. And when you have visual elements they are visual elements, but they are not painting or graphics. And when you have a person acting, he is not pretending to be somebody else, he is himself or herself. So intermedia is dealing with what is actually, factually going on. It exists on the same level as daily life—it is not daily life of course, because other rules apply—but it doesn't exist outside of itself, it doesn't belong to any other kind of higher abstraction.

Nicholas Zurbrugg co-curated the Queensland Art Gallery's exhibition Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-Garde with Anne Kirker. He is Professor of English and Cultural Studies at De Montfort University, Leicester, England.

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The patron of the seriously ephemeral

Douglas Kahn reports from *Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-garde* at the Queensland Art Gallery

Francesco Conz is an artist who was born in a rich person's body and raised to do his bit to increase his family's considerable wealth. He dutifully internalised this mission, yet there were still these other, indescribable urgings. He eventually reached the point where he could no longer hide his true feelings. It was not as though he needed to rent a garret and dance around in a beret, but he knew he could no longer run his factory in good faith. He tried running a gallery but his relations with artists were still too much on a commercial footing. He wanted a factory more like Warhol's, one that would hum with artistic activity on-site, greased with wine-sodden conversation. He had started too late to be an artist in his own right (even though art history is peppered with late-starters) so he concentrated on being something of a participatory patron. He wanted a factory where he could sweep the floors.

He was not interested in being a collector who becomes wealthier through his associations with artists. Instead, he reversed his family's fortunes and directed them to a generation of artists who also became an extended family of sorts, although he talks of them in terms of, literally, being saints: the experimental and intermedia artists who had arisen in the late 1950s and 1960s, including those associated with Fluxus, Happenings, Concrete Poetry, Viennese Actionism, and Lettrisme. How it works is that he invites artists to his place in northern Italy, where they produce museum-quality multiples, take in the alpine air and live the life. He also takes hundreds of photographs to document the performances and other activities while they are in residence.

No matter what you may think about the life decisions of rich people, his style of patronage is definitely not patronising, and his choice of patronage has been an especially fortuitous one, for these were artists whose performances, objects and quasi-objects, with very few exceptions, could not be cashed in despite their historical importance. Other artists in their wake used their ideas and became bankable while they continued to live close to the bone. Make no mistake, no one is getting rich in this enterprise but at least some of the pressure is relieved. One of the important things Conz has done is to take some of the early works which were either ephemeral or just not conducive to display and reproduce them with archival techniques, acid-free paper, fine craftsmanship, and in a form better suited for exhibition and collection. While this provides the key attraction he also publishes the more recent works, many of

which are quite remarkable and show the staying power of some of these artists; I'm thinking in particular of Dick Higgins' *Africa* (1988). Besides providing a source of income for the artists, Conz's publication of these multiples has the added effect of raising their profile and of advocating this generation of artists as a whole.

A large selection of these works which Conz donated to the Queensland Art Gallery forms the basis for the present exhibition *Francesco Conz and the Intermedia Avant-garde*. The exhibition continues to February 22 but because the works are in the permanent collection, Brisbane will now become an unlikely mecca for those interested in experimental art in the same way that people flock to Canberra to see Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*. Yet it is not merely an attraction for devotees; much of the show is very accessible, not because it fulfills the received Conditions of Art, you know, the ones that MacDonald and Auty are lost without, but because it directs itself to matters of everyday life. The intermedia *avant-garde* was 'multicultural' before its time (although this could be said of Paris 50 years before) and international in scope and this scope is well represented, although I wish there had been a work or two by Takehisa Kosugi, one of the main players in Fluxus and more recently the musical director for the Merce Cunningham company. It was also the time when women (with the possible exception of the Russian *avant-garde*) became a true force within the *avant-garde*, a fact still lost on too many art historians, and they are well represented here with works by Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, Carolee Schneemann, Charlotte Moorman and others. While we can question the lack of self-effacement involved whereby so many artists are flown under the flag of one individual, it is nevertheless an excellent collection bursting out with poetics, politics, refreshingly stooied humour and dry dry wit.

In keeping with the original concerns of the intermedia *avant-garde*, the events of the opening night and the forum on the following day consisted primarily of performances by invited artists Alison Knowles, Ben Patterson and Eric Andersen.

Knowles presented an early work *Newspaper Music* (1961) and a more recent one *Loose Pages*; Andersen also presented an early work *Piano Piece* (1961), while Patterson performed two new works, *World Weather* and *A Simple Opera*, the latter written the night before its performance during the Saturday forum. The forum also included an interview of Conz by Nicholas

Zurbrugg in which Conz's infectious personality was everywhere in evidence, and a talk by myself on Pollock's influence upon Fluxus and Happenings artists in terms of noise and chance, aspects usually attributed to John Cage.


The strength of the performances ironically emphasised one of the shortcomings of the exhibition, Conz's publishing practice and, indeed, exhibition practices of galleries in general. Much of the intermedia *avant-garde* and experimental arts were and are performative and time-based. For instance, Fluxus was rife with musical performances and sound art pieces, many of the artists had formal musical training and most were directly influenced by Cage. The gyrating choreography of Pollock and action painting in general unleashed corporeal and environmental events across a range of performative and theatrical modes. Yet the

Conz's publications, his photodocumentation of the artists' activities at his property, the exhibition itself, and galleries and museums in general are predominantly silent and static affairs, which precipitate from the upper reaches of the traffic in material culture. I would suggest that the acceptance of this collection by the Queensland Art Gallery also comes with the responsibility to become a presenting institution of an expanded type, one where performances and screenings are not relegated to the opening events alone but become as permanent a feature, within reason, as the objects themselves.

Douglas Kahn is Associate Professor of Media Arts at University of Technology Sydney and author of *Noise, Water, Meat: Sound, Voice and Auality in the Arts*, forthcoming, MIT Press.



Ben Patterson and Francesco Conz, 1993



Hind Site

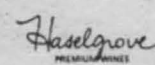



installation works

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 Teri Hoskin & Mark Stephens
 Katie Moore
 Sue Rodwell
 Jolenta Sweet-Kirkwood
 Anne Walton

March 5 - 15
 Jackie Deane
 Leith Elder
 Julie Henderson
 Gavin Malone
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Dumbing down or building bridges?

Jacqueline Millner reports on the National Art Publishing Forum: *Audiences, Markets and Distribution* held in Brisbane last November

A long time in the making under the stewardship of a Brisbane-based steering committee funded principally by the VACF, this forum eventually brought together some leading figures in arts publishing to discuss issues currently of concern to small arts publishers. The agenda centred around distribution, marketing, and audience development, issues which according to the organisers have to date received insufficient consideration. In two days of exchanges between some strange bedfellows, from big-time commercial book publicists to editors of small funded specialist journals, old dilemmas resurfaced: how do you expand the audience for the arts without dumbing down? How do you improve the sales and distribution of quality art journals (which are suffering up to 35 per cent returns even on very small print runs)? How do you internationalise without compromising unique local attributes? Few new issues were canvassed, although it was useful to interrogate the cyber-cliché that electronic publishing will kill the book. As is the nature of such forums, of course, no issues were resolved, and given the broad spectrum of speakers, not much common ground emerged. However, what the forum did provide was a useful insight into how 'the other half' lives, an opportunity to explore new strategies based on others' experiences.

Sessions ranged from the motivational—easy to pick Maggie Hamilton's marketing background (head of publicity, Transworld Publishing)—to the low-key, such as Ian Chance's step-by-step explanation of how he got a small specialist journal, *Indigenous Arts Australia*, off the ground. Indeed, this schizophrenic swing from studious, almost reticent demeanour, to savvy selling pitch, characterised the event, with ideological differences sometimes betrayed in impatient sighs and tight smiles. While many arts publishers are able to simultaneously embrace both high-brow content and slick marketing—or, as Paul Foss from *art/text* put it, negotiate the transition from a culture of theory to a culture of the bottom line—the hoary divide still rules in some quarters.

Melbourne commercial gallery director Anna Schwartz and *Art Monthly* editor Peter Timms remain wary of the danger of dumbing down to meet bottom line imperatives. On the other hand, Maggie Hamilton and her argument that we need to build bridges through merchandising (and other techniques which might seem tacky to a purist) in order to develop audiences for the arts, met with a great deal of approval. Teenager Kevin of Bankstown, her fictional example of the type of audience the arts should be developing, had followed his dream to become a curator upon the purchase of a Monet mug, after all! Inspirational stuff! Davina Jackson (editor, *Architecture Australia*) is also unabashedly into 'bridge building', vaunting the power of a gossip column to boost sales, while decrying long reviews and articles: "Why have chunks of text when you can have a sexy image?...If you have a dud designer, then all your efforts are a waste of time".

Along with talk of audience development, there was much tut-tutting about the standard of arts writing in general, and in particular about the poor grasp of English grammar among emerging writers. Jackson bemoaned the deliberate obfuscation of content in tortured prose, underlining the need to write "from the grass roots up", and urged editors to consult more closely with writers. Robert Schubert from *Globe-e* internet journal expressed frustration at the time and energy expended on editing new writers, while Juliana Engberg (curator MOMA, Heide) lamented the paucity of quality text, "some almost sub-literate", she receives for her catalogue publications. Later, this was picked up as the need to find resources for the professional development of emerging arts writers, such as for instance providing research time and royalties for catalogue writers, a suggestion made by Michael Brand (Queensland Art Gallery). Engberg also raised the related issue of low minimum rates for arts writers, which the forum resolved to lobby against, while concern was also expressed about the new policy of universities to discount writing

published in non-refereed arts journals when appraising prospective job applicants.

The other dominant issue was distribution, with some small journals complaining about how poorly served they were, and independent distributors countering with the suggestion that indeed more effort needs to be made rather at the point of sale. Timms' idea that the money skimmed from the funding of art journals to attend world fairs be put towards paying an independent distributor to handle Australian art magazines met with the response that a better use of such funds would be to sponsor an Australian art magazine section at point of sale, say at newsagents. Some fresh marketing ploys were proffered by Janet Mansfield of *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, a glossy which boasts American and Japanese distributors and sale in 40 countries; these included ensuring the magazine is listed in international library lists and indexes and negotiating pre-sale deals. Mansfield reiterated that selling, not distribution, is the main game, with most issues of *Art and Perception* sold before publication. Foss also illustrated this point with his anecdote about the French distributor of *Artforum* who has not paid the journal in 20 years.

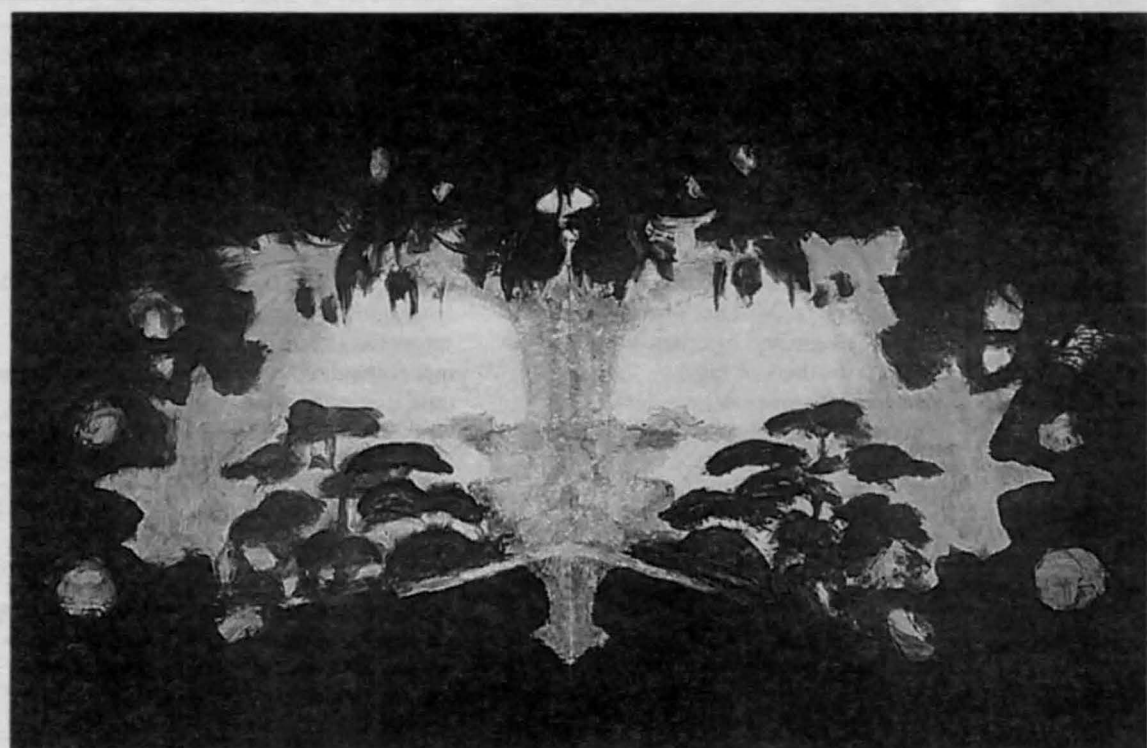
Mansfield's presentation reflected her ease with international marketing, although this was not the case for everyone. Timms emphasised the vital importance of local inflection, while Foss suggested that international marketing would not suit everyone, hedging his bets by arguing for the protection of the 'democratic' publishing scene in Australia. The need for arts publishing to engage internationally was forcefully put by Brisbane gallerist David Pastorius. Offering one of the most practical suggestions on the topic of catalogues, Pastorius called for the publication of decent monographs on Australian contemporary artists, given that these are essential for recognition in major international exhibitions; without them, artists present as unprofessional beside their European counterparts; "35 millimetre slides are not enough". Pastorius' view was endorsed by

Leon Paroissien (editor, *Visual Arts and Culture*), who contrasted the Australian attachment to a sense of 'national identity', a style of nationalism, with European perceptions which still view nationalism with deep suspicion. For Paroissien, given the mobility of artists today, it is impossible to think of them within national boundaries, and arts publishing must follow accordingly.

Not many grand claims were made on behalf of another form of international publishing, namely electronic. While the advantages of the net in terms of marketing and distribution were noted, its role as a content provider was much criticised. Schubert's presentation was remarkably low key given that *Globe-e* is the first electronic contemporary arts journal in Australia. Schubert spelled out the many limitations of his medium, reassuring his colleagues that electronic publishing posed no threat to print media. Its greatest asset, namely its lack of finality, was also perhaps a liability in the credibility stakes. Indeed, it is the book's finality which, to Morrie Schwartz (Bookman Press), renders it unassailable, together with its status as a potentially beautiful object of desire.

