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New music in Sydney
Allan Sekula
Forsythe/Stuart/Selwyn Norton
Kosky's O'Neill
Bad Rice

Australia's innovative arts bi-monthly
August-September 1998  http://www.realtimearts.com/openshly/
Debord: "The spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality."

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correction:

In "Taking up the fight", RealTime 25, the cinematographer referred to as Jane Spring, working on Michelle Mahler's Urban Clan, about Bangarra Dance Theatre's Page Brothers, is in fact Jane Castle.
Feature: Next Wave

Critically surveying selected exhibits and performances from Melbourne's Next Wave Festival, RealTime writers go the distance with new media, visual arts, performance, dance, sound works, and cross-cultural exchanges including Hiram To's Bad Rice.

Arts Education

In our annual arts education feature section, Steven Maras queries the term "media" in his column, curates new media education, Philip Kent and Sarah Miller offer insights into visual arts education issues, and Kerrie Schaefers reports on an intriguing experiment in performance studies in Snowsomia.

Festivals

Previews of the Melbourne and Brisbane Festivals raise some critical issues about festivals. Plus previews of works in Carnivale, Sea Change and Melbourne's Mallarmé Festival.

Culture

Diana Klaeson reports on the State of Arts in Tasmania seminar; Kenneth Grant on the 14th International Congress of Russian Literature; and Emma Gibson writes the first of our regular TV columns. Brisbane's digital media event, MAAP, previewed.

Writing

Josephine Wilson on the texture of the text plus more writings on the net.

On Screen

Our feature on the Sydney Film Festival includes reports on short films, documentaries and features as well as selections from dLux media art's D.Art program. Noel King reviews a new book by Adrian Martin. Edward Scheer compares masculinities in Bill Henson and The Boys. Plus Philip Breathy's Cinematic column, conferences and film reviews and Telfordication—Emma Gibson writes the first of our regular TV columns. Brisbane's digital media event, MAAP, previewed.

Performance

Virginia Baxter reads the room at Marima Abramovic's recent MCA appearance. Aleks Sierz writes in the dark at the Batsberrera Arts Centre, Jan Paterson speaks for herself, Roland Manderson buttonholes David Branson in Canberra, South African performance at Black Swan in WA, A Life of Grace and Piety in Cairns, Dorothy Porter's The Monkey's Mask, the Kosky-O'Neill Mooring Becomes Elektra and the Heilmann-Leila Room in New York.

Dance

In the full version of the provocative proposal she delivered at the recent MAP Symposium in Melbourne, Eleanor Strickland argues the significance of dance practice. UK writer Sophie Hansen reports on new short works by William Forsythe, Meg Stuart, Michael Clark, Amanda Miller and Paul Selwyn Norton (soon to work with Melbourne's Chunky Move).

Visual Arts

Cassi Plate reports on the recent visit by Allan Sekula; John Barbour on Richard Grayson; Christopher Chapman on Andrew Osborne; Mark Jackson on Shepherd's Wool; Care Jones on Black Humour; Injection at The Performance Space—the crisis for artist organisations; David Seguira looks at selected works from the Adelaide Biennale; PICAs Hatched reviewed.

Music and Sound


Sport

Jack Rufus relishes sporting cliches and Vivienne Inch wades off the course into the cultural wasteland of fundraising.

In RealTime 27, October-November

- RealTime reports MAP
- RealTime was the guest publication at Melbourne's first Movement and Performance dance season and symposium. We present extensive commentary plus reviews of Danceworks, Danceworks, Company in Space, the AICD Awards and the Australian Ballet
- Barbara Karpiniski and photographer Heidrun Lühr meet Lydia Lutsch
- Edward Scheer on the challenges for Performance Studies
- Sophie Fhotakis on the Central Arts Theatre's new productions
- First reports on the Brisbane Festival and Sydney Biennale
- Ken Glantonburies reviews novelists Glenda Adams about her new play for Griffin
- Plus: The Performance Space's Open Week, Urban Theatre Project's Harly Strum, University of Sydney, skataka's new film, Synergy in concert with WNA's Nova Ensemble and NT's Drum Drum, Dean Kiley on hypertext genes, reports on the Brisbane and Melbourne Film Festivals, Jo Law on Australian-Asian cultural exchange, Philip Breathy's Cinematic conference on jazz, radio drama for WNA, Morgan's hypertext, and much more.

Editorial

The artist enabled and disabled

It was one of those sheer-up-the-spine-moments. I'd dropped into the Art Gallery of South Australia with a friend attending the launch (July 19) of the innovative SALT (South Australian Living Artists Week) and had been listening to gallery director Ron Radford proudly extolling the virtues of local artists, ranking off stats, highest number of artists per capita in Australia etc etc, a litany of well-warranted praise the South Australian in me thought, and addressed to an audience largely made up of those living artists of several generations (there was a great two-page spread of them in The Advertiser). Arts Minister Di Lidiauau praised SALT, listed sponsors, reminisced rapturously about her early introduction to art collecting, recent purchases and dreams and aspirations of family collection. I wandered into a room nearby where Thomas Bush had curated some fine local work from the archive—Fiona Hall, Hewson/Walker and ...just as I was about to leave, I glanced on the narrow left wall by the door, a Regin Lannan photograph of Meryl Tankard, looking up—disturbed! alarmed!—her right eye oddly distended, as if double-exposed, over-enlarged, disabled. What had sounded like deserved praise for the local, South Australian art, now rang in my ears like ugly parochialism. When asked my opinion about South Australia and the demise of successive Australian Dance Theatre artistic directors, I reply that it's not just the ADT, you have to look at the fate of artistic directors in state theatre and opera, and the perilous line some Adelaide Festival directors are forced to walk. The notion of arms-length in Adelaide is something that is regularly withdrawn, reminding you that although historically one of the most liberal and progressive of states, it is also capable of incredible regressions—steps forward, three back.

Where were the cries of shame, the calls for the minister's resignation echoing through the gallery? (SA usually likes to demand reparations, it's a press favourite when it comes to the arts!) Why was the mishandled mishmash of the company's affairs and the artistic director's future allowed to go on, and on as it did, the ADT board hiding behind a spokesman and confidentiality clauses? Where was the Department of the Arts in all of this—happily confident too? The longer it all went on the more it was reduced to a mere bureaucratic wrangle, the early termination of Tankard's contract, and the petty and vengeful release of a 100 page document solicited by the Minister from the ADT itinerating Tankard's alleged managerial, corporate and personal wrongdoings. During the opening session of MAP (Movement and Performance dance season and Symposium in Melbourne, see RealTime 27), writer Robin Grobe bewailed this "disabling" of an Australian artist. He called for us to look again at the relationship between boards and artistic directors. We were inevitably reminded, too, and once again, about boards of management where artist representation is nil or minimal, and about artistic directors who are only ever employees. The Labor Party in its arts launch promised to initiate a status of artists document, not a case of special pleading (bound to upset arts-hostile One Nation), but both a philosophical and practical recognition of the special circumstances of living and working as an artist, with remuneration, funding, employment and the Taxation Department's only recently resolved harassing of visual artists, taxation. It should also address the relationship between artists and boards of directors before the corporatisation of the arts weeks more have.

The Australia Council is deservedly celebrating its 30th year, an organisation that has facilitated the work and success of thousands of artists and now promotes their work internationally. The Council is a great survey of both Liberal and Labor governments, the target of detractors who would either obliterate it or spend the money in fanciful ways. Internal reforms over recent years have weakened the fundamental role of the Council and retrograded the role of Council in initiating policy, but much that is valuable is still achievable.

The Australia Council in its limited funds which, over the decades, have not kept pace with a burgeoning arts scene—for many mature artists it's a very long time between grants, for others it's the end of the line. When additional money does accrue, the Council's way is inevitably tied to special projects (Keating's Creative Nation, Howard's regional artsboost—even these have now evaporated) rather than being allocated to the ongoing and growing needs of the arts. Funds. Labor's policy promises more of the same, this to a degree. Just as promising is the prospect of a GST and Arts Minister Richard Alston's apparent lack of interest in buffeting the impact on artists and companies, where everything from materials to tickets will be subject to tax, making artists' prey to a strange adjustment to a GST. The Australia Council's celebration of its 30 years of work, much of it by, about and for artists, and, at the same time, "for all Australians", is timely, a moment in which Council misguided fees and two tickets for National Accounts Council's arts.

In October the Sydney Opera House is celebrating its 25th birthday in part with its "Industry Week" program. The Opera House will host Head to Head, the national physical theatre conference (see page 41), Open Dialogues, "prominent artists in open discussions", the long-day-long The Performing Arts in the 21st Century, an International Debate (Friday October 9), in collaboration with the Australia Council, which is funding and formatting the events, and the ARC, which will broadcast them on radio and television and through online Chat Rooms. Along with The Performance Space's Injection/Forum (see page 50) on visual artist organisations and its Autopsy (see below), it looks like we're in for some significant re-thinking of the arts in Australia.

It's finally time to formally welcome Zame Trow to Sydney and The Performance Space. After over some 6 months of vigils, drinks and other non-events, Trow has launched the space in new directions, with fresh gallery space, a multimedia studio and a greater focus on in-house activity and artist support, building on the space's strong tradition of experimentation and debate. Trow says, "The Performance Space has a growing responsibility to Australian culture and artists, and it's time to look at the space's highest number of artists in 25th 21st century performative art. To be available to artists at a local and national level and to extend their increasingly limited opportunities to engage in long term development processes. To offer affordable time, space, platforms, network. Real Time wishes Zame and his team well for this new stage in the influential life of The Performance Space and applauds the programming of Autopsy, an inquest into the state of the performing arts in Australia. (See page 37 for TPS program.)

Other things to celebrate. Congratulations to Jane Goodall for winning the Marlis Thiersch Award for best article in 1997 by a member of the ADFA (Australian Drama Studies Association); Roland Mansell's directorial debut at the Sydney MCA for 1999 Festival of Contemporary Arts in Canberra; choreographer Garry Stewart for winning the Robert Helpmann prize, which will allow him to work in New York; Linda Marie Walker for her appointments at the National Arts Centre; and Josephine Wilson and Linda Carrol for winning First prize in the Salt Hill Journal HyperText Contest.
Performing time, space, race and place

Suzanne Spunner queries Next Wave performance

The strictly performance category of the Next Wave comprised The Vacant Plot season at La Mama of two double bills, Horizons and Kickin' Up Dust, a double bill of Indigenous theatre, a youth circus project Taboo in Footscray and, in the associated program, Radio City presented by St Martins Theatre. A house of Next Wave was distance, a tangential theme at the best of times, and it strains the imagination to find it expressed in these disparate works, however two of the most interesting works to emerge, 6 Sided City at La Mama and Radio City, shared some ground and distance of sorts was a feature.

It is difficult to see the guiding curatorial principle behind the performance component of Next Wave. One expected the best of the new. Given that Next Wave has a two year lead time (and every year Melbourne has the Fringe Festival) the program selection was odd. More than half of these pieces would have sat more comfortably in the Fringe, or even something more open and less demanding than Next Wave or the Fringe. They were often first attempts and should not have been headlined in this way. The situation bespeaks the uncomfortable and ambivalent place of this category "performance." In crude terms theatre is not kosher in the Next Wave rubric, so what we saw was often nothing more than very basic performance poetry with a bit of music, or unformed and indifferent theatre that had some slides so it somehow qualified as not spoken word and was meant to pass as "more than theatre," to wit performance.

Buried amongst it all was a rarely and adventurously new work of great imagination and virtuosity, 6 Sided City, which appeared at the end of the La Mama season before a poor house, when it warranted the full support and profile that Next Wave can offer. In many ways new writers and directors in theatre are already well served at La Mama.

Similarly the youth theatre works are not about new and emerging artists in terms of performers or writers and can only be considered in this way in relation to directors. The texts are group-devised and the performances are by people who are not emerging from anything other than adolescence and, while not gainingays their right to express themselves, again there are other banners more appropriate eg LOUD. This is a showcase for storyteller Maureen Warson to relate stories of her life, interspersed with some virtuoso didgeridoo playing by Mark Arkin; in between Tanya Ellis makes caps of tea. As the program notes, Watson is arguably Australia's leading Indigenous storyteller and Arkin is an accomplished didge player (also arguably one of the best) so in what sense they are emerging artists is beyond me. REM describes itself as integrating all of the performances into "a vibrant cross cultural cross artform theatre," however this work is so non-theatrical it was distinctly awkward to watch in a theatre. It felt more like an interlude at a conference and needed that sort of interaction with the performers and audience as issues arising from the content might have been elaborated in further discussion. As storytelling and didge playing it wasn't new, but vibrant cross artform theatre is something else again.

Horizons on the other hand was definitely emerging though not new in form or content. It was a group-devised performance project involving recent graduates and current students of the Indigenous Performing Arts Course at Swinburne University of Technology and directed by Peter Oystein and Jill Romans. Horizons was a well intentioned mashup of argot grown into the British invasion of Australia, a lounge room scenario of a group of urban Kooris in Melbourne. Lighting existed in no particular place, except the group house (with digestions into cameo pieces from the performers' lives in other parts of Australia) plus the obligatory indigent song where everyone could show off their favourite pop impersonations from Elvis to Abba. Not new and innovative theatre by any stretch of the imagination, however it did reveal some performers of potential and some performances in the storytelling vein that were strong and interesting such as Elliot Maynard's reminiscence about mutton binding in Tasmania.

In watching this double bill I kept recalling the comments made by Rhoda Roberts in launching The Festival of The

Jason Cavanagh aboard the bus in Radio City A Mystery Tour

Duncan Ward

6 Sided City was, however, a work of great originality, consummate art and original insights that introduced a whole swag of exciting new artists. It was a collaboration paying homage to Italo Calvino, a revere on time and space, and a true hybrid in an opera. Co-directors Dianne Peters and Edwin Preston were also the composer and librettist. Preston's libretto and narration was vast in scope and full of interesting ideas about urban design and the growth of cities and Prestons' score was original and exciting contemporary music. It was a genuine miniature, a fine jewel that employed the full resources of the genre in an abbreviated form: a narrator, Edwin Preston, a singer, soprano Annika Lindberg, a dancer/choreographer Patrick Cerini (also the designer) and 3 musicians—a violinist, Steph O'Hara, a cellist, Phil McLeod and a harpist, the composer, Dianne Peters.