The forum was an ambitious project which succeeded in providing a useful arena for the exchange of different experiences in arts publishing. Despite some protestation, the general mood suggested an acceptance of bottom line imperatives (as cultivated by government policy through its funding bodies), as well as an acknowledgement of the need to look beyond both niche audiences and national borders. It is to be hoped that some of the interesting suggestions which the forum threw up are taken a little further, including the professional development of emerging writers, new strategies to move journals at the point of sale, and the exploration of the potential of electronic publishing.

National Art Publishing Forum, Brisbane, November 28 - 29 1997; Steering Committee chair, Sarah Follent, Eyeline Publishing; Project Co-ordinator, Peter Anderson.



Virginia Ross, *In the Velvet Darkness* (installation detail), ink painting

encapsulated in the only object present—a half black, half white sphere suggesting planetary rotation and the co-dependence (and differences) of the terms "light" and "dark". The object serves further to unite physically the large wall-based works that face one another across the gallery space, yet is ultimately dwarfed by them. Similarly the wall works accentuate each other and mirror common concerns, yet maintain a discreteness that is slightly jarring. The work's ultimate strength comes from its meditation on themes pertinent to the Sublime and its Re-presentation. The pervasive, almost cave-like darkness of the exhibition space intermittently lit, suggests Plato's cave, the birthplace of 'modern' Western concepts of the Re-presented. Ross eludes that philosopher's evident disdain for the visual arts, and for the pre-eminence of visibility in general, through the psycho-sensual intensity of her work's physical and emotional engagement with darkness. In this case the light of Reason is subsumed by the more enticing flame of experience—experience as an *exposure* to alternate possibilities.

Alex Gawronski

Virginia Ross, *In the Velvet Darkness*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney, November 1997
Alex Gawronski is a Sydney-based artist and writer.

In the Velvet Darkness, a photographic installation by the Sydney based artist Virginia Ross, highlights the 'underside' of visual representation and of social experience through her abiding preoccupation with themes of darkness and light. Darkness as the absence of light is simultaneously, in photographic terms, also the trace of light's utmost presence—total exposure. Through a series of three separate though interconnected works, Ross queries both a philosophic and physical absence of light that is shown to resonate, yet not necessarily, as light's alternate polarity.

To suggest that light and darkness are opposites is to ignore the implications of each as both palpable phenomena and as psychological conveyors of meaning. The first aspect of Ross's exhibition is a series of 36 seemingly identical images of a 'typically Australian' bush scene photographed at night. The photographs are all of a soft velvety blackness and marked in the upper right hand corner with a somewhat crudely rendered number corresponding with each photograph's place in the film roll. Also present are x-ray traces of common insects that trail mysteriously and artificially across the foreground of the picture plane. This work creates a double paradox that undermines pictorial sameness, at the same time invoking the hidden materiality of the photographic medium. Similarly the 'actuality' of the scene is parodied via the inclusion of the traces of those visual, and 'actual' pests, the insects, that inhabit it both in and beyond the artificial confines of the framed image. Darkness is invoked as the substance of the lost object, the Australian landscape, and as an alternative to its popular 'sunny' representations. At the same time the light which illuminates the living organisms does so at their expense. Organic material reveals the inside of light, whilst light becomes a shadow of itself and a purveyor of death.

The other significant component of the work, a large ink painting executed on the facing wall, repeats the already repeated photographic landscape, reversing it in the process. The viewer is presented with a double-landscape equivalent of the Rorschach Test. What differs in this instance however is the 'nature' of the central gestalt normally rendered in black ink. The centre of the 'page', the wall, glows through in all its whiteness. Psychology's "hidden agenda" is illuminated at the expense of the predictable representation of the unconscious as dark and uncomfortable. Here light hides discomfort in refusing to reveal its sources, in refusing to show us the emotional emptiness sanitation conceals.

Ross's desire to illustrate the seduction of the "dark light" of darkness is further

Such poetry

Simeon Kronenberg at MoMA (Heide)'s *Lightness and Gravity*

The most beautiful exhibition in Melbourne in 1997 was *Lightness and Gravity* at the Museum of Modern Art at Heide. Not a very cool thing to say perhaps, but nonetheless true.

The exhibition was exhilarating because of its unrepentant exploration of the aesthetically lovely and deeply poetic. This is not a fashionable stance—especially in installation work today, but here was beauty manifest, in an exhibition that caused more than a single flutter in the breast, especially for the unreconstructed.

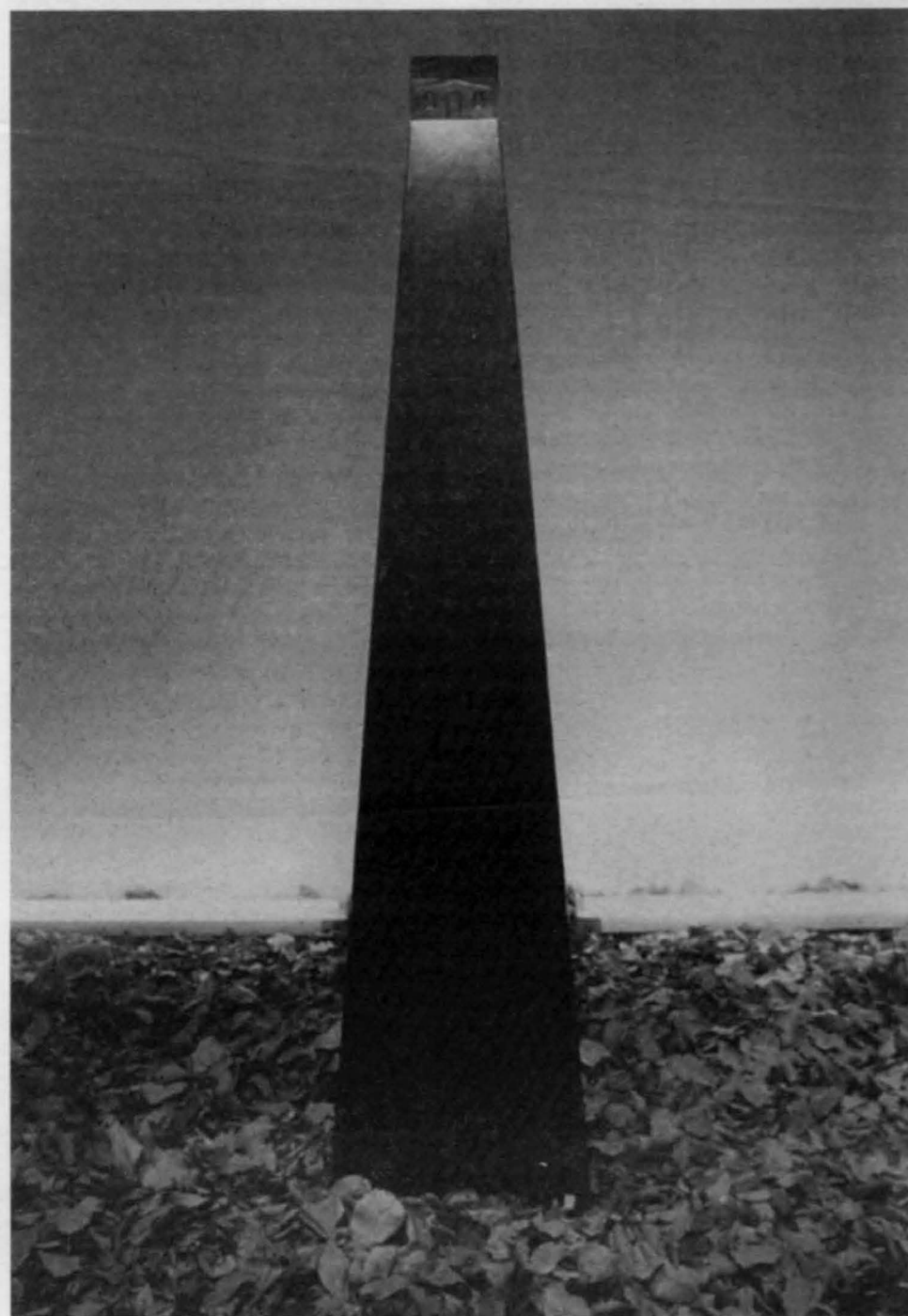
It was Juliana Engberg's idea to bring together the artists who appear in the show, and Ewen McDonald who guest curated it with her. The artists Aleks Danko, Robert McPherson, Pieter Laurens Mol and Richard Wentworth rose to the occasion and produced some of the most interesting installations seen for a long time. And as usual, the exhibition had the kind of grace and coherence we have come to expect from the work done by Juliana Engberg at the museum.

Aleks Danko's *Aleksander Danko Senior, Adelaide 1991* was a little house on a column surrounded by elm leaves. A simple and poetic image, captured and still, frozen for the present, in a room of blue light. The work was unashamedly theatrical and allusive, evoking a range of emotional responses about life, dying, home and time—big humanist issues explored through metaphors that embraced the everyday, while suggesting the inherent poetry of experience. All done through an emblematic

little house on a perfect plinth. The image is a child's construction of 'house'—a central door, windows on either side and a chimney. But is it an image of pain or of joy? Of loneliness perhaps? The house on top of an unclimbable column, perfect and serene, a little threatening perhaps, containing the pain of the impossible.

The work evokes a mixture of feelings but the viewer is guided by the text that accompanies it, *As you know we are pensioners, day in day out, twenty four hours closer to death, (RUSSIAN HUMOUR)*. Pretty black humour, perhaps typical, in a country of long northern nights and short days. This is the kind of grim wit that locates us and our frailties, ambitions and dreams within the real—the inevitability of impending death and in the end, nothingness. The artist provides us with a way of approaching some very important issues here and he does it by the evocation of a simple but poetically significant image—one that in some way belongs to each of us, no matter how fractured or ambiguous our own notions of 'house' and 'home' might be.

Ewen McDonald writes that the artists in *Lightness and Gravity* "play between literal and figurative readings—determined to bring art down to earth at the same time as they imaginatively metaphysically let it soar". ("Lightness & Gravity", *Lightness and Gravity* catalogue) Danko provides us with an immediately recognisable image—the doll like house but it is imbued as well with metaphysical possibilities of consciousness and intellectual play.



Aleks Danko, "As you know, we are pensioners, day in day out, twenty four hours closer to death" RUSSIAN HUMOUR) ALEKSANDER DANKO SENIOR, 1991

Pieter Laurens Mol's *Ascension Dream Sculpture* is a collection of photographs placed high up on the gallery wall. They depict the artist seemingly wrestling with a feather filled pillow. In 24 photographs, mounted together, the artist holds the pillow up to his face. In the 25th photograph the artist is standing on the pillow as it ascends. He has finally recognised its power. In this funny and whimsical piece, Mol has proclaimed the poetry of magic and has risen to heaven on an artist's feathers of flight.

Richard Wentworth investigates the "culturally poetic investment". (Ian Hunt, "Fall of the Half-Rhymes", *Lightness and Gravity* catalogue) in the found object. In *Brac*, the artist reassembled a large number of broken dinner plates on the floor of the gallery. This became at once an image of the mundane but precious and full of meanings. The work occupied the available space like a small domestic constellation.

More threatening and ambiguous was *Load*, a stack of galvanised steel, like an industrial shelf system, roughly put together but complete with light globes. This work evoked a range of responses, horror at its seeming impregnability and hardness and amusement at its absurdity—it looks as if it should be somehow usable yet it is clearly functionless. What kind of load could it possibly bear?

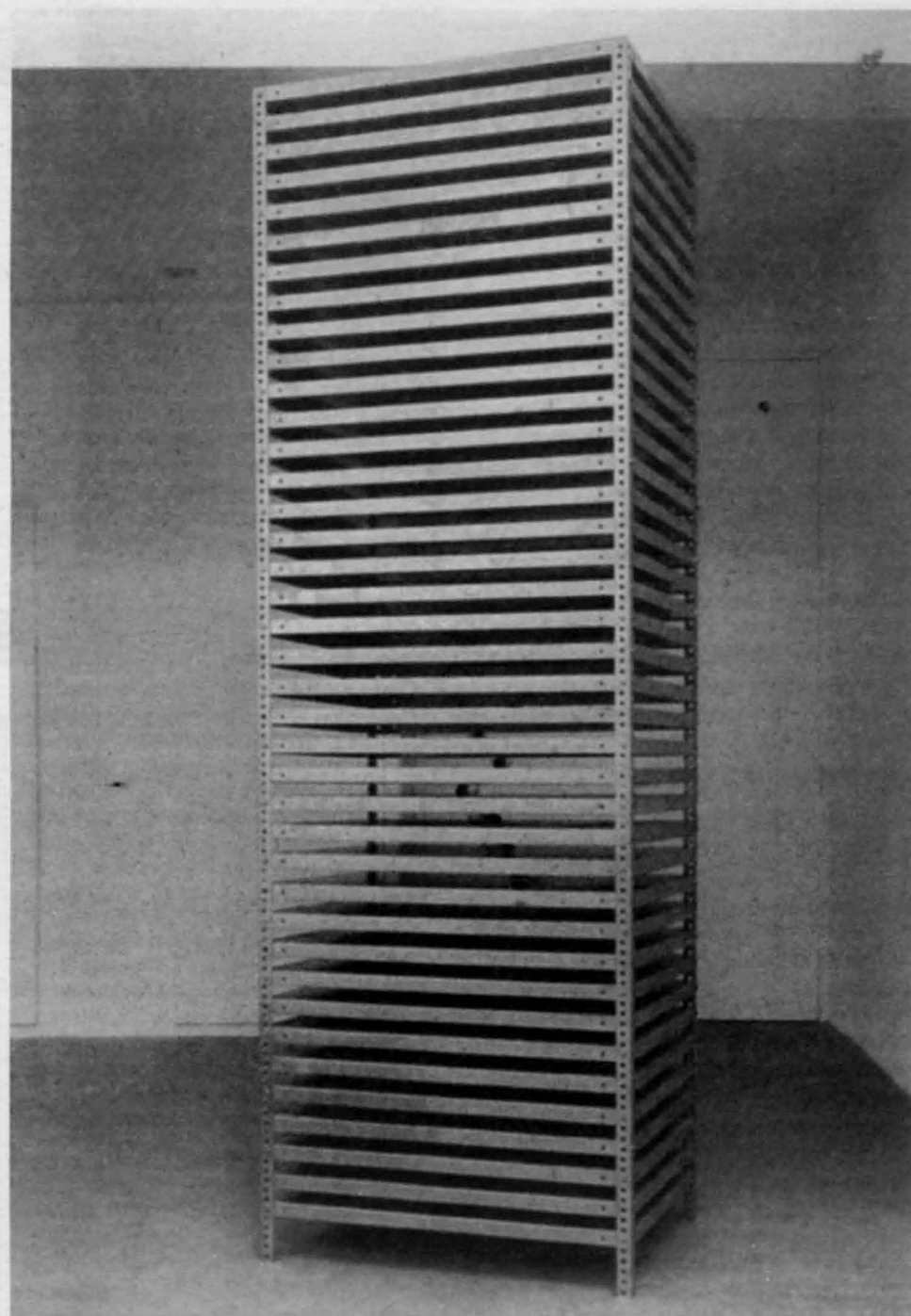
In Robert McPherson's work we are faced with the dilemma of words and signs. Both are seen as equivocal and open to interpretation, not fixed and certainly not

always serious. Modernist notions of art and its sometimes pompous investigations, are mocked and questioned by a process that illuminates a different world—of working class histories (the gingham table cloths of *Red Raddle: 18 Frog Poems for Mary Lake + Connie Sparrow*, and reference to the silver screen and its pin ups, *Souvenir of Marlene Dietrich: Hand Rituals (13 Simple Gestures) A project for a book and sculptures*). These are not what we would expect as fit subjects for modernist discourse, but are celebrated here (and ironically heroised) in McPherson's work—proclaimed indeed as historically resonant. Words and signs in McPherson's work evoke the world of the everyday, while performing within a refined and complex art practice.