In 6 Sided City, La Mama was transformed, every part of the space, every entrance, every possible level was utilised. All are talented new artists with everything to offer, just notably skills and ideas and a passionate commitment to shared vision executed with wit and great flair. I was utterly enthralled and privileged to be there at the very premiere performance. La Mama fireplace and the compelling drama of the burning logs for want of anything more interesting happening "on stage," for this season of 4 works (with one notable exception) was an enormous disappointment.

Polaroids & Gramophones was poetry, songs, stories and instrumental music and had a beguiling quality due to the freshness of the performance by Joana Davidson and the fine playing of Fiona Roake. It was light and dreamy full of girls reveries about love and dreams and devotion of pretension, whereas Takin' Up Ground, also a performance in poetry, music and song, was long-winded, indifferently performed, portentous and empty of anything but references to other poets and performers with more insight and originality.

Reve Vision by Theatre Membrane was described as text, music and installation exploring Australian utopias which sounds au courante enough for Next Wave but it was actually embarrassingly old hat theatre with indifferent slides badly projected onto a venetian blind. All 3 pieces ignored the particular space that is La Mama, a space to which unpretentious response in itself, so it was a welcome relief to watch the fire.

Taboo: a youth multi media project drew on the stories of 30 young people from the inner Western suburbs of Melbourne to present their concept of the forbidden and was staged at the Melbourne Showgrounds. It showcased the work of 4 key artists—physical performer and director Marianne Permezel, video director Tony Le Nguyen and artistic director Debby Marzara. The cast of 20 plus performances was entirely made up of minority young women, which is not surprising given its genesis in Westside Circus, established by Reema and Marzara to target the homeless and long term unemployed young women from the high rise housing estates in the melbourne. Mazara, Onley and Permezel share a background in the Women's Circus while Le Nguyen is the driving force behind Vietnamese Youth Media and Taboo's style and form showed these influences. It was dynamic circus performance with cleverly designed and stunning theatricality, utilising video projection and lighting to create a fast moving, stylish, sophisticated show.

Together they created a strong mythic story line about the fall from grace—which touched on Eve and the apple, Pandora and the box, the forbidden and the forbidden. The particular stories and experiences of a group from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It utilised physical metaphors—whips, red rope, fire—and through super-banging and visual effects made everything look as foolish and dangerous as possible. Taboo was quite spectacular in its level of performance, its tight direction, high energy, short speed and the multiplicity of dazzling images; there were no weak performances or longeurs. It was wonderful to see a youth arts project that had clearly been given the resources and hence been able to buy the time and expertise to develop to such a high standard.

Radio City A Mystery Tour presented by St Martins Youth Theatre was developed by director Caitlin Newton-Broad with 7 young writers and 9 performers. It took the form of a bus tour to two sites around Melbourne to provoke a response to the city. Its strength ultimately lay in the choice of the sites—the underground carpark at Melbourne University and the grandstand at Fitzroy Football Ground. En route en bus, we heard radio scenarios and characters jumped the bus at various points throughout the city.

Underneath we were in the dark and felt vulnerable, the display was quite drogued to find out what would happen next. Cars became performers and, like Dull, suddenly appeared without warning. We were left alone and it was clear how we were going to get out. Later in the grandstand we relaxed taking in the expansiveness of the wide sky and the beauty of the city outlined before us; we watched fire dancers out on the oval and listened to the music that came on. I was pleasantly surprised at how much I had experienced two surprising extremes of the city and the distance between them seemed enormous.

Takin' Up Ground artists Kerry Loughrey, Tom Ball, Jam Gamache, La Mama, May 27 - 31; Sided City, Sided City, Melbourne, May 14 - 17; 6 Sided City, 6 Sided City, Melbourne, May 28 - 31; Meadul, Meadul, Melbourne, May 24 - 29; Washing, Washing, Melbourne, May 24 - 30; Spectr, Spectr, Melbourne, May 24 - 30; Taboo: a youth multi media project drew on the stories of 30 young people from the inner Western suburbs of Melbourne to
Cellular listening

Zuzsanna Soboslay celebrates new music masterclasses at Next Wave

Start with what you know
Olivier Messiaen

The Australian National Academy of Music runs a series of masterclasses throughout the year for young performers auditioned from around the country. Over May their visits to Next Wave saw Cathy Milliken and Dietmar Wieser, founding members of Germany's Ensemble Modern, give a series of workshops leading to a performance season of contemporary chamber works. In April it ran a masterclass series (including a lecture on Xenakis) with Spanish percussionist Jose Vicente and Synergy Percussion.

Masterclasses enlarge the scope of contemporary music practice by bringing in international artists who sometimes extensively with composers such as Xenakis, Ligeti, Zappa, Stockhausen. This direct composer-performer relationship of course draws out the possibilities of sound, texture and structure in what Weisner calls the "brinkmanship" of pushing each others' limits of technique, even ways of thinking about who we are. He and Milliken see masterclasses as a chance to explore "life itself" and to increase the parameters of awareness with which students perform.

Composers are philosophers as much as musicians on a par with developments in the techno- and scientific worlds. Next Wave's contemporary music concerts encompass electronic music works and timbral experiments entering into instrumental technique and composition as savagely and invasively as insects into trees and (playful) devils into our minds. There are visceral logics at work here: problems of physics, metaphysics, mathematics and architecture recursively through sound.

Xenakis composed by examining the geometry and workings of cells. Synergy members speak of Xenakis as if he were God. Perhaps any composer who taps this physics is in fact taking footing with The Maker. Similarly, the art of listening, the hearing and perceiving of this making and breaking of worlds, is an intimate godliness in itself.

Stockhausen's music often allows space to describe—Messiaen advising him to abandon the tradition of building up from the key of C and "essentially in things you know that I don't." He composed directly out of his experiences of World War 2. Perhaps indeed his beginnings were then not structure (and certainly not melody) but the decimation of form. There is fusion and fusion in his works: thunderous, enormous, panaural sound that booms and shocks but also turns interior as it plays, tearing, changing our DNA.

Centrifugal and centrifugal forces ply into each other at energy plays. Vicente's front stage listening: he rocks back and forwards to a syncopated internal beat. My own body rocks to a different drum. Both of us moved by a kind of radiation, the work held together by something apart from units of time.

This polyrhythm is exactly right: I move a work differently to you. That is why there is difference in how we perform. A composition is a territory across which we each walk with peculiar steps, even though it's the same land.

Xenakis composed Clouds (Naages) as improvised segments within larger pieces which the performers play independently, though under rhythmic instruction. The result: a dense mass like a clockwork universe, of pieces not preluded form. Such moments demonstrate the meeting of the small within the large, the out and the in. Vicente commands a moment "containing everything": Synergy synchs a single-note boom. Like the opening note announcing a gamelan, epic and daemonic and drone drum is called in. Every note a musician is about to play must already be present in her or him.

Christian Lindberg for the ACO recently performed Jan Sandstrom's Short ride on a motorbike trombone solo with jumps, pinotoues, slides, rasps and 180 degree turns on the concert stage (May 3). His leather-clad knaves urged the music on, pushing and provoking this aural road movie into the room. But the same concert also demonstrated Sandstrom's coming of internal motion: though Acrylnas keeps the orchestra still, it wedges universes apart. Mass eruptions, Jupiter ice, overtake. A concert of both body-music played overt, and sound itself as microcosm of a physical world.

ANAM students managed this double presence at times. Martin Kay in Stockhausen's In Freundschaft solo for sax splayed and split the single opening note as if from inside the bore. There were, however, melancholic moments where the inner bodysense is small against the sound. John Cage's Four, perhaps, presents a problem the other way around, the piece too small for the application it demands. Cage's exhortation to "listen to the silence" is given the other angle in a piece where your ears measure the floorboards in between its thumps, sirens and whistles. The quartet is exemplary in its disciplined focus and control of silence: tone, but the piece's architecture fails. Like much of Cage, the value is in its "redirection of the gaze", but we are numbly by the time it ends, and (as though emerging from a bomb-shelter) no one can applaud for a very long time.

In Stockhausen's YLEM, movement and space are well-matched. Stockhausen asks his performers to form, regroup and disperse, physically enacting the movement of particles, music a blueprint for before and after the Big Bang. Even from outside the hall, where due to circumstances I heard the work (can I hear this music without even attending the concert? by simply meditating the idea?), the piece's manifest poetry was pointed, slightly dizzying, and sensitively played. As YLEM finishes, the hall doors open the performers exit, still playing to recreate the universe elsewhere.

The final splitting of atoms was Stockhausen's music-theatre piece Oden und Unter for quartet, soprano, male actor and child. "Fuck fuck fuck" roars the raincoated scum. Tom Cominade plays this vanguard as a self-mutilating, poisoned, violent, apocalyptic shadow to the angel-woman, chanting, hopeful, erect. She calls on Benn's Euphoria, Clarity, the Resurrection: the word "Christ" is between them glorified and reviled. Perched mid-stage on a stool, a child repeats and alters their words. She hovers between innocence and knowledge, both absorbed of and resistant to their instructions. This is a penetrating work: questioning the complicity of opposites that refuse to recognise each other. The quartet does a fine job the impulsive of the actors' bodies. The collision here is fine.

The other big question in mixed-media work is to do with the electro-acoustic interface: what is "presence" in the face of electronically-produced sound? Olga Neuwirth's Vexeridder vigorously engages its live quartet, but has opened with taped sound decimating even before introducing its world. Intriguingly, sound (like war) may tear the world apart, but performing bodies live to tell the tale.

Disraeli and Carly's joy in the students' work is palpable. These are enormous works, requiring intimate caring—of both the music and the young musicians involved. Next Wave and ANAM needs more of this happen to keep feeding a burgeoning new and youthful music world.

Next Wave, Twentieth Century Music. An electro-acoustic celebration, Australian National Academy of Music, South Melbourne Town Hall, May 16 - 30. ANAM workshops range from vocal and instrumental programs through to jazz, chamber music, song, and masterclasses.
Finding the coordinates
Dean Kiley graphs new writing at Next Wave

The Next Wave Festival theme was Distance, a saleably vague rubric that generated some rocco rhetoric, much fanfare and adventure. Perhaps the most surprising part of the crosseyed get-high-of-print products: my favourites are, respectively, Zane TensorFlow and the disjointed connotations on 1998 publications, the hazy hype impeding FlightsPath's takeoff, and an inexplicably cute star-chart-style location map.

But I do like a good metaphor, so let's start with Distance. Let's start with the Next Wave literary program as a graph. Performances in theatres, galleries and other venues of performed-text, multimedia and video coexisting, Next Wave would be a small separate clusters constituting the periphery. Workshops and seminars would be neat trapezoids lined up down the bottom. Issues, trends, practices, histories, genres and so on would form points scattered all across (and sometimes off the page, like lost co-ordinates. Apparently, the shortest distance between any of these points is a forum. So, solidly in the middle of everything and the centre of nothing, there's a Ronchick smudge called the Context Writers Day, May 16 in the Lower Town Hall, a conference by any other name.

The day began (badly) with Teaching the Writer, drawing on professional writing courses for teacher and student perspectives. Deanin's Judith Rodriguez seriously misread her audience, patronising us with cartoon parables about bats and elephants, and Ben Zipper banally whined about hypercriticism as choose-your-own-adventure cyberhe, leaving Philippa Burne to belatedly address substantial pedagogical issues. At least the Public Poetry forum stirred some debate. John Mater eulogised poetry as a panhistorical universal Esperanto dealing with Life Itself, which collided with Carol Hall's pollicised position that poets need professionalism—preferably with a union and minimum-wage—to survive the major publishers' downsizing and the impracticability of self-publishing. Adrian Wiggins, caught unprepared in the crossfire, did a witty 3,000-word headlight impression and concluded that "TV and publishers are your enemy."

While Matt Davison interviewed briefly in the (excellent) festival catalogue on the topic of media shutout and generational strangling, nothing the panelist proffered in the deal with the functions or state of media, new or otherwise. Oh, unless you count, and I don't, Thinking Magazines, the obligatory how-we-run-them-&-how-to-get-in-

Promiscuous media
Shiralee Saul savours new media at Next Wave

Ironically, in a festival exploring the permutations of distance, 1998's Next Wave Festival demonstrated the eroding intermingling of artforms and the dissolution of traditional barriers between them. With a program comprising more than 100 separate events, Next Wave had a dozen artform streams in favour of a recognition of the increasingly hybrid and cross-disciplinary nature of our time.

Next Wave's art and technology program has consistently provided one of the highights of the festival, generating high levels of publicity and pulling punters eager to take advantage of the opportunity to actually see new media art for themselves. Though tempting it would be a mistake to see this year's refusal to replay the artworld apartheid scenario as a symptom of the increasing acceptance of new media into the mainstream of contemporary arts worlds. Most galleries paint the barest of lip service to supporting this and other many new artforms. Perhaps now that most art schools have glossy new multimedia courses which are already pumping out the graduates, these galleries will be forced to rethink their attitudes and begin to present technologically demanding works as a consistent part of their normal programming.

More pragmatically, the integration meant that one tended to stumble over projects incorporating new media. Equally, given the geographical dispersion of Next Wave events with many in rural Victoria as well as in diverse parts of Melbourne and suburbs, the car-less viewer certainly felt the tyranny of Australian distances. Most of the actual projects, therefore, concentrated on psychological and emotional distance, producing a strangely melancholic and highly offcentre sense as they explored human yearning for closeness and understanding and the impossibility of achieving it.