The allusive and poetic are examined in *Lightness and Gravity* by each of the artists represented in an exhibition of deeply resonant works. It was a joy to experience such poetry, so coolly presented.

Lightness and Gravity Melbourne Festival of the Arts 1997, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, October 7-November 23

Simeon Kronenberg is the National Director of Museums Australia, the professional organisation for the museum and gallery industry. He has worked as a freelance curator for numerous contemporary art venues, both metropolitan and regional and as a regular contributor to art journals.



Richard Wentworth, *Load*, 1993

Stephen White

A haunting

Linda Maria Walker contemplates *Maria Ghost* at the EAF

"I want to be possessed" is already a possessed statement, or a statement possessed from the inside, by language itself. It says: "I want to possess", I want to possess being possessed (I want to master/occupy being mastered/occupied). Saying 'it' is like haunting or ghosting what was, until then, unsaid. Photography is a ghosting, showing later, after (all is said and done), the 'it' that was, and was even then unseen. The photograph of oneself haunts one forever, calls the ghost of oneself, from the past, clarifies the present as time—you see this played out, somewhat, in the film *Titanic*, with a drawing (Rick Martin's solo exhibition in 1995 was titled *Breath-taking: a passage on the Titanic*).

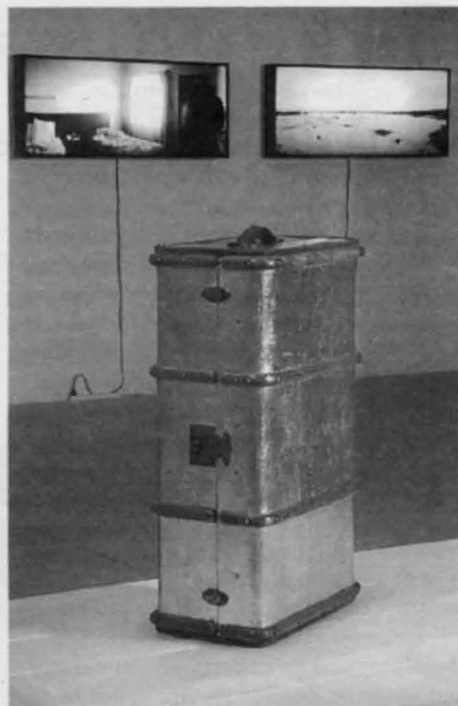
The calling, in this exhibition, of "Maria" is (like) a second-calling. A calling which is named "Maria", but is another word perhaps, and not a lingering proper name; or is a sentence, or a conversation, unannounced, and toward which all language flocks, as if a place jammed with myriad sounds: fear, for instance: Oh, you thought I, Maria, would not come? Maria is 'called' by Martin with images: Maria, a ship, wrecked in 1840.

What really happened? That's the call, not a direct call to or for Maria, but a simple question, whispered, to the land and sea near where she died. A question that starts speech, again; that brings images into being; that prompts more ways of seeing and saying something. And this 'something' will not, and is not expected to satisfy, just as a photograph can't, except momentarily. A photograph, a ghost, has a ghost-of-a-chance to show, let alone 'tell'; let alone tell how the ship was wrecked, how the passengers and crew got to shore, how the Ngarrindjeri people assisted. Memory

though is coaxed, and willingly enters, and adds to, the space of the archive that might or might not be true.

Martin gathers together photographs of a particular place, and arranges them around a central object. Several of the images are lit from behind. One large colour print, composed of seven separate strips is pinned to the wall; nearby is a long black and white print of a fragment of a 'found' photograph. There are interruptions, or intervals, throughout the work: the narrow white gaps between the composite work, and two black images. Nothing is quite intact, although everything seems to be. The intervals hold the story, like the boxes do in Christian Boltanski's *Detective* work: "... but you can't open the boxes. If you opened [them] you wouldn't understand anything anyway because the stories and the faces are mixed up". The aim of his *Childhood* work was "... not to represent his autobiography, but to explore and evoke familiar cultural types, archetypal gestures, to create an archive of 'model images' of generic 'normal' or collective life". (Gregory Ulmer, "The Heuristics of Deconstruction", in *Deconstruction And The Visual Arts, Art, Media, Architecture*) Martin's photographic intention is similarly gestural. There is no sure passage, no correct source; there is 'this' though, he's saying, 'this' traveller's tale.

If you've seen the invitation to the opening of *Maria Ghost*, you'll know it's beautiful. A traveller's trunk, glowing golden, hovers to one side, above a scene of the Coorong, that calm inland sea south of Adelaide. A distinct and flat landscape, often described as boring by those who pass it on their way elsewhere. It appears to be waiting, patient, perhaps alluring, enticing.



Rick Martin, *Gilded Trunk*, detail from *Maria Ghost*

It might possess one, like the open sea behind it possessed (took) Maria; was she looking and wondering, lovestruck—not actually seeing the Coorong, but the dunes, yet sensing it anyway—inattentive to the wild water beneath her (to where she really was, and from where she never returned).

Some facts: the Maria, a brigantine, sank in June, near Kingston; she was built in Dublin, as was the Titanic; she was sailing between Adelaide and Hobart; all passengers and crew survived the wreck; all were killed before reaching Adelaide; the circumstances surrounding the whole event are unclear; the story of Maria is unresolved, mysterious, and violent.

The exhibition contains the deathly presence of photographs and the dark horror of (a) history. Neither will 'let-one-in', and together they pose the (im)possibilities and (un)imaginings of 'travel', of being a 'traveller': between here and there, heaven and hell, this culture and that, fact and fiction; of being in the heart

of things, inside the thing of thought (the immobile heart, writes Jean-Luc Nancy): the interval. We see photographs brought back from the site of the story. And as a metaphor, a glimpse, of the story, 'a history', we see the trunk (the central object: a body, an embodied passivity); the possessed object for possessions. The trunk is closed, packed, full of treasures never to be sorted, worn, loved, again. There is 'something' between and within these two layers (photography/history), an order of exchange perhaps, which functions as 'infinite' (Blanchot's 'infinite conversation' which although interrupted will go on and on, the interruption being part of the 'infinite': "You know, then, that when you speak of these interruptions during which speech would be interrupted, you do speak of them, immediately and even in advance returning them to the uninterrupted force of discourse"). Photographs are infinite, history is infinite. We never get to the bottom of either. Martin signals this by white gaps and black pictures. How does one know the unknown, or how does one keep-talk, close to the heart, as the loved keep-sake (the trunk); or, more likely, in what shape does the unknown return, and 'give' speech. This is then, Maria-talk, the talk/call of Maria and those she carried, and all their complex, intricate, unrealised dreams. It is talk that keeps to (seeks out, stares at) the thwarted struggle of return: Maria ghosting/saying her peace/piece.

Photographs, stories, do not repeat 'what really happened'. There's no means of being in-the-know, and of passing-on the possessed knowledge: the illusion of finitude. Martin ghosted Maria, respecting her calling, returning to the space of no-return, and instead of arming himself with The Story, returned us to the idea of 'wreck', to the rack and ruin of another idea: the archive as possessed, the archive as Ghost.

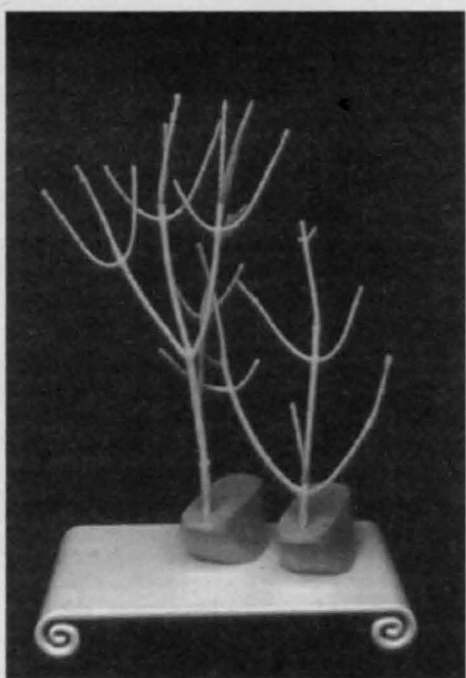
Rick Martin, *Maria Ghost*, *Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, December 4 - January 18*.

Weaver by name and by nature

Jason Smith follows the physical and emotional trajectories of Louise Weaver at Gertrude Street gallery

I Have a Little Yellow Bird in my Ear that Sings, Louise Weaver's exhibition at Gertrude Street, expands on the ideas she explored in *Still Falling*, her installation in *Natural Selection*, the Museum of Contemporary Art's contribution to *Australian Perspectives 97*. Her primary interests are the physical and aesthetic fragility of ecological systems; convergence between human and other nature(s); perceived distinctions between natural and artificial, ephemeral and imperishable, real and virtual experience.

Thread and water metaphorically connect the sixteen individual works in this installation. The first piece encountered upon entering the large gallery at Gertrude Street is titled *Head of a drowned man (imagined 7th state) 1933 Meret Oppenheim*. The reference point is one of Oppenheim's first objects, *Head of a drowned man, 3rd state, 1933* (now lost). It is a face-like shaped piece of wood painted cobalt blue with carved recesses that have been filled with white sugared almonds. There is nothing in the seemingly random configuration of the almonds that resembles the features of a face. Rather, their appearance as cavities infers the dissolution of the body and its reduction to elemental matter, in this case water. Weaver's piece comprises two rectangular lengths of midnight-blue silk organza pinned to the wall, with seven embroidered white almond-like shapes joining the fabric lengths. The resulting *moiré* effect, and movement of the fabric with the currents of



Louise Weaver, *Slippers*

air generated by passing visitors, is suggestive of fluidity and journey.

A silence and elegance that demands an almost reverential quiet pervades the surreal museum constructed by Weaver in this exhibition. Like the last remnants of the natural world, mute branches and antlers are hidden in claustrophobic crochet, often disappearing, chameleon-like, into the snow-white of the walls. Through her transformation and

combination of organic and synthetic materials Weaver demands of viewers an inquisition into what these alluring, almost natural forms might be, and opens relations between them to numerous classifications and possible meanings.

Playing with the traditionally female practices of sewing, crochet and appliqué, and drawing on a range of sources from art history, science, *haute couture* and the aesthetics of other cultures, Weaver's opulent and finely crafted objects oscillate between the poetic and the pro-environmental, the personal and the public. Despite their seductive, almost irresistible tactility, her works have a deeply disturbing edge that warns of the terrors associated with the imposition of Culture on Nature—human conceptions and ideals of beauty contesting 'natural' states and elements. This is especially evident in the macabre *Invisible bird*, where Weaver has straitjacketed a taxidermied hoopoe (Upupa epops) in a sheath of sequins leaving only its beak and erect crest free of the suffocating restraint.

The seductive, insidious and ephemeral world of *haute couture* is evoked in *Waterfall*, a vitrine in which Weaver has strung jet beads and crochet like a black web heavy with dew. Referring to Duchamp and a Chanel evening gown from the autumn/winter collection of 1996/97, *Waterfall* exemplifies the multiple formal and conceptual levels with which Weaver's work is engaged.

The yellow bird from the title provides a 'natural' connection between the inner world of the artist and her external environment. Perched in its auricular enclosure, Weaver's bird acts as a soothsayer, harbinger and informant. It sings stories of migrations across the disparate zones and conditions of the contemporary world, a metaphor for her personal and professional migratory patterns and excursions. Weaver follows the trajectories of her yellow bird—intellectually and emotionally, if not physically—absorbing diverse aesthetics and accumulating specific material culture along the way: Japanese slippers, the lost limbs of trees, cottons, silks and wools, the hoopoe bird, a crystalline field of hand-blown glass snowflakes. I have an image of her sitting in concentration and quiet for long periods, herself perched and crouched in different positions in the rooms of her house, methodically translating the lamentations and tales of her songbird note by note, crotchet to crotchet, stitch by stitch. Weaver by name, weaver by nature.

Combining technical virtuosity with a highly refined aesthetic sense, Louise Weaver's recent work offers an enriching and provocative challenge to our perception of what is 'natural' and casts a critical eye on the panic-stricken late 20th century impulse to preserve.

Louise Weaver, *I Have a Little Yellow Bird in my Ear that Sings*, 200 Gertrude Street Gallery, Fitzroy, November 8-29, 1997.

Jason Smith is curator, *Contemporary Art*, at the National Gallery of Victoria. His current projects include a survey of Rosslynd Piggott's object and installation based works, and a major exhibition of contemporary Korean craft.

Taking comfort

Jacqueline Millner reviews the last show of 1997 (and the end of funding) at Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney

Take comfort: fondle your chains, breast your obstacles, love your disease. This exhibition invites us to do all this, with strong installation and object-based works responding to the notion of comfort. Perhaps these injunctions might also be appropriate for the incoming Firstdraft gallery directors for 1998-2000. As the current committee winds up its stint, Firstdraft has just discovered that its public funding has been completely withdrawn. Considering the vital role the gallery has played over the last 11 years to nurture a wide spectrum of emerging contemporary artists, this is very bad news for Sydney's visual arts community. The new directors are determined to keep operating; no doubt deleterious compromises will be necessary,

most likely from prospective exhibitors, as in higher rent charges and less access to support services such as publicity and networking. Of course the gallery as a whole will suffer if compelled to subvert curatorial to fundraising priorities.