Company In Space's futuristic installation WhereYouAre (email order bridge) at Gallery 101, all shiny stainless steel and glass surfaces, assorted technology-gadgetry and lonely reminders of the natural world, was pressed into dual service for a 3-up performance in which there was plenty of technology-mediated looking but minimal impact as the participants remained trapped reflections of each other in a masturbatory pas de deux. WhereYouAre (email order bridge) contained moments of great poignancy and beauty but was flawed by the logic of the instantaneity and power of the grid: the axes of analysis; an atrophy of basic organisational skills and a reluctance to try a gestalt. WhereYouAre (email order bridge) did not quite show the whole diagram of Writing Now, just not one that explains or does much.

Context: Next Wave Writers' Day, Lower Town Hall, Melbourne, May 16

Kerry Leugny and Jim Gamack perform at Word at the Continental Rick Jones

Context Day performances were similarly coralled in 'interlude' sections, juggling the well-known, the animated, the tedious, the emergent and the misfired. Jim Buck was a highlight, Moira Burke wasn't. David Honebrow was engaging hilarious and acerbic ("Anatomy of a Heroin Deal or How to Kill Kimora?" an audience hit, Dan Disney's reflexive micro-plays were terrific, and Phil Nortan moved smartly from lyric into song, puppetry, soundscapes and show. Ania Walwich gave us a richly accentuated refrain-driven breathless reading, spiky with enunciation and close to reading the like Katherine Hepburn on bad speed. Rosalinda Mercuri played all the parts in her vividly dramatic prose pieces, while Frances Tang gave us the quintessential Performance Poet experience, complete with tap-drum synthesiser, declaiming backing-tape, and a coma's worth of clichés. We finally got a few laughs courtesy of Peter Salman and his deadpan-19th century epic dealimg epically with Carlo the "most Cuban revolutionary.

All in all, no outstanding of the usual not unusually excruciating.

Where Context did badly fail it was via endemic 'conference management' problems of timing, agenda balance, sound, stage, and basic organisation. Session chairs were mostly unprepared (despite good pre-briefing), disorganised, dilatory, accidentally self-promotional, or (as in Thinking Magazines) incoherent. Some sessions were painfully elastic-sided, others started absurdly late, others gulled justint when discussion gained impetus. No-one ever seemed to realise the inefficacy of a forum procedure limited to "Questions? Anyone? No? OK." While the launch of Transcending the Medium was well stagemanged and mostly dramatic, the experimental FlightsPath Radio National simulcast was an unmitigated disaster. Again, this had to do
Some place like Sarajevo

Vikki Riley moves into the sound rooms of Next Wave

The composition to construct and consume non-narrative sound events—postambient, uneasy listening—is back as a group sympathetic experience, the local cafes, the discs and anything outside of the lifestyle zone is the ubiquitous multimedia spectacle on and off screen in the neurocinematic dawn of our lives. Out there it’s like KLEx’s Jam Eternal whether the World Cup on or not. More importantly, there’s a backlog of recordings, manifestos and used goods and bad, Alerted States energies left over from Prog Rock; psychodelica, dub, Music Concrete, 80′s Industrial, all that Kraut stuff and an infinity of circuit tape and found weird shit to be sampled or simulated.

In the official arts world the ‘performerless’ sound event is fast turning out to be the mythological white room of art′s current conceptual fix on the caramx and all obits社会各界—conferences, gallery gigs, hobbycore art which ‘plays’ by itself. At a festival like Next Wave it’s the concept for the ubiquitous ‘emerging artist’ using the new gear. It’s hard not ask yourself why you’ve been summoned there as Ross Bendon says in the mixing desk to present his luscious computer-piece Scattered to the Wind. Benigna downloads a waterfall of subject files which since the vacant ornate ceiling of the South Melbourne School of Art, whizzing around speakers stationed at correct intervals, unleashing surges and suryping the vacuum. A crass pop rock era capitulation into the distant Urban garden beyond the speed of light.

James Hullick’s 24 VVw was more head music material, the toxic aggressive metallic disturbances which you hear breasting between more than the usual range of snarl and roar records. Kathryn O Neill’s Or Plessure was the only piece which moulded the sound plane to something rather than the usual range of pushing up and around and made into a curt atonal deluge; but remaining Hildegarde of the continuity between 1 and 2, Ann Dudley, Diamanda Galas are three ‘female’ electronic sound composers who are still alive. Being at this National Academy of Music, the meek I’d paid Pink Floyd when they came to town and set up quadraphonic speakers at Melbourne’s

Promiscuous media

• from previous page

originally intended to protect the monetary assets (and secrets) of a young colonial administration. Exploring questions of subject and identity, the work generated a sexual subtext of voyeurism and exhibitionism as viewers spied on each other, swapping gossip—secure in the knowledge that the emotional and intellectual content was encoded in another cell—and puzzled out the narrative clues of a self, rendered partial and changing. Art in the 80′s and 90′s became focal points for pushing up and around and made into a curt atonal deluge; but remaining Hildegarde of the continuity between 1 and 2, Ann Dudley, Diamanda Galas are three ‘female’ electronic sound composers who are still alive. Being at this National Academy of Music, the meek I’d paid Pink Floyd when they came to town and set up quadraphonic speakers at Melbourne’s

Festival Hall. A macabre remnant of Keating’s Creative Nation funding, the Academy’s devotes to furthering notions of genre and talent by privileging them with lessons and workshops and an annual festival. Next Wave chose to use them as hip venue and wrote given that people like Ross Bendon come out of Latrobe University Music department when the warehouse is in use, now being closed down for golf turf management courses.

 statically, Terry McDermott’s ‘international collection of our planet’s most eminent electronic works’ event, promised to induce a kind of ‘extraction of communication’ and advertised itself with a flirt with familiar AMOKRe Search catalogue Nation lay out, the whole 50s world of Martin Denis and sci-fi crossed with link-up Bridge Festival style preenings to New York global social proportions, and an overbearing allusion to the spere of Pierre Schaeffer, the catalogue even footnote in detail Schaefferesque terms like ‘acoustic’. The venue is the new Public Office, an ambient conscious space for meeting, doing business, working, taking in a performance event, bar inclusive, oddly situated behind the new Remond Centre. McDermott sits behind a desk with a few helpers and onlookers doing the sound file mix, the rest of us sat in chairs in the half lit room. A tray of gins, annoyances, disgrudges and perplexities swirl around the roof, over the lukewarm lattes in people’s hands and over their part-strooped heads and pastel charger. We move to lie along the floor to hear, as my headmusic partner tells me later, the ‘endless horizons of destruction’ that the piece is a whole beginning to conjure, the devastated present projection unfolding inside, a more appropriate and epitaphic space. Take it I decide, McDermott manages to put through the homogeniser the 30 or so sound artists from Tokyo, Italy, Canada and Brazil. Isolated sounds back to back never sounded so expectant, or unemotional, invoking a lab studio experiment putting on an audience survey—aurs in white coats next time please for this line on world electronics.

 statically called up a nostalgia for Throbbing Gristle era noise appreciation meets, the sound event as a happening of extreme metal industrial onslaught, the terror dome of perpetual ephemaphoric statements, prophecies of doom sans the bad drugs and ugly people. Still, there’s a seated audience there, something of an anaesthesia to the culture, and overtones of cine-soundtrack media spectacles add to the general air of missed expectation about. Having undergone an association-driven endurance test of the mind you can only leave with an equally lengthy list of guilty responses left unhurt—

 cruised, I changed, did it work, did I get excited about the prime powers of 8 channel diffusion?

 Bucket of Blood Hotel by artists Adam Beerlowski and Tammie Stone is a wood-paneled unoccupied office showroom space in the city centre offered an entirely other world. A week, a cluster of empty suites interiors housed in cupboards and connecting unit rooms, mysteriously begun as a sound art invite but ended up as a living, haunted boscrom of dormantdomestic work space, a sound environment Rain to literally get lost in, with all kinds of sound resonant to lost hope, top-bought players embedded in the walls and positioned around the girny carpeted floors. In the first room three flaved sculptures; a sugar cube model of an atrophed Casino, ants at times swarming underneath, next to an optic fibre forest and fuzzy lawn bed. Like the Gigle Palace the next room tilted down into darkness to a den of garbled phone message recordings, nothing interesting. A 1960′s model car, a manifesto leads to a cupboard with a carapax of Speaker’s Corner spoken word tirades, disputes, then an empty room, you nothing to do, a dirty pigment map and a manifesto being read—the Sarajevo effect again, this time I suddenly was thinking of Susan Sontag’s ‘empathy settings’, her search for the ideal venue. [Sontag directed Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo during the seige—eds.]

At the end of the week, opening by a Sarajevo ageing gig, giant microphones and spatialisation is about negotation of orientating unknown future space, a room opens onto a camera eye device set in a mirrored dressing table, a concert of ‘Do you dare look’ at it as the invincibility and lost in space—what everybody wants to be, up close to near silence, what writer Gaston Bachelard calls an ‘intimate immensity.’ The final portal found, the audience is that harmoniously whirling and breathing, brought in and out for the duration of the 2-week event everyday by a beehive, a mud boring tape accompanied the live action. Bucket of Blood Hotel was unfamiliar uterities indeed, an arte povera spin on where to put sound and the poetics of dramatically beautiful theta-waved spaces. When you burst out of its hidden exit, into the light, the sound of other human voices was chillingly fresh, the globes flickered with power.

Next Wave, Computer Music Concerts, South Melbourne Town Hall, May 20 - 21; stastic, The Public Office, May 19; 23; Bucket of Blood Hotel, Flinders House, May 16 - 30

I followed, while some of the work foregoes involvement in continuing assessments, another capacity of playing goes to perpetuate existing and create new regimes of social control. Instead it offers an optimistic technophiles utopia of a new humane technology that will allow new insights into our world and new ways to express them.

Jhiehere, Yoltherhere (email brand order), Shirel Sael is a freelance curator and consultant specializing in the media arts. She is currently researching navigational strategies for use in on-line and hardspace cultural environments.
Dancing across waves

Philipa Rothfield experiences Contamination and Distance at Next Wave

Although Melbourne’s Next Wave festival is for emerging artists, not all its performers are that young or, for that matter, emerging. Contamination was a case in point. Produced by Kate Denborough (PhD candidate in Dance, Vic), elements of this piece had sophistication and polish. Firstly, the design of the space: the theme was white. White cơnotes, white walls, white light—the lighting beautifully enacted by Ben Cobham whose work I adore. This time, he erected a wall of white plastic road barriers stage left, and gave them a warm cream glow.

Some of the pieces were lovely, some funny, some not. There was some fine movement in the piece. Denborough and Van Dyck are obviously very comfortable with each other and all three performed some entrancing sections. At times, Erskine looked a bit excluded from the action of the piece. Her presence was not as luminous as it usually is, and I think this was because the choreography was largely composed by the Kage duo. I’m not sure whether her contribution was fully thought through. Although she performed a strong solo towards the end of the piece, she was also laterally relegated to the side of the space.

Also, the comedy sketches were largely between the other two who obviously have the theatre skills and enjoy bouncing off each other. There were some genuinely funny moments, such as the intervention of Van Dyck’s mobile phone, the appearance of the two other men, preparations for some Afro funk groove, and a Meatball impersonation to the repetitions of a drum machine (the music was skillfully created and managed by Garth Skinner). Other cameos were not to my taste, dependent as they were upon our matter.

Within the hour or so of performance, there were many interactions and actions which demanded a committed attention, and offered aesthetic pleasures. If anything, I would have preferred to see some of those other moments developed into longer considerations. Whereas Contamination was not a work of the piece that emerged as a result of Distance, Be Your Best was jam-packed with young artists with a horizon of future work. A collaboration between two groups of young people from the two sides of the Bass Strait. Indeed, the slowly modulated video shown on the back wall had its dancers tread both beaches of this rough and stormy expanse.

Sue Dodd and Jane Trengove are both cat owners. Peking George Chin confronted the habitual patterns of communication between girl and beast—cats’ eyes and human calls. The windows of Grey Area were papered over with fake cat fur and viewers peered voyeuristically through two peepholes into the eyes of each cat defiantly staring back. We could recognise those feline gazes, brassy, devilish, the hunter who suddenly relaxes into a purring soft toy. The accompanying soundtrack repeated our familiar and innate attempts at dialogue with these kingly beasts. “Here puss, puss, puss.”

The making of new work was integral to the piece’s projective of assuming degrees of joint responsibility. Monochrome images by Colin Duncan and David O’Brien faced each other across the space in Blur. O’Brien’s large scale black and white photograph depicted a woman on her hands and knees, probably recovering after exercising. We look at her, the glanced at us but we have no idea who she is, her personality, her life story, her identity, her turn to this former arcade shop turned artspace. The oviform forms of Colin Duncan’s airbrushed painting are minimal but image—an abstract slice of life—a much enlarged sample from a DNA graph. Out of the flux of possibilities arising in the juxtaposition of these two works, notions of individuality, portraiture and genetic and psychological mapping start to cohere.

Viewers could engage with the conjunctive of sensuous experience and conceptual content in Bianca Hester and Jan Nelson’s Synch. Faced with Hester’s Super 8 projection of the syncopated rhythm of cars driving across a jointed road bridge, a range of associations came into play. Travel, boredom, duration, passage or environmental degradation were subsumed in the perfunctious staccato of the film but interrupted by another persistent and asynchronous sound emitting from Nelson’s video monitors. With screens inaccessible facing the viewer, viewers contorted their necks to gain a glimpse of what appeared to be bodies in a marital arts roll, a rapid loop. For viewers clashing and juxtaposing sounds and images, the works proposed allusive connections across the expanse.

Like Dodd and Trengove, Kim Donaldson and Emma Woolley took advantage of the glared facade of Grey Area. A schematic tree, made from lengths of hardware pine, paraclally climbed across walls and windows. Lying forlornly on the carpet was a lost or decisive bough of Creeper. For those who initially imagined the piece as having come unstuck, realisation that its placement was intentional was to be made aware of our viewing assumptions. The stray branch was intentional; nature disposing of redundant ‘dead wood’, the arborist pruning or the fly black sheep or prodigal son. The association of the works was reinforced by the references to Black Death in the catalogue, but visually the consilience nature of Creeper was strategically understated.

While career collaborations of the likes of Kimberley Lame of Kate Denborough and Melamid are not for most people, the opportunity to positon a practice in the context of a larger multi-institutional project to negotiate a larger endeavour, can be a stimulant for both artists and audiences. That a series of exhibitions could be terminated by contact over the backyard fence is an encouraging sign of communication in a time when neighbours are often strangers to each other. Although one of the objectives of Next Wave was a biennial festival of young and emerging artists, the phenomenon of cross-fertilising, collaborating such as …so far offer room to step beyond unilateral relations and accustomed passivity in the development of productive reciprocal dialogue. For artists like Donaldson and Woolley or Dodd and Trengove, who ‘stepped sideways’ into new artful and professional zones were explored. The extent to which one is willing to practice detection more in how much is gained from collaborative experience and the distance travelled—whether near or …so far?

so far…, curators Kim Donaldson & Emma Woolley; Peking George Chin May 12 - 16; Blue Tomato Gallery, May 12 - 30; Melbourne Youth Dance Company, VCA School of Art, The Unloaded Space, May 2

Philipa Rothfield lectures in Philosophy at La Trobe University and is editor of Hysteric, Body, Medicine, Text. Her most recent book published by Melbourne University is A Mixed Metaphor at Dancehouse in July.
An unexpected meal

Rachel Kent tastes Bad Rice at Next Wave

Bad Rice...fooling the Gods represents one of over 100 offerings in the 1998 Next Wave Festival for emergent artists and artsforms. Curated by artist and writer Hiram To, a former resident of Brisbane who lives in Hong Kong, it comprises works by a group of Hong Kong-based artists and one Australian.

Bad Rice does not fall into the trap of attempting to represent one distinctive Hong Kong Chinese aesthetic. Rather, as To states, "it seeks to puncture such expectations of cultural consumption." He explains, "In pre-1997 handover Hong Kong, many of the packaged art exhibitions that travelled overseas have either been lauded as 'representing or grasping with a Hong Kong identity', or sold and promoted as 'a celebration of the strength and uniqueness of cultural consumption'."

Bad Rice presents an array of works, in diverse media, which play upon stereotypical notions of what constitutes contemporary art in Hong Kong today. Developed in response to the festival's curatorial theme of 'distance', it explores ideas relating to geographical and, more specifically, personal identity. To's interest in Bad Rice is in the ambivalence of identity, both cultural and sexual, and the grey areas that fall outside conventional constructions of "Asian-ness." Participating artists exist outside of the art institutional "mainstream", in To's words, while themes are frequently of a culturally "problematic" nature.

Ideas relating to sexuality, desire, perversion and illicit behaviour are recurrent in works by Wilson Sheh Ka-ho, Patrick Lee Chee-fong and Kary Kwok Ka-chee. Wilson Sheh explores ideas about sexual expression in a delicate suite of erotic paintings on silk, in which tiny male caricatures masquerade in fishnet stockings and lipstick. Shish's works combine the exquisite and the perverse with considerable success, making them one of the highlights of the exhibition. Patrick Lee explores issues relating to gay male sexuality in Hong Kong via images of a young hustler, Wilson Sheh's semi-naked and inherently vulnerable body.

Artists Phoebe Man Ching-ying and Jo Law present works relating to female identity, both private and public. Phoebe Man explores ideas about feminine identity and the body in a series of large sculptural '"flowers', entitled collectively A Present for her growth, which are constructed from sanitary napkins and dyed red egg shells. Dispersed across the gallery floor, Man's surreal flowers defy taboo with their references to womanhood and menstruation. Jo Law, who was born in Hong Kong and presently lives in Perth, instead explores media depictions of women in a kinetic piece made with a revolving turntable, angled mirrors and wall projections intercut with fragments of text.

Duvo VC and KH (Vera Chan and Cheung King Hung) have collaborated to produce an installation comprising a grey rubber welcome mat with humming tea-trolley and cups. Incised into the mat is the question "Shall we dance?", its invitation reiterated by the jiggling of the two cups upon their saucers. While references to the world of film and musicals are obvious in the work, a more indirect reference to Hong Kong's new relationship with mainland China is also perhaps implied. On a different note, Choi Yan-chi's photographic documentation of high-school desktop graffiti reveals a world of pubescent fantasy, desire and speculation.

Choi Yan-chie's work destabilises commonly held perceptions of Chinese children as hardworking and studious, revealing an adolescent subculture in which swear-words, cartoons, and references to popular culture and sex are prevalent.

The inclusion of Brisbane artist Scott Redford in Bad Rice alongside participating Hong Kong artists seems somewhat incongruous at first glance. The only non-Chinese artist and permanent Australian resident within the exhibition, Redford has produced a large wall work which states in bold capitals that 'KEANU IS EURASIAN!'

Part of an ongoing body of work by the artist inspired by contemporary male film stars, Redford's statement confounds the standard definition of Hollywood superstar as light-skinned and western in origin.

Bad Rice...fooling the Gods is timely in terms of Hong Kong's recently changed political situation but also, more pertinently, in its exposure of clichés and stereotypes that inform common perceptions of Chinese culture. By presenting subversive work that exists beyond the mainstream of artistic production, To's exhibition highlights the ambiguities of cultural and sexual identity in Hong Kong today.

Bad Rice...fooling the Gods, Span Galleries, Melbourne, May 5 - 23

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The brave and the brutalised

Sarah Miller discusses visual arts education from the perspective of this year's Hatched Symposium: Art/Culture/Media/Education

The Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show is probably one of the exhibitions I’ve enjoyed producing most over my time at PICA. This year it was a particularly creative show of recent graduates (BA, B.Arts and sometimes MA) from university art schools around Australia—whilst obviously not all encompassing—covers a lot of bases, from painting to multimedia as we like to say. As the participating artists are selected by their respective institutions, there is no ideology or unknown—despite copious correspondence, description and documentation—just what we’re going to get. And when we open those packing crates which have come from as far afield as the James Cook University in Townsville and the University of Tasmania.

And it’s a lot of fun—if a bit stressful, installing the work of around 50 artists.

Hatched is the perfect rebuttal to those tedious, mean-minded and tendentious critics who take up enormous amounts of newspaper space attacking the art school system. What is obvious—nay, flouting the opportunity to celebrate the idiosyncratic, the speculative and the imaginative in tandem with the traditional—is that we have, suddenly, 50 artists that these graduates emerge from their respective institutions armed not only with a variety of technical and conceptual developments, but critical/creative and investigative skills—OK not all of them, but overall the calibre of work is high.

Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that over the past decade, and particularly since the amalgamation of art schools into the university system, arts education (both creative and liberal) has been under increasing attack. Such attacks have been compounded by the restructuring (downsizing) of the university sector and the reintroduction of fees. It is argued that universities (including their poor art school cousins) have never suffered so much. They are ridiculed in the press; sneered at by politicians and dismissed by industry (the real world) and are under increasing pressure to perform in an economically rational climate (i.e. without any money). Effectively, performance must be measured, or of course, both in terms of student intake (numbers); and student output (employment) understood less professionally, which is not only finely inspired, than in terms of jobs, real jobs, paying real taxes.

The brave and the brutalised are new world in which we find ourselves. Students pay and, according to current political wisdom, what you pay for, you get. They expect a return on all courses reasonable until you realise that students, having a brain or two, have that one worked out of paying for it, they expect to get it. That’s the contract in a user-pays world. I give you the money, you give me the goods—in this case, a degree or higher degree and, yes, thank you very much, I expect a high distinction, first class honours and possibly a postgraduate scholarship as well. This segue from ‘customer service’ to current university conditions. If a department or school is to be funded on the numbers of students—now known as the “clients”—neither and art school can take all the clients we can get. And we certainly won’t want to fail them (patrons) as we worry about the overseas clients because they pay more) because then we lose our WASU’s (weighted associated student unit) or fee for what they are). which is after all how we measure our fiscal worthiness and what other kind of worthiness is there after all?

The title of this piece, and many more have for the past 7 years formed the raison d’être of PICA’s Hatched Symposium which accompanies the Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show, an annual survey of recent graduates from Australian universities. In the 5 symposia I have put together, the aim has been to achieve some recognition of the ways in which the professional and educational arts worlds overlap and the many ways that we all have to deal with. At times, this has been a little like trying to convince people of the relationship between sport and politics. Nevertheless I persevere because I profoundly believe that art is integral to the world it inhabits and, as such, engages with the world, and we, whether it will or not.

Consequently the forums we have undertaken have addressed everything from cultural policy (Professor Francesca Cabllo Albillos at racism (Dr Ian McLean and Dr David McNiel), research within the university art school system (Professor Geoff Paris), hybridity (Brenda Croft, William Yang and Noelle Janaczewski), the impact of digital technologies (Neda Farman, Amanda McDonald Crowley), history and the environment (Ross Gibson), censorship (Jay Younger) and an exhibition of a Bernese Murphy, Jon Cattapan, Sue Baker, Julie Dowling) and much, much more.

Overwhelmingly, artists are asking that things have emerged.

Firstly, there is no area with which artists and art-making cannot engage meaningfully. Secondly, the decline in the political and critical confidence of artists/educators over an extended period is now a given. Artist educators, in any other area the arts or education, are overstretched and overworked. Their accountability workloads tend to increase in inverse proportion to budget cuts and on top of that, they are alienated within their own institutions.

Plus ça change. Writing in the last issue of RealTime on the outcomes of the Australia Council forum, “Are there too many arts graduates”, I cited, somewhat dismissively, comments by the recently retired Director of the WA Academy of Performing Arts, Dr Geoff Gibbs, who claimed that the fundamental difference between universities and art schools was that the former were about the intellect and the latter were about imagination. While I would still argue that Dr Gibbs’ comments were overly simplistic, I don’t altogether have to do much on a functional reality that affects all our public schools operate within universities. It is a reality that is lived out daily in terms of available resources, funding and for diverse knowledge. The classic instance is in the failure of university art schools to attract postgraduate research funding. Many schools claim that universities are incapable of respecting or even recognising the calibre of their research or even that it is research. University management, on the other hand, find it hard to see anything remotely resembling research in the so-called creative arts. Creative practice is not typically regarded as research although the fight goes on to have original creative work (a novel for instance or an exhibition in a performance season) rated at least as highly on the academic scale as a research project on the coloured toothbrush nose of encouraging children to clean their teeth. The issues are various and differ widely across art forms which is another of the reasons (given different histories within the tertiary education sector) why the Australia Council forum was unable to come to terms with many of the issues at stake.

For some reason, this year’s Hatched Symposium reflected a tentative optimism which, given the current climate, seemed nothing short of miraculous. Perhaps McKenzie Wark’s keynote address, “Art/Culture/Media/Education”, in suggesting that it was time to recover the initiative in conceptualising these terms for the future, provided an appropriate starting point. For whatever reason, the artists/educators’ forum was a thoughtful and often humorous consideration of the juggling act undertaken by those engaged in two or more vocations simultaneously. Debra Perch’s discussion of the ‘fragile’ relationship between two spaces—one of full-time university lecturers aspiring artists and the other a private public space which encompasses her art practice—was both poignant and affirming. Rodney Glck’s witty performative paper, “The Act of Juggling”, selected 5 objects for juggling: the burning torch (or brilliant academic career), a razor sharp axe (a rigorous art practice), an over-ripe rockmelon (his public art commissions), a bunch of sunflowers (differing community and family engagements) and finally the operating chainsaw (or the task of successfully administrating and financing an empire)! It was quite an act. Paul Montcrieff addressed the pleasures of achieving the seemingly impossible whilst Vivienne Binn took a somewhat different but nonetheless engaging trip through the book she is undertaking as an artist and teacher with the two things Gordon Bull.

Other speakers were invited to address the always emotionally and intellectually fraught issue of art criticism. While Sarah Follent of Eyeline magazine provided a thoughtful, fascinating and useful overview of both the philosophical and practical issues pertaining to small specialist art journals, Kevin Murray explored—among other things—the prospects of online criticism. He asked whether, given the democratic aspirations of cyberspace, we might well be looking to online facilitators or moderators as opposed to the old adversarial concept of the critic. It was, however, the newly appointed and in his own terms—very informal—endemic critic for the West Australian, Robert Cook, who brought the house down with his witty and ironically self-deprecating paper on the trials and tribulations of streaming in the mainstream.

I dunno. If these speakers, who have occupied individually and severally the spaces of student, artist, educator, writer and curator are anything to go by, then it seems to me that arts education in this country is in incredibly healthy shape. Some days I don’t think so but perhaps that’s why events like Hatched are so important. In a climate where nothing is as certain as ongoing funding cuts to the arts and education sectors, the sheer energy, commitment and diversity of form, conceptual, expressive and physical practices is critical in reminding us—without romanticising the situation—of the persistence of the critical, the art-making and the value—not simply fiscal—of an education in the arts.

Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show: Co-ordinator, Katie Major; Hatched Symposium: Art/Culture/Media/Education, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts: June 19 - 20

Australasian Drama Studies Association

Books

Our Australian Theatre in the 1990s (V. Kelly ed) What Time is This House (Open City/V. Baxter East Lynne (K. Newey & V. Kelly eds) Performing Women/Performing Feminisms (interviews) (J. Tompkins & J. Holledge eds) Adelaide Ristori’s 1875 Australia tour (Galletti’s diary/T. Mitchell ed)

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Grading the making of art

Phillip Kent reports on the standing of visual arts education

Visual arts as a university discipline has been in constant contention since art schools were absorbed into Australian universities during the late 1980s. Indeed the very name of the discipline under review—visual arts—is an indication of the problems studio-based art practice has faced since its submersion within the university.