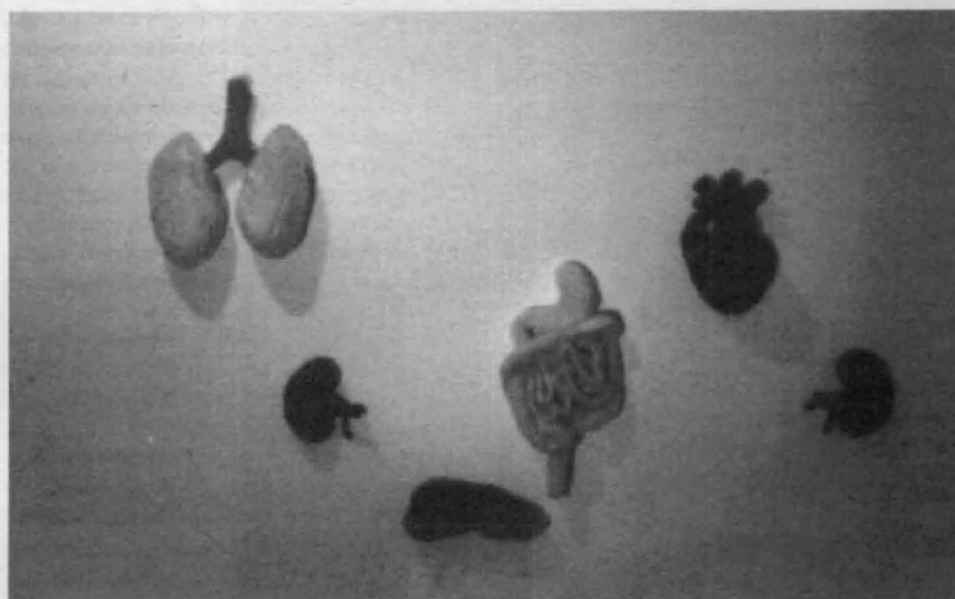
Firstdraft, with its notoriously broad brief and biennial changing of the guard, is necessarily a little hit and miss, although it is this very tolerance for mistakes which creates a climate for genuine experimentation. It is often in the second year of a directorship that the program hits its stride and becomes more consistent: 1997 was no exception. The concluding show provided an opportunity for curator and outgoing director Philpa Veitch to bring together some of the best contributors

to the year's schedule, under the aegis of comfort.

On arriving at the gallery, we are confronted with a solid wall of water-filled green balloons, which we have to penetrate to enter the space. It is a clever ruse by artist Helen Hyatt-Johnston to invade our comfort zone, like an overripe bosom pinning us to the wall. Intimidating on one hand, on the other the work evokes the desire for a buffer to protect our inner sanctum from intrusion. This soft armour keeps the world at a safe distance, dissembling with its flippant and frivolous appearance. It cedes to our pressure, presses against our bodies, only to spring back into shape to hide any trace of our contact.

The comfort we seek in the tactile, including the comic touch, is also integral to Bronia Iwanczak's *Cuddleguts*. Crafted from the tacky fake fur now familiar to contemporary art—think Kathy Temin—these cute renditions of human organs sit on the wall, flayed as for a forensic examination. Heart, liver, intestines, kidneys and lungs in flesh tones are deprived of their visceral abjection and invested with the benignity of soft toys. The contrast between the fear we feel about the exposure of our internal organs and the somewhat inane strategy of warding off danger by clutching a soft toy is thus succinctly evinced. Perhaps Iwanczak is also reminding us of the essential familiarity of our bodies, of the possibility of overcoming the sense of dissociation we feel about those parts of ourselves which we cannot see save through the mediating distance of medical imaging.

Comfort and touch are again linked in Olga Cironis' velvet-swathed chains, which spout



Bronia Iwanczak, installation detail from *Comfort*

elegantly from the wall like a fine stream of water, pooling in a coil on the floor. Cironis has long used this technique of softening metal with velvet, but here the subtlety of the gesture is particularly effective. The chains are rendered seductive and sensual not in a gaudy, loud way, but with restraint. They speak of discipline and economy of emotion, evoking a sensuality of nuance and quiet intensity, of small movements and tight clutches. The security of the close embrace, the safety of a small margin of choice, these are the comforts of *enjambment*, less than the sexual pleasure of bondage.

Far more flamboyant is Kevin Sheehan's hybrid machine, which alarmed the opening night audience with unpredictable hissing and bubbling, only to dissipate the suspense with anti-climax. When not in the process of setting to explode, this strange object constructed from a vintage sink and various gas and pressure valves looks spiky and hostile, an interesting counterpoint to the 'soft sculptures', all by female artists, which surround it. Sheehan's may amount to another response to comfort, a comfort derived from a more aggressive form of protection from intrusion, that is, from repulsion, the very opposite of touch.

Interestingly, this notion of repulsion as intrinsic to comfort is also evident in Caolan Mitchell's *The Wait*, a table setting with red-hot cutlery. Warning signs and an aura of heat keep us at a distance; implements intended for handling become potential wielders of pain. Like Sheehan's, Mitchell's work relies on suspense; it harbours potential danger, in the tradition of kinetic sculpture such as Yves Tinguely's. This suspense dramatically increases its sense of presence, in contradistinction to the very quiet use of video by Stephen Birch which, rather, evokes absence: of emotion, of thought, of agency. Instead of putting us in the action, as film and video characteristically do, Birch's video sucks us into a vortex of ennui as personified by the profoundly bored monochrome faces which stare out from within a dog kennel. Using loaded symbols such as the home and domestic pets, comfort is given a bitter twist; the 'comforts of home' might amount to no more than habituation and its discontents.

The discomfort of home also underpins Sione Francis' *Tapware* and *Vanities*, sleek constructions which cross domestic fixtures with references to abstraction. Together with Birch, Francis is concerned in part with decontextualisation and its effects. He experiments with unlikely conjunctions to interrogate our assumptions about home and the familiar, and about the comfort we take in our ability to control space and the associations conjured by objects.

Veitch succeeds in installing this exhibition to heighten the resonance between works, so that common

approaches and thematic drift easily from one to the other. This gallery space can work remarkably well for large group shows, as demonstrated by the consummate ten year anniversary exhibition of December 1996. Indeed, *Comfort* is a fitting epilogue for the contribution of the gallery's outgoing directors.

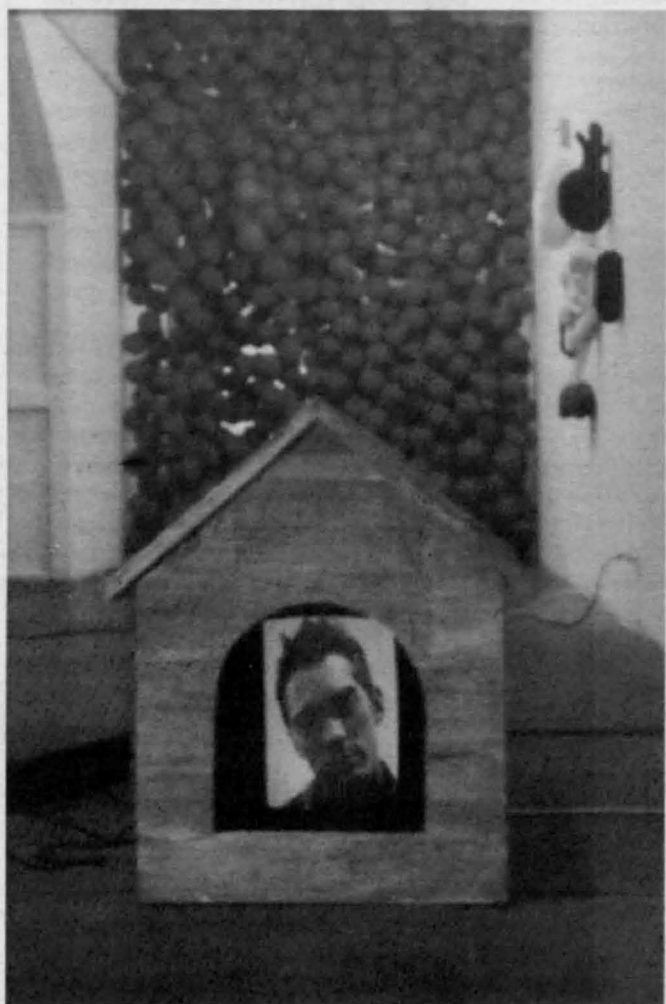
Comfort, Firstdraft, December 1997.

Bronia Iwanczak, Olga Cironis, Helen Hyatt-Johnston, Sione Francis, Caolan Mitchell, Michele Nikou, Kevin Sheehan, Stephen Birch; curated by Philpa Veitch.

The new directors of Firstdraft are Simone Douglas, Peter Fitzpatrick, Greg Ferris, Tess Knight, Tanya Peterson and Nairn Scott.



Kevin Sheehan, installation detail from *Comfort*



Stephen Birch, installation view from *Comfort*



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Gaining ground

Diana Klaosen interviews Sean Kelly, the new director of CAST (Contemporary Art Services Tasmania)

Last year, Sean Kelly, artist, administrator, Fine Arts Masters graduate and former teacher, was appointed Director of CAST, the state's multi-faceted visual arts promotion and development organisation. In the 15 year history of CAST and its antecedent Chameleon, Kelly is the first director to be chosen from within Tasmania, though his predecessor, David O'Halloran, who resigned one year into his term, grew up here and attended the Tasmanian School of Art. Kelly's appointment was welcomed as a change from the parochialism that assumes that 'imported is automatically better'. Through his involvements in contemporary art, Kelly has built a solid reputation and a formidable number of friends and contacts.

CAST has had some particular challenges in the recent past, including being without its own gallery since losing its original premises in the former Blundstone shoe factory, some five years ago. Whilst CAST's role includes considerably more than exhibitions, this was an obvious anomaly. I spoke to Sean in early January, at a time when, on the one hand, CAST is in a strong position with an innovative program of shows, events, collaborative projects, grants and assistance schemes for artists and curators, and so on, in place...but, paradoxically, following the recent sale of the building that CAST, with its new gallery, occupies, the search for a new base has had to be resumed!

DK For people who may not be familiar with CAST and its functions, perhaps I should first ask you to describe them.

SK CAST is not predicated on the idea that the primary, or sole, role is to provide exhibitions. CAST is much broader than that, covering a wider range of activities, particularly involving professional development. Take the art spaces that evolved in the 80s, much as CAST did, out of artist-run co-operatives, gradually assuming a more professional edge, with triennial funding and formal management. Those are now quite professional and focus on providing curatorial and exhibiting opportunities. When Chameleon transformed into CAST in the early 90s, it took on broad state-wide responsibility and became less Hobart-based. Interestingly, it has maintained as active an exhibition program as ever, with the other activities grafted on, which means it is achieving a lot, despite limited resources and staff. Basically it is a contemporary arts organization, not simply an arts space.

DK This is probably the point to mention CAST's touring program.

SK A unique feature of CAST is that it incorporates a touring agency. Initially, CAST linked up with NETS (the National Exhibitions Touring Scheme for intrastate touring) offering it office space. Inevitably, and logically, CAST and NETS began liaising and it became obvious they could be useful to each other. And now this NETS agency is unique in having direct links to a contemporary arts organization and putting work into a contemporary arts circuit. Most other NETS agencies pretty much serve only the Regional Touring Program, with minimal involvement with contemporary arts spaces.

DK This sort of collaboration is particularly appropriate in a small place like Tasmania, to maximise resources and to avoid duplication of effort.

SK Yes, NETS gets Australia Council money for exhibition development and for touring; as an arts space CAST gets funds

for project development and exhibitions. Theoretically we're a one-stop shop. Someone could come to us and get development money from CAST Touring to get a project up and happening, possibly at CAST gallery, and this could then be toured.

DK And CAST's board and staff reflects this versatility?

SK In the early days the co-operatives' boards were made up of practising artists who were co-op members. So they had a clear idea of what constituted good art and appropriate activity, but they didn't necessarily have skills in lobbying, or in legal or financial or management areas. Clearly, you need people familiar with the corporate and business worlds; people from related disciplines, like architecture. Our board Chair is John McQueenie, the Trades and Labour Arts Officer. He has a degree in Photography and works a lot in community arts—in an innovative way. We have practising artists; two gallery directors, an accountant, a lawyer, an architect, and the City Cultural Development Officer, Philip Holliday. Most have arts qualifications, some at Masters level. The staff includes Michael Edwards, the NETS officer, who manages CAST Touring; Jenny Spinks is our administrative assistant. All the staff are able to have significant input into the program and it's not left up to me, as an isolated artistic director, to run the whole show.

DK So do you see your role as significantly different from that of your predecessors?

SK Certainly I have a desire to give CAST a higher profile—and the board endorses this. I want to make people aware of it. In

ways like public art and site-specific activities. This year we're working with the Fringe Festival, the only arts festival in Tasmania. People might say 'That's not the business of an arts organization!', but bringing arts events into such a festival allows us to undertake a much wider range of activities and to be seen by a much wider audience.

We're looking at ways of working in more community arts-related areas, but not the traditional community arts model. We're working with specific groups to achieve high-level outcomes. The exhibition *Episodes* [exploring attitudes to mental health/illness] is a good example. We linked up with Mental Health Services and there were artists of the calibre of Mike Parr and Graeme Harwood rubbing shoulders with people from mental health programs working in the gallery.

It's also vital to make sure that more good Tasmanian art is toured outside the state. Plus more professional development and more regional activity. Though you do reach a critical mass on how much you can deliver.

DK And what other ways are members involved?

SK Well, there's some concern these days amongst arts organizations about how relevant it is to be member-based, that having members can cost more money than it generates. But it's one of the statistics that funding is based on. We try and give people real value; our newsletter contains a lot of helpful information [on grants, awards, shows, openings, internships], but there's some debate about whether having memberships is the way to go.

DK How do you see the effect on the arts of Tasmania's isolation?

SK There's no reason to assume that isolation—physical or psychological—has

to lead to bad art-making. Travel is an issue, but even a struggling artist can afford to go interstate once a year. And people say, "Oh, but there's the internet now and we can all tap into that..." More important for artists is face-to-face human contact—and that's happening all the time—in bars, at openings, in work situations, everywhere. Sure, there are shows that don't travel here, and so on. But the flip-side is that agencies like the Australia Council have a clear government directive to prioritise regional activity. Though we always say that the reason that Tasmanian artists get such a high proportion of grants is that there's a high proportion of good artists here!

DK So how do you see the future for CAST, especially with the bombshell news about the sale of the building? The difficulty of finding and keeping non-commercial gallery space seems to be an on-going saga in Hobart.

SK When I came into the job, I said that I was the first director to walk in and find the organization in very good shape, with a full and varied program, good staff, financially secure and so on. So I obviously brought down the wrath of the gods, because the government building we occupy has been sold and we're looking for another home. We have to be out of here by mid-'98. So is it going to be a snakes-and-ladders situation for CAST? We hope not. But we don't yet know what level of compensation we'll be offered.

DK But you're anticipating that there will be some? Particularly as you've been in these new premises for such a short time.

SK Exactly! Given the degree of government encouragement we were given to move in here, we would hope that their moral obligation would translate into a financial commitment. We're trying to be positive. This could be the chance to find even better new premises and really get established long-term. We hope to be able to re-locate speedily—and hit the ground running.