The problems of this adjustment are evidenced by the ongoing quest to find an appellation with the right resonance within the university environment, hence visual arts is increasingly being replaced by the term ‘fine arts’ (my own institution made this change in 1997). Subsequently, visual arts’ annexation of fine arts, a label which traditionally in Australia referred to study in art history and theory (the University of Sydney’s Department of Fine Arts underwent such a change in 1997). Usually, this issue of nomenclature is part of the quest to legitimise the study of visual arts within universities, and brings the term fine arts into alignment with accepted practice in the United States (the western tertiary-education system that has the longest tradition of including studio-based art practice amongst its university disciplines).

In the remainder of this article I will refer to studies that are assessed primarily on the basis of the creation of a work of art as ‘fine arts.’

The positioning of fine arts within universities has been discussed repeatedly in Australian art and cultural journals over the last decade. One of the first to write on this issue was John McDonald in The Independent Monthly (JMB Publishing Pty Ltd, Surry Hills, March 1991). McDonald’s main concerns were the problems associated with fine arts becoming a university discipline and the subsequent effect this might have upon the making of art. He begins with the premise that art schools in universities and art-history departments are “failing to produce artists and art writers of quality.” The result of this is that art—art theory, or more specifically art theory reliant on French post-structuralism (his particular bible is Jean Baudrillard).

Such theories, he posits, produce “art world zombies,” students who have been “ground down by their lecturers” who McDonald refers to as “aging bulks of 60s radicalism.” Art history departments are faulted for not teaching enough “art history,” by which McDonald seems to mean art of various periods such as the Renaissance and the Neo-Classical age. Art schools (fine arts departments), he argues, give too much emphasis to “professional development” which produces students more adept at compiling curricula vitae than making art. Furthermore, such an education prop up an art world based on grant writing and institutional funding from organisations: like the Australian Council, which in turn has led to unbridled nepotism. Moreover, art theory has produced theorists who spout “mind-numbing jargon” and insulated “students against aesthetic experience.”

This continues to be the main form of faultfinding levelled against fine arts within a university structure. There are problems with these criticisms, however, if only on a percentage basis, since art theory usually constitutes a mere 20-25 percent of a fine arts BA. Most fine arts curricula in universities still introduce undergraduate students to a wide range of media and students typically tend to focus their work upon one area from their second year onwards (although this broad spread is increasingly difficult to maintain as the number of media has expanded to include more recent arrivals such as animation and multimedia). Still, most fine arts undergraduates exit university having a wide knowledge of a number of media and sufficient skills appropriate to their chosen expertise. Furthermore, as a provider of some ‘art-historical’ components of a fine arts degree, I’m always struck by the number of students who gain high marks for their art history essays and also score high grades for their studio work, and vice versa.

The BA (Fine Arts) is also criticised for not equipping students with the usual skills associated with a general Bachelor of Arts, such as being verbally proficient and having a command of the written language. These skills used to ensure that BA graduates from disciplines as diverse as sociology and English literature could find employment as clerks and teachers. These skills, however, were never expected from art-school students, but have always been expected from university BA graduates. The issue here is expectation and fullfilment. McDonald and later critics who have waded into the fine arts-in-university mine (see in particular Alan Lee, “Art schools and academe”, Art Monthly Australia, No. 86, February 1996) note that if the aim of the BA (Fine Arts) is to produce artists, then it has failed miserably. In part these criticisms are due to fine arts academics’ desire to have a fine arts specific degree. The BA (Fine Arts) is promoted as a vocational degree. A BA (Fine Arts) implies that it will produce artists; this is not the case, however, with a general BA—no one expects an English major to be a novelist. While the BA (Fine Arts) continues to be a vocational degree it will always suffer from these attacks. (Interestingly, many BA [Fine Arts] graduates, as with other students with discipline-specific BAs, have come to realise that the discipline handle on their degree can work against gainful employment, and drop it when applying for jobs. Yet it also has to be admitted that students prefer degrees professing a specific discipline, they only see a ‘ground of hard work’ in front of them as they enter the job market).

Many of these issues regarding the skills and marks for a Bachelor of Arts degree cluster around debates concerning what constitutes fine arts research. These debates have become especially potent in respect to the research component of postgraduate fine arts degrees. Some have argued that artists have always researched and that no work of art could be created without research. Following from this, it is argued that the written component of a Fine Arts MA or PhD does not constitute postgraduate work—rather an essay which “through words...explains the [art] work and puts it into context” (Petra Willick, “The place of text in the art school?”). Art Monthly Australia, No. 84, October 1995). Others have argued, however, that fine arts research does not constitute postgraduate work—no one produces a PhD thesis and then goes on to produce an exegesis that tells the examiners just how good or important the thesis is.” (Alan Lee, “Art schools and academe”, Art Monthly Australia, No. 86, February 1996) Recently these debates have re-emerged in the pages of Art Monthly Australia concerning fine arts professional doctorates.

I believe that this problem could be easily solved if Doctorates of Creative Arts, rather than PhDs, constituted the highest fine arts post-graduate qualification. It seems likely that if PhDs in the creative arts become common, then the traditional PhD will be redundant. A scenario similar occurred when MAs by coursework commenced in Australian universities, many of the ‘sandstones’ renamed their traditional Masters of Arts by thesis only as a Masters of Philosophy (this also occurred at Oxford). Although having said this, I should also note that recently a number of British universities have begun to offer a MPhil in Fine Arts/Visual Arts (eg The University of Kent at Canterbury). While surveying international comparisons it should also be remembered that in the United States the MFA is the highest post-graduate degree awarded in fine arts. Issues of research go to the heart of what criteria of assessment is used when grading a work of art. This is an area which fine arts educators have never satisfactorily addressed, and until they do, will haunt fine arts in its quest to become a legitimate university discipline (the continuing illegitimacy of fine arts is evidenced by the refusal of the Department of Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs, and its attendant research-funding arm, the Australian Research Council, to recognise much fine arts output and research). These hurdles will not be cleared until fine arts educators precisely articulate what constitutes good work of art and clearly expound the criteria of assessment they use to evaluate art.

Phillip Kent is an art and architectural lecturer at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW.

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Troubleshooting

Steven Maras explores skilling, interdisciplinarity and capital M media in Communications and Media Studies

A series of recent articles in the Higher Education Supplement of The Australian have once again raised the problem of skilling in Communications and Media, and its status in an academic context. Behind the 'boom' rhetoric, surrounding the growth of Communications and Media in this country, and despite at least 20 years of debate about these new and practical disciplines, is the 'labor skills problem' calling for attention as insistently ever-as especially in the area of digital media.

By way of definition, the skilling problem has to do with instilling competency in students, in particular 'media' and 'communications' skills, however they may be defined. The definition of skills is a central issue. As a media educator, for example, a key aspect of my job is troubleshooting. This involves working in computer labs with minimal technical assistance, surrounded by students working at different 'speeds'. If things are going well, students are undemanding. If the technology is playing up, I can expect numerous calls for help. With tricky problems, help involves assuming control of the computer, and rectifying the situation as soon as possible. At this point, the student usually steps back from the machine, or has a break. Recently, however, my assumptions about this scene were challenged when I encountered an approach that 'looks like a really useful skill.'

While troubleshooting is part of my own stock of tools as a teacher, crucial to assisting students, I had not considered using these moments to bring troubleshooting into the curriculum.

Anxiety about the skilling problem raises important questions about the definition of skilling, and the links between Communications, other areas of arts practice, and Humanities thinking. Particular modes of skilling can place these links in jeopardy, especially through segmentation of the production process. There is a tendency to think about skilling in Communications as an activity with its own unique set of procedures, concepts and truths, following its own industrial imperative, and with few links to other media or arts contexts. This tendency can in turn feed into an idea of Communications as a discipline that stands detached from other kinds of artistic, technical and theoretical practice.

There are perhaps traces of this phenomenon in the name change of the Sydney Intermedia Network to ultra mediaarts. One of the arguments supplied for the change was that developments in computer arts had given 'network' a different meaning (e.g., a mobile phone network). The assertion of media/arts in the new name can be read as a gesture against a particular image of communications. Similarly, as a Humanities academic it is worrying to watch Communications become detached from the (media arts), or the Humanities, and connected instead to, say, electronic commerce, or information systems.

Yet, what if one of the causes of this detachment was the skilling problem, and its baggage? What if skilling happened differently? The experience of helping establish a Communications major and suggest that academic categories such as the 'capital M Media' are themselves part of the problem. New practices have brought into question the way in which the category 'Media' gathers together a field and flattens out a diverse ensemble of practices. Today we can no longer be sure what we mean by media even if increased reporting of the media by the media masks this uncertainty to some extent.

Non-linear digital editing provides an example of the ambiguity of media. In the Media 100 digital editing system, media relates to the partitioning of the supplementary hard drives necessary to deal with large video files. (Thus a 17 gigabyte drive is partitioned into 4 or 6 GB media plus one other). This is very different from conventional understandings of media as a container and marks an interpretation of artistic and technical ideas.

This use of media gives rise to new understandings of the term, and media is being referred to as a block, in a broader process of construction. In a different sense, media is seen as a material you work with (or allocate) to achieve an effect.

The tendency to use the plural form 'media' to designate a singularity emerges, in my view, out of a digital understanding of forms, where digital files can be articulated in a range of formats for presentation. There is sense in this use of media plural, in that it helps highlight how the way media is being redefined as a multiplicity. But this conception runs at odds with capital M media, with its relation to a homogenising mass. This makes the conventional understanding of media problematic in ways that strike at the core of Media Studies.

Philosophy/conceptual practice

Implicit in the idea that traditionally non-academic disciplines can be accepted within interdisciplinarity is an affirmation of different forms of conceptual practice—that is to say, an acknowledgement of diversity on the level of conceptual practice.

What is referred to as 'transdisciplinarity' has to do with the interaction and interference between different disciplines and conceptual practices. It is worth elaborating on the idea of conceptual practice in more depth. In Deleuze and Guattarri's What is Philosophy? (Columbia University Press, 1994), philosophy is defined as the creation of concepts. In Deleuze's Cinema 2 (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), theory is something that is made. It 'is itself a practice, just as much as its object', and so cannot be assumed to be 'pre-existent, ready-made in a prefabicated sky.'

Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation and Media studies an exclusive right to concept creation. Nevertheless, as Paul Patton argues in an article in the Oxford Literary Review (181-2, 1996) this does not mean that it is metaphysical or pre-eminently epistemologically privileged in relation to other activities—Art, Science, Cinema. For example, in relation to the cinema, Deleuze suggests that while the practice of cinema has to do with images and signs, the elaboration and articulation of images is being taken over by filmmakers and critics involves a theoretical work—a conceptual work specific to cinema. While this practice may not be philosophy, it is without question a conceptual practice.

A valuable aspect of Deleuze's writing on the cinema is the way he defines the significance of this conceptual practice for philosophy. 'So there is always a time, a midnight-morning, when we must no longer ask ourselves, "if it is cinema?, but "what is philosophy?" Deleuze's work enables a questioning of philosophy's ownership of conceptual practice.

As Patton points out, the creation of concepts does not simply mean the creation of new visual concepts. It also means the creation of untimely concepts, acting against our time, or acting on time. Transposed into the world of communications, the notion of conceptual practice allows us to interface in the way Communications imagines itself as a discipline of ideas. Deleuze and Guattari themselves take up the abuse of "the idea" by "the disciplines of communication."

More specifically in the media arts, their approach facilitates a questioning of the status of conceptual work in the production of programs and works. Most media handbooks provide an extremely circumscribed account of the role of ideas in the production process. However, few words or less, models, are subjected to a brief phase in the pre-production stage of a project. "You should be able to write the main concept down in a few sentences, sometimes in just one."

In a context in which a mentality of manufacture has marginalised the concept and ideas—even while bemoaning their absence—philosophy's ownership of conceptual practice provides tools with which to contest our definitions of production, composition and assembly. An idea of that practice by questioning the unusual segmentation of conception and execution typical of "manufacturing" is redefined in our 'normal' modes of media skilling.

Steven Maras teaches in the Humanities at the University of Western Sydney. bus. This article draws from a larger work on the philosophy of communications to be published in the journal Continuum.

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Amputating hate

Kerrie Schaefer reports on the Carmelo Bene-inspired re-working of Stephen Sellow's play Hate and its implications for performance studies

In May 1998, Timothy Reuther, a professionally trained actor researching (post-modern actor training methods and performance techniques as part of a Masters degree in Performing Arts (Charles Stuart University), facilitated a performance project based on Carmelo Bene's play Hate with Theatre Studies students at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.

It was set in the Queen's country house on the Easter weekend following the 'great stock market crash' of 1987. John Gleason, patriarch, wealthy businessman and rigidly religious politico, controlled his adult children—Raymond, Celia and Michael—to the family's country estate for the Easter weekend. A major announcement: he has decided to run for PM and must hand over directorship of the family business, Gleason Enterprises, to one of his offspring. The events of the weekend are framed by a fierce power struggle between Raymond and John as the son challenges his father's political position and his control of the business. The entire family is entangled in a thick web of lies, and deceit, as Raymond attempts to secure the company votes of Eloise and Michael against their husband and father respectively, and as John positions Celia against Raymond as a rival for the director's job.

With Sellow's permission, Reuther adapted Hate according to the textual and performance methods of Italian actor and director Carmelo Bene (1917 - 1987), an important protagonist in contemporary theatre who is best known for his revolutionary work. In Shakespeare in the 1980s. Reuther came to Bene's work through Gilles Deleuze, who in his essay, "One Manifesto Less", Deleuze asserts that Bene's theatre exemplifies a cluster of concepts central to his philosophical system: the notion of the rhizome, of multiplicity, of desiring machines, of assemblages, of becoming and of desire. He characterizes the workings of Bene's theatre in terms of 'amputation' or 'subtraction', and describes the actor in Bene's work as being a "deconstructed character" as a "scenic assemblage of colours, lights, gestures and words." (Gilles Deleuze, The Difference, ed. Constantin Boundas, Columbus, University Press, New York, 1993)

Reuther's experiment with the theory and practice of 'amputation' sought to maximise momentums of thematic intensity in Sellow's Hate by taking away or subtracting from the original text rather than adding to it. In the amputated text, the role of John Gleason is cut altogether. This subtraction of a major character is designed to enable the operators to explore the possibilities for 'becoming' of the minor characters in the play. Reuther also rewired scenes in the original text in order to curtail "psychological development or denouement, and the language of living room drama." He "picked up the scene in the middle, or the in-between, where things pick up speed and the language is heightened poetic." In the amputated text these condensed scenes are often played simultaneously to create moments of coherence or juxtaposition. For example, in Act One Scene Two operators playing Raymond (connected by a tie stretched between them that remained in his pocket) attempted to win the company votes of Eloise and Michael. While one actor works on Eloise the other works to persuade Celia (having a loving, marriage, children, family are interwoven in such a way as to reveal particular relationships within the Gleason family unit (an incestuous relationship between father and daughter and rivalry between mother and daughter for John's love). As a professionally trained actor, Reuther's main concern was to empower the creative ensemble. To this end he provided the operators with a set of performance techniques to use in the creative process. The eight operators working on the Hate amputation were encouraged to move beyond the restrictions of psychological character. They were "free to explore and experiment with the theatre space (levels and proximity or distance); with voice variation, with body movement and interaction, with language, with dialogue created during improvised performances, and with processes such as role sharing and usurpation." In the performance itself, the technical operators managed theatre technologies in the view of the audience, while commenting on the stage action.

The performance of the Hate amputation anticipated a number of questions. To what extent would the amputation of a major character alter power relations between the other characters? What would the other characters 'become' in the absence of the patriarch, John Gleason? Would the techniques of amputation provide the students/operators with the means to explore and even challenge or subvert certain structures of power inherent in the original text?

The performance certainly did seem to open up possibilities for the operators. In one instance, Raymond confronts Celia shortly after their arrival at the house. This meeting takes the form of an improvised amputation. Lines taken from the original text cue the beginning and end of the improvisation. The operator playing Raymond is able to take words freely from the text and to use them to threaten and undermine Celia. Celia, on the other hand, didn't react to Ray's attack in his bullying in the original text. In the amputated version, because the operator playing Celia isn't tied to or constrained by the text, she is able to reply using her own company directorship, which Raymond believes is rightfully his. He urges his mother and brother to take a stand, to take his side against Celia and John. In another instance, Reuther juxtaposes two separate dialogues between Eloise and Celia. The two prefer to persuade Celia (having a loving, marriage, children, family are interwoven in such a way as to reveal particular relationships within the Gleason family unit) an incestuous relationship between father and daughter and rivalry between mother and daughter for John's love. As a professionally trained actor, Reuther's main concern was to empower the creative ensemble. To this end he provided the operators with a set of performance techniques to use in the creative process. The eight operators working on the Hate amputation were encouraged to move beyond the restrictions of psychological character. They were "free to explore and experiment with the theatre space (levels and proximity or distance); with voice variation, with body movement and interaction, with language, with dialogue created during improvised performances, and with processes such as role sharing and usurpation." In the performance itself, the technical operators managed theatre technologies in the view of the audience, while commenting on the stage action.

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Celia's position and speaks to Michael in his own voice. Celia stands behind Raymond echoing his words in a whisper. Towards the end of the dialogue Celia retakes her original position and states forcefully to Michael that she has chosen to stay and take the directorship. She states that she loves her father and cannot leave, even if that means sacrificing herself to him.

In this latter example a parallel is drawn between Celia and Raymond who seem to be directly pitched against each other, the Hate amputation. The amputation suggests that their father's power and control fascinate both characters. But this fascination takes different forms. Raymond wants to be just like his father, to become him, while Celia becomes him by default or because she can't find the strength to struggle against him. She is helpless or powerless against the kind of power her father wields. In this way, Celia is perhaps more like Michael who spends the entire performance marooned atop a tall black box a few feet from the ceiling. He seems to have removed himself from the situation and prefers to daydream or to reintegrate and attempt to understand his own family, to protect Celia. But his perch is only a few feet from the ceiling, which suggests that he is crushed or weighed down, unable to take a stand, to act.

This performance interpretation raises questions concerning the theory/practice of amputation. The removal of the main character, John Gleason, seemed to amplify his power. He was even more present and powerful off stage. In his absence, the other characters seemed unable to challenge or subvert his power and control over them. Individually and as a family, they imploided—a negative becoming perhaps? At the same time, if the aim of the amputation was to intensify or to bring to the surface what was latent in Sellow's text, then the exercise was more than successful. The Hate amputation presented a very stylized and grotesque image of a particular kind of public/private culture in Australia in the 80s and 90s. Finally, I think the amputation project signals the importance of performance-based research in the realm of the tertiary institution. It raises questions concerning the use and combination of theory and practice, and concerning the new interpretations of text and the new bodies of work that they produce. These are pressing questions that need to be encouraged and debated in drama/theatre/performance departments in our universities.

Thanks Dr Jocelyn McKimmon (founder-coordinator of La Salle 1996-7) who picked up the project and gave me months to work on some of the conceptual and practical aspects of the performance.

Hate Amputated, directed by Tim Reuther, produced by La Salle student theatre company, performed at Queensland University of Technology, Queensland. Operators: Catherine Bayer, Melissa Blackmore, Michael Byrne, Shannon Parsons, Terry Phillips, Timothy Reuther, Sharron Rose and Wayne Staniland, May 27 - 30

RealTime 27: The challenge for performance studies

In our October-November edition, Edward Scheer, University of Newcastle, offers some timely challenges to performance studies in Australia. Here's an excerpt:

"I've just been on a research trip to Wales in the UK with meet with Richard Gough and the people at CPR (Centre for Performance Research) who are doing very interesting work in practical performance teaching and especially in bringing practitioners from all over the place to Aberystwyth on the Welsh coast to work with students. They've had everyone from Belolle and Boul to Gristow visit there and, most recently, members of Anne Bogart's and Tadashi Suzuki's Saratoga Theatre Institute were there doing their own workshops. We talked in Cardiff about the whole idea of putting performance-related work at the heart of drama, theatre and performance degrees. We had a very good and fruitful conversation about the whole idea of putting performance-related work at the heart of drama, theatre and performance degrees. We had a very good and fruitful conversation about the whole idea of putting performance-related work at the heart of drama, theatre and performance degrees. We had a very good and fruitful conversation about the whole idea of putting performance-related work at the heart of drama, theatre and performance degrees."
Tempted south

Keith Gallach previews the 1998 Melbourne Festival and overviews the ongoing arts festivals debate

Notable for a festival launch outside of Adelaide, a positive artistic director seems happy to talk issues. While promising enjoyment and exhilaration, Sue Nattrass is also happy to talk about collaboration, multiculturalism, the family, indigenous arts, and equality as "the topical issues that interest our community today which are reflected in this year's festival." Not only that, but the 1998 Melbourne Festival has more character and sense of the contemporary in its programming than it did a year ago. Compared with Adelaide it's still a restrained, rather modest looking affair with some parts of the program clearly superior to others, but it appears less determinedly middle-brow and more adventurous than its predecessors.

Nattrass says, she's "wanted to produce a festival that could be experienced at more than one place!" with "threads that link events together. One could, for example, look at Aboriginal culture through an organ and didgeridoo concert with indigenous performers—and play—"one Stolen," a world premiere, a concert by Goanna, Aboriginal music and performers in the opening celebrations, an art installation at the Magenta's Court exhibitions, exhibitions at the Koori Heritage Trust and the National Gallery of Victoria, a symposium at the Victorian College of the Arts, and two photographic exhibitions—one of urban Aboriginals, and, in contrast, one of communities in central Australia." She indicates you can also follow an Italian cultural strand, or pursue themes of (anti-) violence in the family, or multiculturalism through the weaving of the festival. For Melbourne, this connection with community and opportunities to offer the festival some of the distinctiveness that it has hitherto lacked in going for broad appeal.

Festivals and their ingredients were a hot topic at the recent Imaging the Market conference in Sydney, Robert Fitzpatrick, director of Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival in 1988—one of the rare Olympic arts events outside opening and closing ceremonies to be highly regarded—boasted in mid-July about complacency about Cultural Olympiad programming: "Atlanta botched it, Barcelona did it only slightly better. This is an occasion for Australia's arts metatheatre . . . Safe programming and a low profile will not achieve the desired effect. If you were deriding "giving people what they wanted" as a formula for boredom and isolated art's power to "transform and disturb," Fitzpatrick's moral universe, the safe bet reduces the producer/presenter to being a ball player, a ploy for trendiness. You can only hope that word got back to the directorate of the Cultural Olympiad in their Sydney bunker, but their resistance is probably as steady as Barrie Kosky weighed in once again, at the same marketing conference, arguing for truly distinctive festivals and declaring the arts in the Olympics "a complete waste of time, money and venues." He was vigorously applauded. The Melbourne Festival is not the Cultural Olympiad, but with Leo Schofield's elevation from one to the other (with the Sydney Festival thrown in, issues of time, money and venues have become irritatingly prevalent). Schofield's smug promotion of financially responsible festival management as the artistic criterion for success (with middle-brow programs to match) has led to slanging matches about box-office success. In Adelaide this year the press was on early for early box office figures and announced likely success on the first day of the festival. The recent report of Archer's success having erased the debt of the 1996 festival and achieving a $300,000 surplus must have been calling to pragmatist directors who direct festivals with ideas and which look upon them as "experimentation in a playpen." Sue Nattrass has managed to maintain the traditional elements of the Melbourne Festival—the kind of things you'd expect to see any time of the year but with a bigger talent, eg not just any old soprano, but Sumi Jo, current queen of the coloraturas—but alongside more provocative material. The program includes a Bill Viola video installation, a strong line-up of international and Australian visual artists curated by Mandie Palmer in a challenging site, the Old Magistrates' Court and City Watch House, Louis Nowra and Graeme Koehne's detested and admired opera Love Burns (based on the same 'true story' that inspired the cult movie The Honeymoon Killers), hot UK choreographer Paul Selwyn Norton (see page 45) working with Chunky Move, theimitating-stretching dance-theatrical piece Shub from the USA, from France Ballet Preljocaj's Romeo and Juliet in a totalitarian state setting, Paul Capis in the Kosky-directed "grange" Burlesque, plus the festival's continuing engagement with and reassembly of the works of Percy Grainger, that should be the electronic choreographers and a generation of mature Australian dancers to work together. The dance program offers an interesting, overview of contemporary dance from just how contemporary a ballet company can be in the form of Ballet Preljocaj (of William Forsythe and Ballet Frankfurt's great challenge to all the royalty forms in the 1994 Adelaide Festival), to the riches of age, and the power of new media and popular culture.

The music program has its riches too, but in terms of scale and challenge is less compelling—predictable servings of Beethoven et al with all full orchestras while new music (and not so new) is relegated to smaller ensembles and concerts. The Chamber Music Sunseri is titled Music for the Millennium but its offering of Ravel, Shostakovich, Ives, Bartok, Janacek, Schoenberg and Debussy, while truly worthwhile (some rarely heard works) is more backward looking than millennial, save for the extra-ordinariness of B.B. Nrehulle's Suns at the Royal Festival Hall. The only living (barely in Schnittke's case) composers in the series, Electric-Eye places Percy Grainger in the history of electronic music, featuring Martin Wesley Smith and Ross Bandt discussing Grainger's work, and with Bandt curating new Australian electroacoustic works and performances of Grainger's Free Music for multiple theremins. Brisbane's Elision are offering two concerts of contemporary works by Liza Lim, Franco Donatoni, Brian Ferneyhough, Mary Finnis and others. Guitar Mosaic feature Geoffrey Norris and Norito Sato playing an extensive list of works by, among others, Michael Abberton, Gerard Brophy, Chris Denich, Elena Kats Chernin, Raffaele Marcellino, Warren Burt and a selection of the electronic composer's co-founder. The Bachmann Vespers, a hit at the 1998 Adelaide Festival, is presented in Melbourne with, and this is unusual-to-the-odd, saxophone and percussion interludes.

In theatre, the Irish are coming, again, this time with the Abbey Theatre production of Thomas Kilkenny's The Secret Fall of Countess White, the story of Oscar Wilde's wife, but, quite unexpectedly, performed in a blend of "Kabuki, Buruaku and European minimalism." Gesher Theatre of Israel's K'fer (Village) by Joshua Sobol was seen by RealTime at LIFT07 (London International Festival of Theatre). Although by no means Sobol at his best, this amusing, didactic play is well-served by a remarkable variation on the revolve-set and some astonishingly informal but precise ensemble playing that only come out of a Russian theatre tradition. The translation experience is something else. Melbourne's IRAA, another company working firmly within a European tradition, is presenting a new work Teatro, while Arena Theatre's Panacea engages with steroids, youth and sport. Cordacorda Theatre Company's production of Enda Walsh's Angel Street, winner of the 1998 Sydney Theatre and Observer Play of the Year, is "a violent love story of dispossessed, disco-crazed seventeen-year-olds.

Former Sydney jaarstra artistic director Wesley Enoch directs Stolen by Victorian writer Jane Harrison, a play about the Stolen Generation co-produced with Victoria's Indigenous theatre group Ilbijerri. Deborah Cheetham in White Baptist Abua Fan and...
Tempted north

An impressive music program dominates the Brisbane Festival

The abolition of the Brisbane Biennial of Music and its replacement by the annual Brisbane Festival (a conventional arts festival built on the foundations of the Wurakana) was met with despair by composers, musicians and many artists who, like Barrie Kosky, bemoan the lack of identity in Australian festivals outside Adelaide, Perth and Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. The programs of the Biennial, initially boldly curated by Anthony Stief and more recently by the Mills boys Richard and Jonathas, showed enormous promise, with a potential to galvanize the Queensland and the Australian music community in an international context. Now Labor in Queensland is talking about bringing back the Biennial. Ironically this has been toured to the very moment that the Brisbane Festival shows its only consistent bit of noise—in its music program.