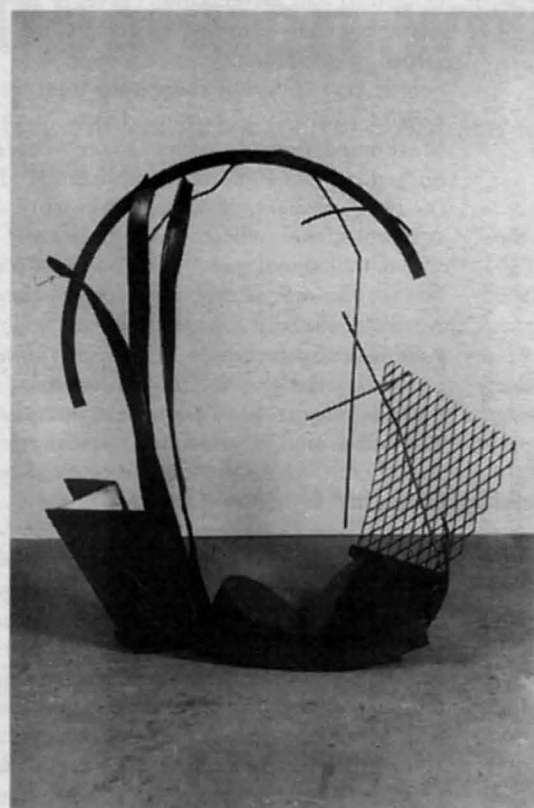
Hobart-based Jane Eisemann's first solo exhibition, *Random Groove*, was held in September-October at Contemporary Art Services Tasmania, on Hobart's waterfront, continuing CAST's series of solo shows by emerging Tasmanian artists. Eisemann completed Honours in Photography in 1993 and is well known in Tasmanian art circles. Rapidly gaining wider recognition, she featured in *Perspecta '95*, *Prospect '96* in Germany and last year won the Photography section of the Australia-wide City of Hobart Art Prize. At the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 1995, her large, digitally altered chromagenic prints depicted surreal tableaux of splay-legged and full-frontal nudes, genitals "computer-air-brushed", into non-existence. Though unsettling, the works were probably not as subtle as the curator suggested in his essay: "clues to crimes or violations...teas[ing], question[ing] and intrigu[ing]..." But there was no ambiguity about Hobart's conservative daily paper's gleeful documenting of viewers' reactions, particularly the shock of one "concerned mother" after "unsuspectingly" taking her children to see the show. Whilst *Random Groove* continues Eisemann's investigation of the body and use of stylized poses and digital manipulation, some works seem more grounded in objective reality. Others—like the triptych *Creeper*, a three-legged humanoid cropped at the waist—are unique products of the artist's imagination. All have an insistent and seductive presence, even *Shagpile* and *Pincer* which at first appear to be chronicling domestic violence. The large monochromatic digiprints are mostly "chocolate" in tone—not sepia. Shot in medium format b&w, the 5 x 7 negatives are high-resolution, scanned onto computer file, with the grey scale converted to colour. As for 'meanings', Jane Eisemann declines to specify what the works 'say' and remarks that some of the interest in being a photographer is that the "products can be 'zero'—they can be things with nothing in them".

Diana Klaosen



Jane Eisemann, *Pincer*, 1997, digiprint

Simon Cuthbert

Jan King, *Tandava*, 1997

While Sydney has all the necessary ingredients—climate, locations and, believe it or not, sculptors—there seems to have been a reticence to capitalise on the natural environment and to engage this city's intellectual curiosity with public sculpture. In an attempt to redress the balance, the University of Sydney Union will launch the inaugural exhibition of a newly conceived Sculpture Terrace at The Sir Hermann Black Gallery on a campus within easy reach of the city. The forthcoming exhibition *OUTSIDE/INSIDE* features works from nine of this city's leading contemporary sculptors exhibited on a large, paved area that complements the sandstone grandeur of Australia's oldest university. Each year, the gallery will provide a series of four 12 week exhibitions on the Sculpture Terrace and an annual exhibition within the gallery and offer an opportunity for the Sydney public to get involved in a dialogue with an area of the visual arts that, for a major city, seems sadly neglected. *RT*

OUTSIDE/INSIDE, The Sir Hermann Black Gallery, Level 5, Wentworth Building, University of Sydney (one minute from the Tin Sheds Gallery), corner City Road and Butlin Avenue, Sydney, February 11-28.

Dance as research

Julia Postle experiences *The Red Shift* at Canberra's Choreographic Centre

Pseudoscience is a kind of halfway house between old religion and new science, mistrusted by both.

—Carl Sagan's words and *The Red Shift*'s story. With this latest work-in-progress, Garry Stewart takes the shared spaces between science fiction and science fact and blows them in different directions with an appropriately cosmic movement vocabulary.

The Red Shift in workshop is a series of seven short scenes, some of them using a complex choreographic tool that has led to the creation of original, innovative chunks of movement. Stewart and dancers Bernadette Walong, Richard Seidel, Kate Levy and Elizabeth Thompson worked with Gideon Obarzanek for three workshop sessions, exploring movement possibilities through the strategy known as 9 point improvisation. Stewart explained the methodology to us before the showing. Each dancer—working in their own imagined box with nine points in different spatial planes—moves between the points, in different orders and using different kinds of movement.

The result is sometimes awkward-looking, sometimes fluid, and always interesting; the force of the movement heightened by an often frenetic pace. Stewart seems to have an ability to meld movement forms with a kind of organised anarchy—in *The Red Shift* he has Seidel spinning on the floor in a new type of breakdancing across the space. A radical *pas de deux* emerges from the breakdancing solo. Sequences spin in and out of each other to maintain the pace, while slides of 'alien spacecraft' and crop circles impose their visual stories on the performance. The dancers are more or less dispassionate—except for the moment straight from *Close Encounters* when lights beam down upon them and there are a few moments of performance anxiety.

After the showing, Stewart expanded on

the choreographic process and some of the problems he and dramaturg David Bonney have encountered. One that is particularly puzzling for him—although a common dilemma for many artists looking to create new and challenging work—is the accessibility of the performance. Stewart was concerned that the story of the piece and the related notion of fictional and factual science barriers blurring was not being communicated to the audience. One audience member thought the slides too directive, instead of allowing the audience to determine the story for themselves. It will be interesting to see how 'well-supervised' the piece becomes through reworkings.

The beauty of The Choreographic Centre is its focus on exploration and process above and beyond product. A relief really, especially at a time when federal government arts policy fails to embrace the richness of investigating the medium of performance, or to acknowledge artistic practice as a means of research.

Garry Stewart made reference to this in his program notes, saying "The Choreographic Centre offered the time and space to test out new methods of working, and...ideas which had been satelliting around in my head for some time could finally be put to the test". It makes sense—give someone the resources of time, space and money to look into even the vaguest conceptual problem, and they'll work to solve it. The research problems of artistic practice can give rise to innovations which extend that practice, and *The Red Shift* does offer some interesting, creative 'solutions' to continual 'problems' like narrative and structure.

Garry Stewart, choreographer, *The Red Shift*, The Choreographic Centre, Canberra

Book Review

Michael Carter

Putting a Face on Things: Studies in imaginary materials
Power Publications, Sydney 1997

Michael Carter's collection of essays is a strange and colourful collision of personal reverie and scholarship. An academic in the University of Sydney's Department of Art History and Theory, Carter specialises in analyses of style and dress. These essays, or 'studies' as he calls them, take particular objects and images from this general field and inflect them through critical theory and content analysis to explore Carter's driving theme, namely, how and why it is that these objects secrete such a rich imaginary dimension, invested as they are with quasi-human properties? Carter proposes that human making can be thought of as "a kind of generalised cosmetics", a dream of infinite malleability whereby humans imbue the things they make with a face and delight in their power to change, or 'improve', the world in their own image. Carter justifies these studies as driven by the desire to "explore the ways we attempt to overcome the seeming indifference of the world to create a place for ourselves".

The range of Carter's 'objects and images' is delightful, swinging from the arcane to the banal. Chapters deal with women's hats, using the hat as the archetype of ornament to track the story of modernity; with ornamental animals, examining the aesthetic function performed by animals and making some interesting comments on the human/nature distinction;

with the relationship between the visual representations of dreams and comic strips; futuristic dress; and Cranach's nudes. In this chapter, which opens the book, Carter picks apart the commentary of staid art historians who have unwittingly become erotically engaged with these pictures to propose that this 16th century German 'master' was engaged in "an embryonic form of pornography". It is an entertaining way to examine one of Carter's major concerns which runs through these individual studies, that is, what is necessary for a space of male sexual fantasy to open out around an image? Later chapters, for instance, consider the "deceptively simple question, 'what is male sexual fantasy?' and analyse the pictorial representation of male sexual dreams. Carter perhaps thus indirectly scrutinises his own open penchant for the erotic dimension of art.

The comic treatment of such examples as the dress reformers known as the heliophiles who believed in the healing power of sunlight, or the fate of stuffed animals used in millinery, make this an engaging and likeable book. Carter appears to be genuinely fascinated by his subject, making a strong case for the power of seemingly arcane examples of historical popular culture to make sense of our everyday experience.

Jacqueline Millner

On independents

Dear Editors,

In response to Eleanor Brickhill's very interesting article "The history of our dancing bodies is becoming hot" and Amanda Card's equally fascinating "Heretics and heritage" in *RealTime* 22, I feel compelled to write and add my own commentary on the use of the word 'independent' when discussing dance.

As an ex-patriate American living and working in Australia, I frequently adjust my use of language to my new culture. I usually enjoy doing this, since it gives me the chance to recognise parts of my thinking which I had imagined were just part of being human as actually being cultural assumptions. But I have always found 'independent' troublesome in the context of dance. Where I come from, no such category exists.

It doesn't make sense to assume that the word refers to independent thinking, because the history of dance in America is a history of independent thinking. The formation of companies is just a method of supporting and disseminating that independent thinking. One would hardly say that just because Merce Cunningham runs a multimillion dollar company, and has done for many years, he is not an independent thinker, and yet, The Merce Cunningham Dance Company would not qualify as independent as I understand the use of the word, here.

Independent also does not describe an aesthetic. Merce Cunningham and Bill T Jones, for example, have little common aesthetic, and yet certainly both are independent thinkers. One could say that their independence resides precisely there—in their rebellion, in "inventing against the grain", in their creation of dance in their own aesthetic, not in a known and oft repeated aesthetic. Yet, both draw heavily on classical dance training and maintaining dancers in movement vocabularies required to express their independent thoughts. Neither would claim 'independence' of their history. Kazuko Hirabayashi made an interesting remark about the possibility of dance being independent of its history when she said, "two arms, two legs, what can you do?"

The use of the word independent in Australia almost seems to set up, support and legitimise some of the most despicable traditions in the culture of our field. It creates and reinforces the notion that choreographers working without a fiscal structure are not the same as choreographers who have a fiscal structure. Choreographers running companies are assumed, here, to be more important, more worthy of press attention and, by virtue of having fiscal support, worthy of receiving more fiscal support.

Also, companies themselves are let off the hook by the word independent. Why should a struggling fiscal structure extend its meagre and over-stretched resources any further to support someone who has declared themselves independent. (When, as artistic directors of Tasdance my partner Richard Allen and I tried to support the independent community with resources and to focus on them, there were choreographers so mystified by this gesture that they thought we were taking the mickey out of them.)

The word independent may also constrict companies to a 'non-independent' stance, reinforcing the notion that they should behave in a dependent manner—relying on their board (non-artists) to make important decisions, or relying on known and accepted aesthetic parameters for defining their work.

I would love to hear the word independent dropped from the vocabulary of people making and watching dances in Australia. It would, I think, be a gesture towards liberation, towards removing ourselves from an independent ghetto of our own creation wherein we are defined not by what we do as dance makers, but by the fiscal structure within which we do it.

Karen Pearlman

Praise the lord

Zsuzsanna Soboslay surveys recent dance events and dialogues in Melbourne: Kennett, Parker, Lasica, Hilton, Guerin, Adams, Crisp et al

- The once and future Premier launches extensions to the Dancehouse (Carlton) space. There is indeed some truth in the glorious statement with which he concludes his proceedings: "I am the Lord of the Dance" (sic). If Chunky Move thinks it's autonomous, take note.
- The launch is followed by a showing, seating guests with pillows on the floor. The once and future Premier gets a sore arse, complains bitterly in the stalls.
- Between the rhetoric and the dream, is a place of hard work, lonely hauls, less funds. Sometimes, not even a pillow. Funding in Victoria has been so draconian that over the last six or so years, middle-range companies and spaces have folded, practitioners sat and wept as some of Babylon's multifarious voices died. In 1996, needing a new director and perhaps new criteria in order to survive, Danceworks called for expressions of interest to see in which direction they might move. At that time, the Board invited a limitless submission of ideas on how the company might metamorphose (into a production facility; towards performance...). It seems they couldn't then decide, asking Helen Herbertson to hang on as caretaker for another two years. With the appointment last month of Sandra Parker as AD, the company now seems intent on consolidating its identity as a group focused on the production and development of dance. Hopefully, she'll please the still-incumbent Lord.

Parker, whose work as dancer and choreographer has been seen at Green Mill, PICA, WAAPA, VCA, Tasdance, Vis-a-Vis and Next Wave, and includes collaborative work in Australia with filmmaker Margie Medlin [*in absentia*, March 96] and in New York with Shelley Lasica, is planning a year focussing on dance craft, with less emphasis on multimedia development than in her previous work. Her links in choreographic thinking with makers such as Lasica is apparent in *Two Stories*, an architectural piece shown at the red-brick shell Economiser Building in November. The four dancers—all quite recent graduates of VCA—are technically proficient in a space that lends itself to abstract contemplations across spatial planes. Two neon-edged, black with red-bordered squares mark the two "stories", which are zones of physical exploration of relationship to time, pattern, and space rather than narratives of plot or character-line.

Whilst this has the feeling of a major work, I found the piece cold, despite the very fine lighting by Ben Cobham and competently-structured electronic score by Amelia Barden. These features did not distract from an essentially neutralised dancer presence only occasionally, and troublingly, disrupted by deep-breathed bodily feeling. Particularly problematic was the inconsistency of embodiment between the male and female dancers' bodies. Suddenly, in the last quarter of the piece, David Tyndall's dance is infused with muscular bite and personality. The work speaks through a potentised being. Thereafter, there are glimpses of this in one or two of the women dancers. The inconsistency gives the clue to perhaps an unresolved relationship between personal and abstract, or, alternatively, the potential in future works for explosive choreography.

I find similarities between this work and Lasica's *Situation Live* for two

dancers. A similar exercise in dance architecture (though in a space one-fifteenth of the size), this piece also explores human interrelationship, in an odd combination of extension and stasis in the dancers' bodies. Amongst intriguing squarish shapes, edgings, lifts and slides, steppings and rollings patterned into well-structured configurations, the dancers exhibit a consistent and strange angularity. Their rod-like shoulders and contained upper ribs somewhere need release. Abstraction is not cold *per se*, but becomes such in the context of tight (or uninhabited) bodies.

In one of the segments, the two dancers armwrestle as if on both ends of a Chinese torture-stick—an interesting moment which hints less translucently at the work's stated source in a scripted scenario by Robyn McKenzie about relationships. For the most part, however, the idea of a text "behind" the work is both misleading, and a paper tiger: as in *Two Stories*, the narratives are based in physical and textual interrelationship, here pocked with rigidities which detract from the success of the abstractions.

The fabrics of the dancers' costumes provide nice antitheses: sleeved tops and fitted skirts in contrasting full-blown floral and 60s abstract lines and stripes. This image is a successful working on the difference and tension between passion and abstraction, which the choreography might have reflected elsewhere. Francois Tetaz' Balinese-influenced electronic score likewise develops its own counterpoints between the developing forces of texture versus melodic contour.

Helen Herbertson's Danceworks swansong was to curate the December season at Athenaeum II, recalling three current or previously New York-based Australian dancers to present new works. Each shows a distinctly dry New York flavour, with the occasional spice of blarney. The programme is satisfying overall, but intriguingly poses questions to do with immediacy and residue: what impacts, and what holds over after viewing.

I am struck by how much each dance suits one or other of the dancer's (never the choreographer's) bodies better. In each piece, this is a surprise, denoting the importance of collaboration, of seeing and exploring, sculpting and training in long term partnerships between performers. This is surely one of the principles of ensemble and sustained work in theatre and dance, which in Australia is becoming so difficult to maintain.

Rebecca Hilton's *House*, invigorating and quirky, shows a hip sensibility and independent mind with nonetheless a concern parallel to Phillip Adams and Lucy Guerin with dance bodies, dolly bodies, music-box girls and molls. Hilton's choreography perhaps mocks the confines of house, family and home by playing rebelliously with catwalks and waltzes, shivas and leather-rebels, with leaps and jumps that square the stage. Bodies trick each other, as limbs refuse to catch but make a space to loop another through. Adams' *Grey Area* is also athletic—Hilton especially revelling in the work's muscularity—but distracts me with its carrying of chairs and sorting of objects, reliant on furniture to turn its humour. I feel there's an urban joke here failing me (or the fabrics fail my fancy). Despite the sludge of white noise between scenes, the chair-edges hold me too surely in a dance piece whose title and envoy means to focus on the speechless in-betweens.

Guerin's *Robbery Waitress on Bail* (with a new sound score replacing the one used

last year in Sydney) works more with characterisation than the other two.

Initially, this quality makes me like this piece the least, although such a linear narrative tends to make it, initially, the easiest to recall. Ros Warby in particular infuses her characterisation of the waitress caught in the act of faking her own kidnap with her boyfriend with a sullen immaturity, rocking and hugging her hips as if in moral exclusion of a rich and judging world. Her and Guerin's uniforms are tight and short; they blow bubble-gum in the face of the waitress' role of availability. It is these held images which intensify in memory: rocking against the huge Athenaeum walls, two small figures in huge blank spaces. Extracts from the source news story projected onto small suspended screens, whilst not a particularly likeable device, nonetheless amplify the contrast between such concentrated news abbreviation and the vacuum in which daily transgressions are dared.

The ghosts of ballet are teased and prodded within these three works, alternately stroking and grating against the way movement in our culture is codified. Such spirits are as potent in their own way as the ghosts in Asian dance traditions which Arthur and Corrine Cantrill evoke in their short film of a Balinese dance. Their *Moving Statics* programme—one day in a well-curated and important film component to Dancehouse's *bodyworks* festival—seems concerned with capturing either the body-intelligence with which a performer ripples into shape from one moment to the next (close-up footage of mime artist Will Spoor); or, ancestral spirits infusing ritual music and movement (single-frame time-exposure footage of a Ramayana ritual dance); or, the way the retina itself imprints a sequence of images and constructs meaning from a composite of expectations. Any looking is ghosted by memory and such composing of meaning; Dancehouse' *dance lumiere* component lets film technique further expose dance to this process.

Although one can see the Cantrills' curatorial logic, the other pieces in this afternoon do not match the quality of their own work. Christos Linou's self-portrait shadow piece shows little structural invention; his *Animated Doll* film fetishises movement and confounds "wonderment" into eminently forgettable, breakable parts. John Harrison's film forgets that Kali is goddess of creativity as well as of destruction, obsessing with dark swirlings and black eyes. His acid bathing of film-stock creates interesting ghost-effects, but is relentlessly one-sided; and no-one can convince me that blasting human eardrums with intentionally bad-quality sound can ever effect anything of symbolic value.

In a workshop context, it was nice to see where Rosalind Crisp's work has developed from her solos into a two-hander at the *Double Dialogues* conference, Theatreworks. Partnering another dancer seems to have released a different spirit in her work. Crisp cites a workshop with



Ros Warby and Lucy Guerin

Jeff Busby

American Lisa Nelson (at Sidetrack's CPW8 last year) which challenged and freed her previous focus on personal emotion, with the result that Julie Humphreys seemed to take over Crisp's usual persona, leaving Rosalind free to stride the stage like a watching angel, animating the strings of space with a kind of fully-embodied detachment that seemed to carry even more power. At times, I thought I was watching Rodin's *l'homme arme* crossing the stage.

The conference itself was full of the awkwardnesses, disjunctions and non sequiturs that happen when practitioners start to theorise and theorists at times introduce practitioners without a clue as to how they engender work. That said, some fine working and speaking was heard and shown in the corridors between conclusions, and edges (thank god) remained frayed. Mark Minchinton, in his keynote address, debunked the keynoting put upon him, and insisted that the point of any analysis, or indeed, of any interdisciplinary activity, is to poke, prod and stir and that under no circumstances should performing arts research forget about fun. Minchinton spoke, teasingly, about the necessary teasing between the two fields of play and analysis (twin propellants of creative making), and positioned himself like a fierce but amiable and protective lion on the portal to this Dialogue.

The conference event reminded me that the moat is often more powerful than the castle. Let's cushion no blows: both launches and talk-fests can lose the point. Though dance tugs at the lords, no-one can really lord the dance. Pillows or not.

Two Stories, choreographer Sandra Parker, The Economiser Bldg, November 25; *Situation Live: The Subject*, Director/choreographer Shelley Lasica, La Mama, Nov 12; *Return Ticket*, works by Rebecca Hilton, Phillip Adams, Lucy Guerin. *Danceworks* season curated by Helen Herbertson, Athenaeum II, December 14; *Moving Statics*, curated by Arthur and Corrine Cantrill, Dance Lumiere, Bodyworks 97, *Dancehouse*, December 7; *Double Dialogues: Lines of Flight*, Deakin University School of Visual, Media and Performing Arts/School of Literary and Communication Studies/Theatreworks conference, Theatreworks, St Kilda, December 5.

Cultures dancing

Eleanor Brickhill compares performances by Tharp! and Dance Exchange

The idea of comparing Twyla Tharp and her new company Tharp! with Russell Dumas' new work, *Cargo Cult*, makes sense, firstly in terms of their shared influences—both have continuing and evolving relationships with ballet and the American *avant-garde*—and then the way those influences have been quite differently deployed.

Dumas' artistic directorship of Dance Exchange began not so long after leaving Twyla Tharp's first company and the rich American environment of the 70s. Since then, he has developed Dance Exchange as an ongoing and expanding network (both national and international) of dancers and other artists. Tharp's focus seems somewhat narrower than it used to be, now firmly in the territory of mainstream American ballet, with her current company of all-new "non-professional" dancers.

It's been said about both of them that, while it's taken people many years to appreciate the kind of work they offered, when it finally happened, it wasn't the work that had changed, but the audience. It was Tharp's early work of the 60s and 70s that made her reputation: the detailed and complex choreographic exploration bringing a provocative sense of combat into a warm-fuzzy new dance environment. But the programs brought to The Sydney Festival, while resting on that reputation, seemed largely to be made of different stuff, and one might wonder whether the audience's youth and tumultuous applause was for the work or the reputation, given that it is unlikely they had seen work made 30 years ago.

Dumas' *Cargo Cult*, on the other hand, was built entirely from the original—being an accumulation and development of material which has been worked on over

the years by several generations of dancers since his directorship began.

Something else which is often said of seminal artists (including Twyla Tharp and Martha Graham) is that the dances they choreograph are designed to make better dancers. In other words, their dancers do not train first in order for the choreographer to come along and use that training to make their dances. Instead, the dancers train by developing and embodying ways of being and thinking about the world directly from the choreographer, and this feeling about movement is the actual 'technique'. That's the theory, anyway.

The title of Dance Exchange's new work, *Cargo Cult*, is not mere fancy. It says something about culture and its structure, and particularly our cultural history, and how we have often transplanted ideas from the place where they originated into our 'foreign' context. Our theatres are built to house international artists, whose 'product' we 'acquire' without understanding the reason it has developed the way it has. We mimic the aesthetics without understanding the cultural infrastructures which create them, and in our lack of understanding the ideas become cultish and degraded, being cut off at the roots. Most of Dumas' dancers have been required to study overseas, not just the 'steps' or 'styles' of particular artists, but the cultural contexts in which those artists create their work, to find out how and why the ideas which we might have cherished for generations, have evolved.

The eight dancers in *Cargo Cult* bring not just their phrases and steps to the work, but individual processes. While material is drawn from a shared choreographic history of Dumas' previous works, and a common physical understanding, the dancers' ages and professional backgrounds vary greatly. Material is worked in such different ways in the three almost simultaneous duets and two solos, that each seems like a separate line of thought expressing distinct individuality, while retaining a deep aesthetic unity.

Cultural embodiment is, in part, what *Cargo Cult* endeavours to explore. At one point, we see Cath Stewart's soft, pouted lips and up-tilted, relaxed jaw whispering, and although we can't hear the words, we know it is French because the feel of the language is clearly visible. In fact, Stewart's entire 50 minute solo, including this snatch of speech, was created in France amidst a polyglot group of people in which features of cultural difference and similarity were of great import. Perhaps it's drawing a long bow to say that just as a specific cultural context provides a matrix by which language and feeling is understood, so does the context in which dance is made. But the point is that it is the embodiment of context in which feeling and gesture develop together which goes towards creating more interesting dancing than simply learning imported steps, or laying them on culturally untuned bodies.

The imported artistry of Tharp! could be a case in point. Critical comment was mostly luke-warm: too clean, too balletic, too naive, too commercial, all of that. Not what we have come to expect from Tharp. Unfortunately I was unable to see the second program which featured probably the two more interesting pieces, the oldest work, *Fugue*, and the newest, *Roy's Joys*, in which her old style was reputedly more in evidence, although 'compromised' somewhat by the dancers' youth.

People said it wasn't the dancers' fault that the works lacked substance—especially the three pieces in the first program, *Heroes*, *Sweet Fields* and *66*. Must it have been the choreography then? The publicity for Tharp! reminds us constantly that these dancers have 'raw'



Matt Rivera, Jennifer Howard, Sandra Stanton in *Tharp!*

Jack Vartoogian

talent, chosen from schools rather than professional circles, which presumably means they have an as yet unadulterated ballet school training, and are young enough not to have developed injuries, affectations or idiosyncrasies which need to be worked around. They also probably do not have the depth of experience to understand how to play with rhythm or movement so that it comes alive, or to be able to interpret action in any way other than through a foursquare ballet school demeanour, which flattens choreographic nuance, should it exist, into the prescribed patterns for which ballet schools are famous. And if the dances have been designed to make them more interesting dancers, it will take a few more years yet.

Certainly it seemed *Heroes* was made like a well-crafted demonstration work for graduating dancers, with high legs and multiple *tours* abounding, of which the drive and execution were impeccable. It may be mere hearsay that Tharp once said you know that you've grown up when you have no more heroes. In this case, the heroes she gave us were a team of three spotless, epically unmoved young men against whose torsos young girls hurled themselves mercilessly. Perhaps it was simply a comment about youth.

Sweet Fields and *66* both made what I interpreted as unmistakable references to some particularly American cultural icons. Shaker hymns, and simple vocal chants in open fourths and fifths accompany the short dances in *Sweet Fields*. To say this work is simple is not just a polite way to say nothing is going on. A pale circular spotlight underpins the symmetry of pairs in processional patterns and the simple walking steps of a folk tradition. Running, rolling, leaping and rhythmic variations in lines, squares and circles provide the bare structure which seeps through at the bottom of a transparent filmy balletic style and a brief touch of Graham; an aged brown filigree pinned to the preserved bones of tradition.

66 on the other hand, went for the bluster and chintz of popular Americana: *Route 66*, *Buster Keaton*, *Sunset Strip*, Hollywood musicals, Disneyland, the 'coolth' of vibraphone, denim and basketball, too absurd for words.

But then, one might say to oneself, this is our Twyla! She, a choreographer capable of being in full control of what she wants us to see, must be creating something this facile for a reason. But what, if not to point out that these are American traditions born of a very particular cultural climate? This is not Europe, and not Australia, even though we once adopted much of the imagery as our own. Now it all seems faded and tacky, and the dancers' youthful slickness is unpersuasive. Perhaps it's just that Tharp is sick of being a hero, and has opted for the more substantial comforts of fame.

Cargo Cult, *Dance Exchange*, *The Performance Space*, December 1997; *Tharp!*, *the Capitol Theatre*, Sydney Festival, January 20-25, 1998



Trevor Patrick in *Cargo Cult*

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Small miracles: from footwork to footage

Erin Brannigan explores the dynamic of the film-dance relationship in Intersteps' *Videosteps*



En-Knapp in *Vertigo Bird*

Ziga Koritnik

A boy stares out to sea from a high sand dune, thinking, waiting, ready for action in his commando-style jumpsuit. This is serious play. He signals with obscure gestures to a figure on the beach (he plays all the roles), arms and limbs flying in an 'action man' display of skill. The figure on the beach bolts, twisting and spinning as he runs. The camera work in *Boy* (UK) choreographer Rosemary Lee, director Peter Anderson, takes us into an imaginary life, small hands fluttering out codes, epic slides down the side of a dune. Between close-up and long shot we can piece together gesture, intention, space and terrain in this beautiful depiction of the intensity of child's play—the choreography remains true to the unthought, incipient actions of childhood, and the direction privileges each moment with grand, almost monumental shots.