It is not to say that other parts of the Belt have not been quite as stimulating: the dance component with 5 companies presenting major works looks strong. However, the dance program is 4 parts overseas companies, while the music program allows for a creative and informative juxtaposition of new Australian and fabulous if slightly formulaic international theatre formats. As Kosky said at the Imagining the Market conference in Sydney in June, "It's the least I want to see is Australian work, even if it's awful." This is something that Melbourne, Brisbane and the new Sydney Festival have yet to be embraced. Theatre in the Brisbane Festival achieves a reasonable balance, but where are signs of a future home for the city that was the dream of Jenny Kemp, Nigel Kellaway, Barrie Kosky, Nikki Heywood, Sidertax and any number of other theatre companies? Well, Sidertax is on the bill, but tucked away in the Volt ("challenging visual arts") program. Volt rates a mention in the back pages of the festival booklet along with Brisbane-based Frank Production's Heavy Metal Hamlet (no dates, no venue, no billing).

The standout in the conventional side of the music program, amidst the Mahlers, Elgars and Beethovens (surely guest soloists violinist Gil Shaham and cellist Julian Lloyd Webber could have been allowed some more recent compositions of these giants' talents), is Harry Christophers and his choral group The Sixteen with the Symphony of Harmony and Invention. They'll present as one of their four concerts Handel's The Messiah (currently subject to some interesting reinterpretations on CD), but less familiar and much more attractive for festival adventurers is the composer's Alexander's Feast, set to Dryden's An Ode, in Honour of St Cecily's Day.

The UK contingent includes Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Julian Lloyd Webber, Australian composer Evelyn Glennie, new music ensemble the Steve Martland Band and prominent young composer Thomas Adès. Glennie will premiere Brisbane composer Gerard Brophy's trance...Dahar with the Queensland Philharmonic. In the Mahlerian atmosphere of the Brisbane Festival, it's equally pleasing to see music theatre playing a prominent role Adès will also conduct his chamber opera, Powder Her Face ("inspired by the 1950s divorce of the sexually compulsive Duchess of Argyll").

Kemp, igel ell way Barrie Kosky and Maryanne Lynch preview Brisbane's The Divine Kiss—The Evil is Always and Everywhere directed by Constantine Koukis ('exploring the imagery of the Seven Saving Virtues...and questioning the role of these classical concepts as we approach the new millennium').

Composers' work, the surviving element of the Biennial of Music, will feature a concert version of The Rape of Medusa and the AMUC (Australian Music Centre) Audiotheque of recordings of contemporary Australian music. The landscape program will focus on Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Australian Aboriginal rituals and imaginings.

Five companies make up an intriguing dance program: from the USA, Strath, with graver working; from Australia, the Melbourne Opera Company; from France, the Mathilde Monnier Company with Arlette Aron's Arete in the round, a 70 minute work performed to a live monologoumon: from South Africa, Vusa Dance Company's African Moires; and a joint production by Queensland's Expressions Dance company, and Hong Kong's The City Contemporary Dance Company in Attitude ("vignettes and fascinating images from family and cultural histories were told") a 75 minute performance with choreography by Maggie SiuEtma, music by Abel Valls and video projections by Randall Woolf.

The balance of local to international is better on the theatre front with Queensland Theatre Company's new production of Shakespeare's Richard III, a Jeffrey Rush adaptation of Beaumarchais' The Marriage of Figaro; UK company Shared Experience Theatre's rendering of Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina; and Australian writers featuring in Theatre UpNorth's production of Brian Stott's Orlando's Queen ("Four Australians flying home, the presence of an American Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry...inspires desperate action and compelling Coppola drama..."). La Boite Theatre's A Beautiful Life by Michael Futcher and Helen Howard ("passion, jealousy, and freedom spanning the two worlds of Iran and Australia...") and Koomba Jbara's Black Short, plays by leading Indigenous playwrights. The festival is producing director David Brown's Kill Everything You Love ("high energy multitudes exploring that hidden impact and lasting shockwaves of youth suicide"). On the performance front there's Sibyl Kempshott's former Group's Next of Kin: Arthur Wicks' Degrees of Freedom: Escape Velocity, and Frank Productions' Heavy Metal Hamlet. In keeping with a modest festival, in terms of overall coherence of ideas and themes it doesn't even begin. However, it reflected Australia's place as a melting pot of international dance and it's some international dance visitors that arouse curiosity. The temptation to fly north to see Adès, Marland, Vila, Koukis, Glennie and Kieran Harvey at work is very strong. Let's hope that the Brisbane Festival (or a more enterprising company) will in the future find a way to create a distinctly musical festival, or one like Robin Archer's 1998 Adelaide Festival where original composition and live music flowed in like a river. It's interesting then to note that John Rodgers is composing for the QTC's Figaro. KB

Room for chance

Maryanne Lynch previews Brisbane Festival's Volt

With a 100% increase in funding since its inaugural appearance in 1996, Volt, the visual arts program of the Brisbane Festival, is obviously seen by the powers-be-it as something worth supporting in an otherwise mostly safe and distinctly dull festival. For the rest of us, it's a chance to see or present contemporary work, the sort of stuff that idealists such as myself might have thought was the lifelode of any major arts festival. Volt, produced again by performance artist Maree Cunnington, enters its second incarnation with an obvious relationship to the first, but this is marked more strongly in Cunnington's interest in pushing her brief to encompass what might as well be called performance, as well as her emphasis on performance art. This year sees a dominance of gallery spaces but a similar array of artists and interests to 1996. This year also sees Cunnington drawing on an advisory group of 5, most of whom are from the other arts, and an interest in interdisciplinary practice, and a corresponding shift away from the curatorial role that Cunnington assumed last round time.

Opening night kicks off with several events at the Institute of Modern Art, one of the key Volt sites. This cavernous brick building that everyone but me seems to hate is housing Fifty Reid Players curated by Melbourne sound artists Nathan Grey and Dylan Krasvics. Girler Grills, curator at local Di Bal, and Swac, a sound work by American sound sculptor Ed Osborn from the 12th—the other participating Volt events are taking place in the same space before and after this date.

Fifty Reid Players is another homage to vinyl, this one by the founders of Snakewrld Records, where audio, visual and other artists from around Australia have been invited to contribute works to sound towards an installation comprising, you guessed it, 50 record players fitted with headphones. On opening night, Melbourne artist Michael Greaves and (unnamed) local artists will give a live sound performance. Girler Grills is a "technofortune" exhibition of works by local female artists working with multimedia, and it'll be interesting to see whether the relationship the artists have to their American sisters, the Guerrilla Girls. Osborn is utilising the mimicking of people and objects via ultrasonic sensors to create a series of unstable yet organized audio patterings. This performance has a chance to be a common theme in the Volt program.

At other galleries around town, artists share another of Volt's implicit interests: multimedia installation. Over at the City Hall Gallery, local artist Jay Younger's The Imprints of Promise of Protection: the Marriage of Figaro explores audiovisual technologies in a series of installations examining the positioning of the female body in public and private spaces. ext.cat., a group artist show at smith and stonier, engages with the experience of Catholicism from a variety of viewpoints and through a variety of means. Another local, Franz Ehmann, continues his exploration of "the culture of forgetting" at the Soapbox, with installation and performance.

Elsewhere, Dust, produced by the Brisbane company Arterial, focuses on two sites in Fortitude Valley, the slightly seedy inner-city suburb in which the IMAC is located, to make a site-specific, workshopped performance to depict generational changes in the area. In a city which until recently specialised in institutionalised neglect of its past, this project carries a significance well beyond its public art parameters. Ralph Tyrell, local composer, is venturing out to an archery range in nearby Albion for Sports Scores. In a similar set-up to Osborn, Virgil still has organised the striking of targets by arrows with target will sound, music, imagery and lighting in unplanned sequences. Fiona Hall will create another of her horticultural artworks at the Botanical Gardens-Mt Coottha, 7 kilometres from the CBD. Again, nature as much as culture plays a hand in the work.
Until the fat man sings

Robert Davidson interviews Richard Vella about his new work for the Brisbane Festival

The newest production by Calculated Risks Opera Productions is Bodysongs, a collaboration with Melbourne's Theatreworks for the Brisbane Festival. Taking Shakespeare's Falstaff as a starting point, the show is centred on the Fat Man, an invented rock singer who sings about his body and his life. The show's composer, Richard Vella, talked with Robert Davidson.

RD How did you originally get into music?
RV I went to university to study psychology and had to pick up an extra subject—music was the best option. I was one of the lucky people of the 70s when education was free and had a different philosophy than today. It was about broadening out rather than closing in. I didn't have to audition because there was a concern to include people of disadvantaged musical backgrounds such as myself. Today people like me, wouldn't get in.

RD Can you identify ways in which your psychology studies have influenced your compositional work?
RV Well I was always interested in interdisciplinary things, and how you can understand one thing through something else. That led me into ideas of music and modelling which then led me into film, music theatre, and the work I did at Macquarie University looking at music and science and philosophy. A lot of the things I do are concerned with these issues of music and ethos, and how music encodes these ways of knowing.

RD How does Bodysongs express an ethos?
RV Bodysongs started off being about the mythology of the character Falstaff who was this very large, well-endowed male near the end of his life, who suffers humiliation because he tries to play games on some women, and ends up with a whole different perspective on his life and on his body as a result. Robert Draffen, who's directing the show and who had the original idea of using Falstaff, had always wanted to have rock music in it somewhere, so I said "why don't we do it as a dance/rock night and invent a new character around the rock singer?" I had felt that the character of Falstaff was somewhat remote, and that this was a way to bring him to life in a contemporary way. We already have a cultural history with that figure.

RD That is the Fat Man, the generic fat rock singer.
RV Yes, the generic rock singer. But the most important thing is not that the man's fat, but that the fat is used in order to symbolise a concept of body-ness.

RD It seems to follow on neatly from your last music theatre work for Calculated Risks, The Last Supper which featured a pregnant performer and had a lot to do with cookery.
RV (Laughs) Well she actually got pregnant unintentionally, and we wrote it into the script. Yes, both shows are very Epicurean, both take a very serious approach to things. Tales of Love (1990) was the same too. I guess probably because my musical training was in more of an abstract area, my theatre and film and other types of work come out in a much more physical way. Calculated Risks is about this; it's about circus really, it's about fun. So through that it looks at a whole discourse around the body, and the body in space. That's not a unique thing; the Sydney Front used to do similar things. It was very much something coming out of the 80s aesthetic, internationally, about the location of the body as a site of theatre.

RD It was a general trend for artists to place their own bodies into their work.
RV Yes. Stelarc's another one of course. What's interesting in Bodysongs is that we're looking at someone who's been through a life of a body and we are now getting different perspectives of what that may mean in terms of one's own understanding of self in the world. We get that from different people in the show, from a young girl, a young boy, an old woman, an old man. Basically you can't go beyond the body once you go beyond the body you're dead. Or you become enlightened! So the body is the threshold between ourselves and the world—it goes back to the mind/body split. That's really what the show's about and that's why we use the metaphor of the Fat Man. There's no moral judgement on the concept of fatness, but we're getting something to an extreme to talk about something which we all have.

RD You were given a brief for dance/pop music for the show. Were you in a sense borrowing by using these traditions? Do they form your vernacular?
RV It's not my vernacular in that I don't earn a living from it. I've earned my living by writing other types of music. But it's never too far away, I mean you just have to turn on the radio. It's all around you, like birdsong.

RD Without putting you in this category, I sometimes find it particularly daunting when 'classically trained' composers decide to make use of pop and othergenres with which they have only a dabblers relationship. A patronising attitude can sometimes creep in, as if the composer is legitimising a lower art form.
RV Well that's right. But for me, I won't put any moral judgements on anyone because I think people have the right to do what they like in music. It is really an amoral area. But what interests me in my work—it's not an intentional thing—is some kind of tension between style and content. It's not really straight dance/pop music, but then it is dance/pop music because you can dance to it. When you dance, your body's listening to the music. Concert music is not music listened to by the body, it's listened to by the brain. Bodysongs tries to do both. That's why the show's all about the mind/body split, to take it back to the original ethos.

RD Do the various collaborators share this ethos?
RV Yes. We're all writing our relationship to the mind/body split. Humphrey Bower is writing his relationship to it in his text, and Robert Draffen is doing it through his direction, and the designer Ina banana will be doing her relationship to the concept, so in a certain sense there won't be any type of central focus. It's more like 4 layers which collide and interrupt each other in counterpoint—more like a rock video than anything!

Bodysongs, Tivoli Theatre, Brisbane Festival, September 10, 11, 12, 9.00pm. It will then appear at Theatreworks in Melbourne.

Robert Davidson is currently completing commissions for the Brisbane Festival, and directing the new music quintet Topology, in which he plays double bass.