This short film was one of the international dance video/films that made up *Videosteps*, curated by Michelle Mahrer and part of Leisa Shelton's *Intersteps* programme at The Performance Space. This event also included the launch of the Microdance films. What people at the screenings saw was a kind of map of the interface between dance and film, two points which, speaking cinematically, could become 'documentation' and 'cinema'. This neat binary of mine grew out of a belief that the utilitarian use of film/video for the creation and recording of dance, was a type of primitive practice in relation to recent examples which engage in the technical and historical aspects of film, along with the dance as subject.

An example of this 'primitive' practice within *Videosteps* would be Douglas Wright's *Ore* (New Zealand), directed by himself and Chris Graves, a film that for me, marked a point around which the other films could be placed. *Ore* is a film of Wright's solo from *Buried Venus* (1996) and if you're talking documentation, this is

a fine example. The virtuosity of this curiously Nijinskyish dancer is highlighted by some great editing; the intention of the film is clear as you find yourself marvelling, striving to comprehend. (Where's that pause button?) Ex-Wright dancer Brian Carbee comments that the film cannot compare to the live performance, cannot be more than a mediation which is devoid of the magic of a physical presence. I suggest that this style of dance film must always fall short as a 'replacement' in comparison to those films which actively negotiate the filmic form. Then Carbee brings me face to face with my own bias, asking—but how can film be truer to dance than to represent a dance performance to the best of its ability? For a dancer, this may well be the fundamental aim. It is dance, he points out, which is expected to bend towards this monolith of the 20th century arts; it is dance which is adapting to film. Meanwhile, I feel myself slipping between two worlds, but decide to stick to my guns and argue that "it's a two way street". There is a definite satisfaction in those films which embrace the whole—the dance, the filmic expectations and possibilities, the movement both on the screen and of the frames.

A certain tendency in dance film to patch together dramatic sections and discrete dance sequences performed to the camera became clear after seeing the films *Effort Public* (Germany), *Vertigo Bird* (Slovenia) and *The Father Is Sleeping* (Microdance) in this programme. *Effort Public* expresses the class struggle with the effort of dance becoming the main physical metaphor. Men throw and catch each other like sides of meat in an industrial, dark space where the dance can never stop, always in frame, moving off, or in the background. Filmic 'tricks' such as a play on reflections in a pool of water and the tracing of a chain reaction across objects, sit outside the

drama which is located in the movement. The film really only frames and selects the dance, the factory space acting as a 'set'. *Vertigo Bird*, choreographer Iztok Kovac, is alarmingly similar, set as it is, in "the labyrinth of mining pits" in the town of Trbovlje (program note). The drama is established through the shots of workers moving around with the dance sequences remaining separate, except for a scene where the workers act as an audience, the aim of the work to seek "a connection between two worlds" becoming clear. Here we slip into a documentation of 'audience' response. In *The Father Is Sleeping*, choreographer Matthew Bergen; director Robert Herbert, everyday gestures between father and son develop into a new and touching movement language, but a separate dance sequence by new performers at the height of the action fails to make contact with the central drama.

Then there were cases where The Dance was the sole subject driving the work and we perhaps came close to that balance between the two elements, the film 'showing' the dance as only it can—doing the dance created specifically for it. The most remarkable in this regard was *Nine Cauldrons* (Microdance), director-choreographer Trevor Patrick; co-director Paul Hampton, which can be summed up in the word performer Trevor Patrick chose to describe his cinematic encounter—"seductive". The camera is in the thrall of the moving body—every detail from fabric moving across skin to the twist of an ankle is rendered with an obsessive gaze, the 'eye' now dangerously close, now taking in the body, costume, movement and all. The alchemy of the filmic process transforms and reinvents.

In opposition to this harnessing of technology in the service of the choreography is an indulgence in filmic techniques at the expense of choreographic

invention. *Lodola* (Canada), is an uncanny visual fantasy of epic proportions, memorable for the shimmering void of white back to back with a similar void of black. Two figures mirror each others' movements in these opposing 'worlds' but the movements add little to the black/white, life/death oppositions established visually.

Like *Boy*, *Reines D'un Jour* (Switzerland) takes us into a singular world and acquaints us with it through movement that seems organic to its context. If film has an historical association with narrative fiction, both *Boy* and *Reines D'un Jour* negotiate this history while also accessing the *avant-garde* possibilities of a non-text based short. The Swiss film is located in the Alps and draws on romantic cinematic imagery, from lush green landscapes to bodies tumbling down a hill to rustic cottages and village feasts. The *joie de vivre* of such scenarios is given free rein in the ecstatic bodies of the dancers who move through the landscape, not as locals, but as visitors responding to the environment. Social dancing is intertwined with other dance; men challenge each other, women lean and support one another, couples tease each other. And all without a trace of irony—completely disarming.

It perhaps confirms Eleanor Brickhill's concern that "the good will" is gone from audiences (*RealTime* #24)—in this case Sydney dance audiences—that people didn't seize an opportunity to see some great international and local dance film/video. An interest in the dance film genre is not imperative. For dance, the most elusive of the performing arts, the opportunity to transport performances from around the world to our own theatres is like a small miracle.

Videosteps, curated by Michelle Mahrer in Leisa Shelton's *Intersteps*, The Performance Space, Sydney, November 1, 8 & 15, 1997

Counter histories, future directions and manly regressions

Vikki Riley reviews recent CD releases

Tibiri Tabara
Sierra Maestra
WCD051 through Larrikin/ Festival

Star Rise
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook:
Remixed
CDRW68 through Larrikin/Festival

Gye Woani
Adzohu
Independent ADZ101 through Blue Moon
Records
mail orders 03 94151157

Home
Bongo Fury
Independent 002 through
pentprom@enternet.com.au.

Audio Forensic
High Pass Filter
HPF 001 through Shock

Mi Media Laranja
LaBradford
BFFP144 through mds

Hate Songs
Sandro
cent004 through mds

This batch of new CD releases finds this reviewer once again grappling with Cubanismo: in *RealTime* 22 I attempted to 'explain' the phenomena of Latin salsa as a World Music special event and new easy listening ambient genre—the Ry Cooder mediated Afro Cuban Allstars CD which has flooded the airwaves and speakers of bookshops and loungerooms across Australia, mysteriously marketed as a new pop act ready for mainstream appreciation. But the group's spectacular non-appearance at the Sydney Festival and Jeff's Jazz event left many confused about the group's real identity and reason for being. Fidel saying a big no to North American corporate sponsorship of Cuban culture was the major unreported controversy of the 1997 arts event calendar.



Sierra Maestra

The Allstars themselves are the creation of Juan d'Marcos Gonzales, Sierra Maestra's *tres* (guitar) leader. Besides roping in veterans from *son's* past (like Celia Cruz's pianist Raul Planas), the CD also features another Maestra member, singer Jose Rodriguez. Sierra Maestra's new and snazzy release for World Circuit (only LP number 20 for the group) speaks volumes about the real story of Cuban *son* as a pollinating vehicle of European and Afro musical and dance styles across more than a century's worth of social and political upheaval. The title track, "Tibiri Tabara", is a punchy rendition of Sonora Matancera's 50s hit song which swept across South America as a kind of anthem for unity and social harmony, addressing the listener as "mi socio" and "mi hermano" (my partner, my brother). Elsewhere the group does covers of early

changui tunes from the late 19th century, jazz from the 20s and their trademark interpretations of *boleros* and *montunos* penned by Arsenio Rodriguez in the 40s and 50s. And for those interested in *santeria* and 'roots of' black spiritualism, Sierra Maestra get down to some out-there *descargas* (jams), not surprising for a group which went back to Africa—literally, a decade ago.

Literally, the material is dynamite, a treasure trove of romantic and comic 'street' vernacular translated into English in an impressive booklet which shows off the hidden riches in Cuban literature and folk academia. Forget dividing Cuba into exiles and commies, this is all about a diaspora located in the memory banks of music's latent power to activate and transcend, the potential for an invisible but united republic of storytelling talent to act as counter history and future direction. And true to the group's evolving sound as modern musicology project, bassist Eduardo Himely and clave player Alejandro Suarez are at the mixing desk with new Portugese pianist Bernardo Sassetti climbing up and down the ivories.

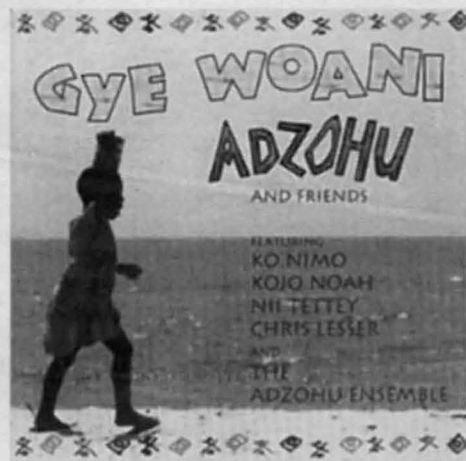


Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook

Electronica's current propensity to soak up 'other' world vibes and traditions continues to beam the ancient and the sacred out of the village temple and onto the dance floor. It's difficult to find someone who doesn't respond to Pakistani *qawwali* superstar Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's ecstatic cry, a six centuries old devotional singing style which, no matter what's going on in the background, always manages to uplift and move the soul to the heavenly altitudes. Nusrat captured on high fidelity CD has been the result of his collaborations with Canadian *avant-garde* artist Michael Brook (check out "Night Songs") which has resulted in mass non-Muslim audiences practically overnight. 'Sufi messages from the Saints' though is Nusrat's text and since the early 90s Britain's trance dance set have claimed him as their drug-free master musician and guide, Massive Attack the first to remix his ragas back in 1991.

Star Rise, completed just before the Nusrat's untimely death marks the astonishing entry of 'black' Asian music into the global pop market, with Nusrat classics like "My Heart, My Life", "Longing" and "Sweet Pain" remixed by the leading lights of London's Nation Records label spinoffs, where new Indian and Eastern grooves dominate the dancefloor. The Dhol Foundation, Fun-da-Mental, Earthtribe and electric tabla wizard Talvin Singh are some of the devotees at the desk here, making for a 'second generation' sound of cultural colonisation in reverse. Maybe it took a huge figure like Nusrat to help rescue Eastern music from its hippie trail associations and recharge pop with a new 'faith' principle, a road Ravi Shankar or Zakir Hussain in the 80s avoided in favour of ECM cheques and

kudos with the free jazz scene. For musicians and producers like Talvin Singh the missive has been to make a sonic dreamscape (or, as he calls it, constructing "a kind of acid trip in India") which invokes everything from Bollywood soundtracks to the art of Indian classical performance techniques. And that's what *Star Rise* conjures up; it's the disc for the dance shrine at the end of the world, a heavy 'chemical beats' carpet of dub and funk shifters with a majestic voice perched squarely on top summoning the world's joys and sorrows for processing an end of the millenium prophecy centred around the word in a metalanguage no-one really can understand but everyone can feel.



Adzohu

Back on the ground, Australian master musicians are beginning to record significant documents of their life-work. That this country has become home for a wealth of outstanding players and composers of international status is a fact lost to most festival curators who keep importing Third World stars with Paris agents for megabucks at the expense of showcasing the extraordinary day to day talent happening in some suburban loungeroom. African musicians are some of the mainstays of our live music scene, some of them are self-styled, like Valanga Khoza, others are *bona fide* pop stars like Shomari Alley, just returned to Tanzania after a year long stint with Melbourne's Musiki Manjaro as singer and guitarist on leave from Vijana Jazz, East Africa's biggest pop dance band. Back in 1992, Ko Nimo, one of the key contributors to modern West African culture and the innovator of 'palm wine' guitar came out with fellow Ghanain master drummer Kojo Noah Owusu to tour the Eastern states. Kojo Owusu ended up staying and joining Chris Lesser's Adzohu and the recordings between then and now are what forms their independent release *Gye Woani*, with the most recently recorded tracks complemented by visiting Ghanain flautist and singer Nii Tettey Tetteh.

Tetteh himself was one of the founding members of the Pan African Orchestra; during the 80s he collaborated with Stevie Wonder and Isaac Hayes and appears in Fleetwood Mac's back-to-Africa movie *The Visitor*. The result—an album which manages to locate the context and mood of this music's social influence like no RealWorld disc can. The outer ambience of the disc is on the beach, you can almost hear the breeze in the trees and Owusu's djembe poundings make every feral with drum sound like a kindergarten hack on cardboard cartons. Tetteh's flute on the fusion track "Agbadza" makes me wonder how Prog Rock could've gone if Jethro Tull had made it to Africa and Ko Nimo's highlife guitar just makes the Ry Cooders of the world wilt away as corny imposters.

More serious archeological work is to be found on Ray Pereira's second Bongo Fury release. *Home* is an around-the-world of percussion styles and traditions; West African, Moroccan, Latin, Middle Eastern and Sri Lankan (Pereira's birthplace) fuse and alternate as 'pure' hybrids and continental crossovers with snatches of live sounds of markets and villages cut in. Nii Tettey Tetteh surfaces on this CD too, this time on talking drum, and stinging guitar from Manjaro's David Marama help make the album more than a workshop sampler. Pereira's master drummer tag begins to wear a bit thin though for me with the inclusion of some pretty mediocre a capella tracks in English, which removes completely the cataclysmic effect of a deep 'voice' emitting from the skins. Childless listeners beware, this is an all-ages family CD about clapping along and having a go yourself—okay as an intro into Afro beat styles but in the end more inner city tribalism about following some learned black male into a feel good zone.

Does all this non-Anglo stuff ever break into the Alternative Rock scene? It sure doesn't get aired on JJJ but at the same time our pub venues prevent the two worlds from being totally mutually exclusive. It's no secret that 'Indie' culture hates the World Music and Techno dance scene (dismissed as either elitist, hippie, or, most commonly, unintelligible) yet there's a bleeding over of things like instrumentation and rhythm which is changing Rock's surface textures.

Melbourne group High Pass Filter are one of Australia's most fascinating groups at present for taking the plunge and trading in some of their baggage for borrowed sound systems from other climes. They may well be our first live dub massive, appearing at the end of the grunge era with a crazy Lee Scratch Perry via Pere Ubu destructo strategies—like Goldie's Metalheadz you just can't pick if these guys are black, white or green. In fact everything about High Pass Filter is slightly mad and out of kilter: the packaging and presentation, like their mysterious street posters, is impossibly cool; recycled grey cardboard stencilled and screened with Constructivist logos that tell you warehouse; cartoon graphics of babyfied machine bits and strange metal appendages which tell you Performance Art project; the fold out plain A4 rollcall of sound contributors which suggest collective. There's something really refreshing about *Audio Forensic* that you just don't get with stuff like Tricky, it's music as an oppositional art movement which leaves behind documents and blueprints for future societies. Older groups like Chrome, The Butthole Surfers, Savage Republic and Zoviet France come to mind here but HPF sits on the gate of current pulses of urban decay with a quasi hippie 'observational' melancholia. Dark jungle and haywire, Derek Bailey's drum 'n' bass acts as timekeeper for a soundtrack of violations of the self by mass culture broadcasts and invasive machine blasts. Singer Anthony Paine manages to make words sound like ectoplasm amidst a backdrop of video nasties, TV themes, excessively scratched and skipped vinyl, machine feedback and found folk music—it's as if Rock's eternal capacity to blow out were a script to be torn up and reassembled for a kind of audio theatre of cruelty that takes on board a politique. On "No lines" it's clearer. (I'll never forget going to see The Clash some 16 years ago in Melbourne where Gary Foley was the support act and master of ceremonies and he had everyone's ear—a hall full of punkers waiting to hear reggae.) When Paine squalls for "land rights" it's as if he's chanting in response from beneath the rubble, the cry's muffled, but there. The sweet sounds of resistance is what I hear mostly on this CD, probably the only adequate musical souvenir of *annus Wik* to hit the stores.

• continued next page

Out of the box

Sophea Lerner reflects on sound and computing after ICAD '97

Auditory display? Puzzled faces and a momentary whirring of cogs are not uncommon responses to hearing this phrase for the first time. What it quite broadly refers to is the use of audio in computer systems. But perhaps the spontaneous sense of contradiction thus conjured goes to the heart of what is most interesting in this area: How do you bring together computers, scientists and sound? And why?

As an event the International Conference on Auditory Display, ICAD '97, was highly interdisciplinary, bringing together participants from academia, industry and the arts, sporting a plethora of technical knowledges and creative applications—people with backgrounds in everything from computer music to rocket science, all of whom use sound in some way to communicate information at the interface.

This conjunction of audio and computing is interesting because it requires a bringing together of the discrete symbolic operations of computers with the indiscrete resonant operations of sound. Sounds mix in space and overlap in time. The current interest in audio amongst computing professionals and scientists is connected to major changes in how we conceptualise computer capabilities...No longer the box on the desk! Computing is breaking out as an emerging rash of ubiquitous and diverse and much more specialised gadgets and applications. As computing takes place less and less in the other worlds that we picture through our monitor screens, and more and more in our physical environments, sound has an important role in integrating computer functions into physical space.

The relationship between computing and the visual interface however has a particular history which complicates the adoption of audio as an interface paradigm. The development of the visual display to replace punched cards and text printers as the dominant interface for input to and output from computers came from a scientific culture which sought to represent and manipulate discrete symbolic operations of computers directly through the screen which acted as a window on a world which was quantifiably known. The computer screen carries the baggage of ways of looking and thinking and knowing that are as old as writing.

ICAD as a whole attempted to reconcile the contradictions inherent in the relationships between computing science and sound design by creating a framework for addressing the cultural problems of bringing together such a range of disciplines. So too the work demonstrated and discussed on the whole attempted to bring these paradigmatically divergent modes together.

Sessions included a huge range of approaches. Some used the properties of sounds and their capacity for providing background awareness or spatial information as enhancements to existing data zones, such as a presentation by Beth Mynatt and Maribeth Back on work they are doing on *Audio Aura*: a lightweight audio augmented reality which used thoughtfully designed sounds to enhance awareness of workplace activity and interaction. At the other end of the scale were presenters bent on

attributing absolute empirically proven meanings to certain kinds of sound events; these tended to make very blunt assumptions about the representational meanings of sounds such as failures to distinguish in a meaningful way between, for example, the sound of a real musical instrument and a badly synthesised midi equivalent. In reproducing sounds, the apparatus of recording reproduction and the space in which the sound occurred, as well as the space in which the sound is replayed, all affect the quality and meaning of the sound.

To balance the sometimes simplistic approaches to the material meanings of sounds, a number of special sessions were organised to introduce a diversity of sound art and design issues to the predominantly technical scientific community. An after-dinner panel comprising Paul deMarinis, Ed Osborn, Tim Perkis and Bill Viola presented a range of perspectives on sounds, silence and listening. Paul deMarinis discussed a history of the sounds which have signified silence from the soft introductory passages of eighteenth century orchestral music to the line noise of telephone systems, sounds which indicate an immanent listening space. Tim Perkis gave an interesting talk on different levels of listening attention, proposing a particular mode of not listening, or not listening with conscious attention as an important and valuable listening mode for sound workers to consider. Osborn and Viola discussed their work. On the last night, delegates were treated to Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening

experience in which the audience performed for the first 40 minutes—a strategy which created conditions for a particular kind of open listening for Oliveros' following accordion performance. By contrast, in the closing session of the conference, sound designer Mark Mancini demonstrated sound design techniques from Spielberg blockbusters and Ben Burt's classic work on *Star Wars*.

It seems inevitable that the convergence of sound and computing will change cultural perceptions of both computing and sound. Perhaps the increased use of audio in computing and the dispersal of computing from the box on the desk will bring different ways of listening and knowing into play in the day to day use of computers.

The sheer diversity of ICAD and the seriousness with which it addresses the complexities of such an interdisciplinary event make it an important contribution to these shifts in the culture of computing.

ICAD '97, Xerox PARC, Palo Alto November 2-5 1997. ICAD '98 November 2-4, hosted by the University of Glasgow's Department of Computing Science; queries icad98_info@santafe.edu. ICAD website <http://www.santafe.edu/~icad>

Sophea Lerner is an artist, performer, writer, broadcaster and academic; specialising in audio for new media. Sophea is the Australia Council artist in residence at The Listening Room, ABC Audio Arts for 1998.

Counter histories, future directions and manly regressions

• from previous page

On to the still burgeoning Post Rock, lo-fi scene where Americana and boredom still rule OK. Groups like USA duo LaBradford prove that some people now think music appreciation is about starring in your own everyday Wim Wenders' movie, that endless blurred car window vista on some lonely expanse behind the twangs and reverb sustains of the score—there's lots of this stuff around and the best at it are Melbourne's own The Dirty Three. Morricone is the big daddy figure of the genre, atmospheric soundscape the only story, players' egos invisible. It's mildly interesting that Indie Rock has reached this non-narrative zone of instrumentals and open ended poetry but for me it's positively soporific. Fans of the genre tell me that LaBradford and Tortoise are influenced by German 70s artrockers like Neu, that it's about mantric meditations on American popular culture. But with its expressionist painterly cover it's more pure ambient therapy product for young males in emotional crisis and will no doubt make it on to a Sundance soundtrack some time soon. I'm still pondering the name though, *Mii Media Laranja*—my orange half. Melbourne lo-fi doyens Sandro dish up the same but with vocals, indeed it's the vocals that make them exist. This ensemble manage to pack out grunge barns like Fitzroy's Punters Club with a barely audible sound which 'keeps audiences enthralled' with strings that

are faintly plucked, high hats tapped by featherweight sticks, piano keys which are struck like Satiesque Eno edits and an East Coast singer-songwriter drawl which drones over the top.

Blame REM or The Hunters and Collectors—Sandro are an insistent reminder that post Kurt Cobain, 20 something white boys MUST be heard. Without going into the lyrics too deeply ("She'll suck you off for a bottle of champagne" is a memorable line), it's not too hard to sense an authenticity factor at work here masquerading as imitation Leonard Cohen for the 90s, where open-book scrutiny of 'bad' masculinity throws up the voice as unforgiving interrogator of the self. Singer Gareth Edwards is yet another anti-hero figure for Rock's dead end journey as mourning music for the wounded and messed up 'man' inside the boy; musically it's time for everybody else to doze off. Such stern, resigned stuff this 'Observational Rock' (as the dailies are now tagging it), but not so strange when Cultural Studies gurus like Ken Wark are busy putting Oz punk poets like Nick Cave into the picture as if the idea of insurgency happened a long time ago, out of the reach of everyone else's experience. *Hate Songs* is the opposite of what's going on in contemporary dance music—all content, a sole narrator and secondary theatre technicians—the sound of "I SURRENDER".



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Photo: Regis Lansac

Sympathetic magic from Chamber Made Opera

Trevor Hay elucidates the relationship between story and opera in Julian Yu and Glen Perry's *Fresh Ghosts*.

Chamber Made Opera's *Fresh Ghosts* is an exciting and ambitious adaptation of the semi-autobiographical Lu Xun short story *Medicine*, written in April 1919, just before the series of demonstrations against the Qing government which launched China's 'first cultural revolution'—the May fourth movement. The title—'fresh' is more evocative, more carnal than the Chinese word 'new'—also invokes Lu Xun's bitter lament about the execution of five young writers in 1931: "I can but stand by looking on, as friends become new ghosts..."

The story appears in a 1922 anthology entitled *Call to Arms* and is a striking example of Lu Xun's most enduring achievement, a combination of almost pathological realism, depicting traditional Chinese culture as a state of disease, and that severe, ascetic kind of romanticism-subjectivism which has allowed him to maintain his reputation in world literature as a great original artist despite his official status in the PRC as foremost 'revolutionary' writer. The Chamber Made production is ingeniously faithful to the essentials of the original, both in content and in translation of Lu Xun's strange and morbidly powerful aesthetic into operatic form—an interesting irony in view of the fact that the author was venomously sarcastic about Peking Opera—and the storyline is only slightly modified in order to simplify a very complex form of



Xu Ying, David Shan in *Fresh Ghosts*

Ponch Hawkes

narrative, in which the reader's view of events shifts and blurs and re-organises itself like a holographic image.

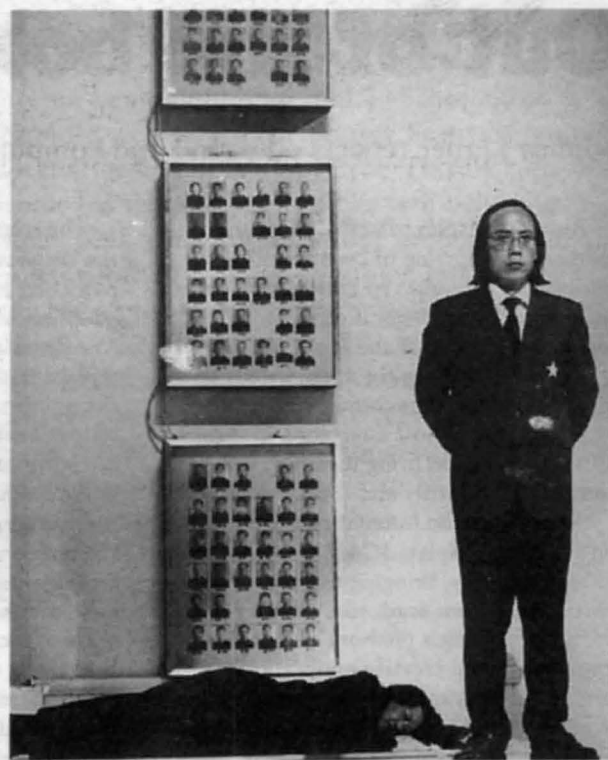
A teashop proprietor is desperately trying to find a remedy for her son's consumption (Lu Xun's own father was consumptive and a victim of quack cures) and is convinced by a sinister government official that she need only meet with him at the crossroads in the morning—a site replete, in Chinese folklore, with malevolent spirits and the evil residue of tragic, premature death—and pay him a certain fee for a 'guaranteed cure'. She meets the official, pays the money and is given a mysterious packet containing the cure. Through the device of conversation conducted in the teahouse (sung in English, with English and Chinese subtitles, reminiscent of the way the songs of the Chinese opera used to be accompanied by character slides to overcome problems of dialect) we learn that while this transaction has been taking place a young revolutionary has been executed—just as a young woman from Lu Xun's home town was publicly executed in 1907, while he was in Japan studying medicine. It then transpires that the magic cure which the mother has given her son is in fact a piece of steamed bread which has been plunged into the breast of the condemned man. As in other stories in *Call to Arms*, we are confronted with the spectre of cannibalism, combined with elements of sympathetic magic. The boy has eaten not only bread and blood but the healthy lungs of the executed revolutionary—a form of pre-revolutionary magic which has its vestigial traces in the practice of selling organs extracted from those executed in contemporary China.

The boy dies and two women—the mother of the boy and a friend of the revolutionary—meet as they tend graves in a cemetery for paupers and criminals. A wreath has appeared mysteriously on the revolutionary's grave and the women puzzle over how it came to be there. A crow materialises and the young woman believes for a moment it may be the soul of her martyred friend. She cries out to the crow to give her a sign but it does not move. Then, as they rise from the graveyards, the crow flies towards the horizon.

Here is the principal difficulty for *Fresh Ghosts* as an opera. I suspect only those who had actually read the story were aware how much was riding on the crow's wings in that last scene. A great deal of discussion has taken place in Chinese literary circles about the meaning of this, but it boils down to the notion that while the crow did not respond to the superstitious belief that it was actually a migrating soul, it did fly toward a dauntingly distant, but real destination—revolution. The synopsis for the seventh and final scene tells us, "As they move off there is a flutter of wings and they look up to see the crow which circles overhead and flies off into the horizon". Lu Xun, in his final sentence, has the crow flying 'like an

arrow for the horizon' and when he looses that shaft his own diagnostic detachment and ghastly realism takes flight with it, in search of a remote and perhaps hopeless revolutionary idealism. Curiously, while the opera handles the macabre realism extremely well, it is at the point where romanticism enters—the very element which might seem most natural to opera—that the translation falters. Without Lu Xun's pen to guide it the crow has nowhere to go.

Nevertheless, this is an admirably imaginative production, and its chief success is in re-creating the essential story-theatre inherent in Lu Xun's greatest work, in which one feels the presence of the author as a manipulative stage director. As in the Peking Opera, detail is minimal, sets are spare and multi-purpose (as in Chinese traditional theatre, tables are used for both symbolic and realistic purposes), costumes are stylised (all performers appear in usher-like costumes of red and black, with a tie that is at one point cut with scissors to represent rejection of the Qing pig-tail) and Julian Yu's music (with a first libretto by Glenn Perry) is a fascinating blend of western operatic singing with its credibility-straining 'heightened speech' effect, and the



Xiaoming Lan (standing), Ying Xu in *Fresh Ghosts*

Ponch Hawkes



(front to back) Kun Xie, Gary Rowley, Xiaoming Lan, Ying Xu in *Fresh Ghosts*

Ponch Hawkes

accompaniment of a small hybrid orchestra located on stage as in traditional Peking Opera and dominated towards the end by a poignantly melodious *erhu* reminiscent of the music of Lu Xun's birthplace. I think the author himself might have been agreeably surprised how truly sympathetic the magic of Chinese-Australian inspiration can be.

Chamber Made Opera, Fresh Ghosts, Theatreworks, St Kilda, November 27-29, December 2-6



New Media Funding

The AFC supports the development of New Media through a range of programs and activities including funding the development and production of New Media works. The objective is to encourage Australian initiatives which explore the creative potential of New Media, both on the Internet and in other digital media.

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