Mallarmé's second homeland

Melbourne celebrates an artist with a profound influence on 20th century poetry, music, painting, dance and ideas

It's the centenary of the death of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842 - 1898) and a festival celebrating his work and its impact will be held in Melbourne. The event is titled *Melbourne, Mallarmé and the 20th Century*. Projected works include Jude walnut, Linda Barmby, Ros Warby, Brigid Lehmahn and Paul Rogers creating Seam, a dance in response to the poet's Lex Noxes Hérésiades: Mystère, Russell Walsh is coordinating a collaborative performance work, to be held at the play by Villiers d'Isle-Adam, which in turn is based on Mallarmé's *Igitur*—"rarely performed", says the press release, but reckoned to be "a major work of Symbolist drama. The Centre for Drama and Theatre Studies at Monash University will produce Gertrude Stein's Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights. Mallarmé's prose and critical writings will be the focus of a 4 day conference at the Department of French and Italian Studies at the University of Melbourne. It will also consider the Australian tradition of Mallarmé scholarship (Australia as Mallarmé's "second homeland")—Bertrand Marchel) and be accompanied by an exhibition in the Baillieu Library including poet Christopher Brennan's annotated collection of Mallarmé publications. Mallarmé's influence on John Cage's ideas about music and chance will be celebrated in a concert of Cage's work. An exhibition at the Monash University Gallery will display works by contemporaries Paul Ryan, Mallarmé and modern Australian painters including Susan Norrie, Imants Tillers, Jackie Dann and others. It will also be a 2 day Mallarmé Writers' Event. The conveyors point out that "Over the last twenty years, eminent Australian writers who have engaged with Mallarmé have included Robert Adamson, David Brooks, Lee Cataldi, John Forbes, Martin Harrison, Kevin Hart, John Kinsella and John Scott." Last, but by no means least in the realm of Mallarmé's influence on and through Apollinaire to the present, is Chances are...An International Exhibition of Contemporary Visual Poetry, to be held at the National Gallery of Victoria for Tuesday, an evocation (on a somewhat larger scale) of Mallarmé's legendary Tuesday night gatherings in his apartment at 89, rue de Rome, Paris. RT

Melbourne, Mallarmé and the 20th Century, contact, Michael Graf, tel 03 9354 3642 fax 03 9328 1236

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Intercultural pleasures
Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Gracias a la Vida, Thirteen Moons and MusiK Kabal in Sydney's Carnivale '98

The Carnivale '98 press release tells us that "Sydney is set to buzz:" it's certainly set to resonate with some fine music. "Over 140 world cultures will kick up a storm of multicultural celebration." Director Lex Marinos says, "Carnivale's relevance is empirical to the strengthening of our cultural diversity (and the value of the arts) is being challenged. Carnivale will continue to promote music, dance and visual arts among all of our communities." Music will play its usual pivotal role in the festival, headlined by Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Gracias a la Vida, Thirteen Moons and Mohan Veena, an Indian version of the 12-string guitar. His best-selling collaboration with Ry Cooder on, as Macnuff for Wraly Acoustics (WLA-CS-29-CD) was a groundbreaker, and has been followed by other insightful cross-cultural teachings.

In the informal setting of a lunchtime picnic and then an evening concert in the Great Hall of the Addison Road Community Centre, musical director Matthew Faragher and associate director Hernan Flores will gather choirs from Sydney's communities to encourage musical and cultural communication. To make this effective, Faragher and Flores, both experienced composers and performers, will coordinate workshops prior to the event to introduce singers to the practices of other vocal traditions.

Hernan Flores explains that three experts will conduct the workshops prior to the event: Robin Hunter (Gaetic mouth music), Lakumi Ramen (zagas from Southern India) and Sylvia Encheva (Bulgarian song). He also emphasises the informality and principle of exchange fundamental to the event. Matthew Faragher says that the concert will include the Mexia Choir (conducted by Greek musician Thomas Mervis), Koleda (Croatian), Hanari Kore An (East Timorese) and Voices From The Vacant Lot. Sylvia Encheva will also perform. The picnic program will feature community choirs including Indonesian, Lavanian, Pacific Islander and Indian choral and musical groups.

Matthew Faragher the peculiar power of the event is to be found in the workshops, in going direct to the source of cultural expertise in singing. In Sydney, he says, "there's not a real lot of talk into cultural richness." The event itself also benefits from not being exoticism, the mere display of cultural difference. Participants attend both workshops and a weekend forum where they get to speak about the experience as well as to sing together, and they collectively work on a song, overall coming to grasp other cultural approaches to song and extending their own range and interest.

On the day, says Flores, the schedule of performances for the picnic will be open-ended and allow for choirs to collaborate in what should be a musically remarkable day, titled Gracias a la Vida (Thanks to Life).

Also on the Carnivale '98 program Fairfield Community Arts Network will present a short documentary reflecting on life and art in Cabramatta in Sydney's west. The film documents the Thirteen Moons Festival, a year long project co-ordinated by the ever innovative FCAN, in which artists and community members work to counter the narrow range of media images of one of Australia's most culturally diverse communities. The film will screen to city audiences daily on platforms 5 and 6 of Town Hall Railway Station (September 14 - 21) and at sunset on the viewing cube outside the Museum of Sydney (September 14 - October 5).

Thirteen Moons has seen a range of spontaneous and planned arts activities involve the community in creating a "sacred space" in Cabramatta's CBD. Events have included a youth art and music event in which visual and performance artists created onsite works in the Freedom Plaza. In September a wall art project involving young artists will be launched at Cabramatta Railway Station. At the opening of the festival in February, local artist Carlos Barros worked for 6 hours on a chalk drawing that almost covered the Plaza. By the next morning, diligent Council workers had hosed it away. Fairfield Community Arts Network and the Cabramatta community are hoping that the images generated by Thirteen Moons will be much longer-lasting. Performance-maker India Mahjuddin established MusiK Kabal in 1993 with the aim of exploring the dance, music and randai (folk open) traditions of West Sumatra. MusiK Kabal's production The Horned Matriarch was staged in Brisbane in 1995.

With assistance from Asialink, India travelled to Sumatra last year to do further research on the randai tradition and to collaborate with artists at the Theatre Jenjang in Padang. Thanks to Carnivale and Sea Change, Sydney can see the new production in September.

Staged outdoors, the work incorporates story-telling, music and dance combining the ancient circular martial arts dance (edat) and traditional storytelling of Minangkabau (kaba). A chorus of dancers performs refrains of rhythmic body percussion known as tapak galombong. "I wanted to create an art form whose roots are especially relevant to the Asia-Pacific region," says India. "Randai theatre with its very entertaining physical theatre style, astounding percussion and witty language I think can influence and introduce new elements to Australian contemporary arts practice." Minangkabau society is uniquely matrilineal. For the protection of domestic stability, daughters are the beneficiaries of inheritance and wealth and the voice of the most senior woman holds sway in her own family and in business life. The story of The Horned Matriarch concerns Reni Nilaam, a Minangkabau girl on a quest to find her place in the modern world.

The opera is performed in English and features a vocal narrative written by Indira Mahjuddin with music by MusiK Kabal and visual work by Effy Asmrana and New Zealand Minangkabau music specialist Megan Collins. Performers include Rosemary Sheppard, Effy Asmrana, Eddy Asmrana and New Zealand Minangkabau music specialist Megan Collins. Performers include Rosemary Sheppard, Effy Asmrana, Eddy Asmrana and New Zealand Minangkabau music specialist Megan Collins.

There is Weddings, Birthdays, Anything. Curated by Efty Alexakis, it's an exhibition of family and amateur photographs (many of them remarkable, says Don) from the 50's to the present displayed in the hall linking the Five Rooms, as well as in the Marrickville Metro and other sites. The Five Rooms of Marrickville Eyes, Leonard Janiowski will be collecting oral histories of the period and want to put them at the centre of a Skid Row and Edithvale Eyes project. Don has decided to donate to them all the material used in or towards the realisation of the work. The great promise of Marrickville Eyes is, however, not only archival, but the evocation of "an insider's view of Marrickville" through photography, sounds, stories, and performance, on the streets and in those five magical rooms.

Marrickville Eyes: Five Rooms, Exhibition Space, Exhibition Studio, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville, September 19 - 24; or other dates for Christmas. Don was surprised to find that Marrickville Council has very little documentation of the last 50 years. Given that Marrickville Eyes has been produced in collaboration with the council, and that Sideck has had such a long association with the area, Don has decided to donate to them all the material used in or towards the realisation of the work. The great promise of Marrickville Eyes is, however, not only archival, but the evocation of "an insider's view of Marrickville" through photography, sounds, stories, and performance, on the streets and in those five magical rooms.

Room to view
Don Mamouny talks with Keith Gallash about Sidetrack's Marrickville Eyes

Sidetrack's collaborative performance works have entailed design, choreography, sound and video, as registries for "Place as Installation." In an interesting development which artistic director Don Mamouny declares a synthesis of Sidetrack's earliest and most recent artistic and social impulses, the company is presenting Marrickville Eyes, a work combining the company's recent explorations with the exploitation of a community audience so pivotal to the early years.

Marrickville Eyes is, in a fact, a set of resonating works in different media and settings. Five Rooms "reconstructs in precise detail the actual living rooms of people who settled in Marrickville (inner western Sydney) in the early years of the post-war migration boom. These rooms are built into the Sideck Theatre and can be entered by the audience. Rear projection screens in each room tell the daily life stories of performers involved in the project. To speed reflective time in each room will offer the audience a subjective feel for another's personal space, an "experience (of) the world through the eyes of each room's owner." Composer Rik Rue will be adding distinctive soundscapes to the rooms.

The Widows are five performers (one of them male) deploying themselves throughout Marrickville in the manner of widowed women in traditional black. This good

Room to view

Con Goulis and friends (Con seated next to driver). St Peters, NSW 1995. Courtesy Goulis family

humbled celebration of a multicultural icon will help open Carnivale, appear at Gracias a la Vida (see "Intercultural pleasures" above), at Five Rooms and at various sites, the widows' "shopping, caring for children and working in their gardens." "Don't be surprised," says the Sideck website, "to see one silhouetted against the dying sun standing on top of Banana Joe's Fruit Mart or abseiling down the face of the Marrickville Town Hall or if a group of them suddenly burst into a plangent song or lift their skirts to dance." "Yes," says Don, "they'll be dancing—choreography by Kylie Tonelato—and singing a capella."

Another event accessible from the street is Weddings, Birthdays, Anything. Curated by Efty Alexakis, it's an exhibition of family and amateur photographs (many of them remarkable, says Don) from the 50's to the present displayed in the hall linking the Five Rooms, as well as in the Marrickville Metro and other sites. The Five Rooms of Marrickville Eyes, Leonard Janiowski will be collecting oral histories of the period and want to put them at the centre of a Skid Row and Edithvale Eyes project. Don has decided to donate to them all the material used in or towards the realisation of the work. The great promise of Marrickville Eyes is, however, not only archival, but the evocation of "an insider's view of Marrickville" through photography, sounds, stories, and performance, on the streets and in those five magical rooms.

Marrickville Eyes: Five Rooms, Exhibition Space, Exhibition Studio, 142 Addison Road, Marrickville, September 23 - October 10, 2:00 - 9:00pm. $5. Enquiries tel 02 9506 1255. Weddings, Birthdays, Anything. Photograph Exhibition, Marrickville Metro and Marrickville Road, September 12 - October 10, shoppable performances. Marrickville Metro and Marrickville Road, September 17 - October 10. Presented as part of the Sydney Sea Change program of the Cultural Olympiad.
Kirsten Krauth on the resurrection of a princess in Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning

"We watched all day the slow cortege move along familiar streets strange with crowds of saddened people. The aeroplanes that flew across out telly screen flew simultaneously across our window panes...Next day our home was strangely quiet. The other children in the block had come to commiserate."


Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning explores the impact of Diana's death (and life) on contemporary culture, her place in postmodernism as popular, gay and even feminist icon, and the mourning of her death at a personal, political and social level. Split into 3 sections—‘Nation and Emotion’; ‘Mourning, Ritual, Religiosity’; ‘Beautiful Woman Dies!’—it also discusses the endeavour and ability of cultural studies to grapple with and understand such events. Cultural studies is about margins; the relation between the margin and postmodernism, an attempt to break down boundaries between art and life, masculine and feminine, high and popular art, an opposition to neutrality, objectivity, reason, and rational Western values. (Curti, L., "What is Real and What is Not: Female Fabulations in Cultural Analysis", Cultural Studies, Routledge, New York, 1992) Planet Diana revolves around these concepts; searching for, and trying to position the people's princess within these cultural constructs.

The weakness of Planet Diana as a collection is its use of the terms “global” and “global mourning”, with little evidence that Diana's death was, indeed, mourned worldwide. Roland Boer (one of the few writers to offer a definition) in “Iconic Death and the Question of Civil Religion” explains “global” as the English speaking world with ready media access, and the concept of globalisation as the worldwide spread of US culture—Hollywood film and junk food—via new forums like the internet. This seems a particularly Anglo-centric way of looking at the world and throughout the book there is scant mention of major players like Russia, USA and China, the latter who ignored Diana's death completely. Global looks more like England and Australia.

The most interesting essays depart from this assumption to challenge the terms directly or place Diana's death in a different context. Rosanne Kennedy in “Global Mourning, Local Politics,” questions the global nature of Diana's death, focusing instead on its exclusivity, the ways in which the media privileges feelings for certain people and not for others. A media that rewards individualism, beauty and idealised femininity encourages a false sense of “knowing” and mass identification, in turn creating a culture unable to mourn larger, more complex tragedies. She asks why we do not grieve in the same way for the stolen children, an issue closer to home, and questions a cultural studies that takes part in exclusionary mourning.

Mandy Thomas, in the collection's most interesting essay, “Beautiful Woman Dies: Diana in Vietnam and in the Diaspora”, reveals the impact that media have on the nature of response when she analyses and compares the reaction of Vietnamese communities, living in and outside of Vietnam, to Diana's death. By showing a culture where Diana is not mourned, more is revealed about the behind-the-scenes mechanisms of the media and the differences in response are telling. In Vietnam, images of Diana were too expensive for the tribulbs so she was little known. In fact, the Vietnamese media found the response in other parts of the world quite bizarre. In contrast, the Vietnamese press in Australia gave the death a great deal of attention and interviews with Vietnamese women reveal Diana had become a “marker of differentiation” for those new to Australia, symbolic of hope and beauty in the west: “Fairy tales like that don’t happen in Vietnam or at least we were never told about them.”

Many essays are concerned more with national character than global mourning and in particular British and Australian responses. Essays by writers in and out of England—David Burchell, Harry Ivin, Jean Duruz and Carol Johnson, Peter Griffin—reveal more about the writers and their preconceptions than the nature of collective grief. Rosalie Brunt argues that cultural studies tends to construct audiences as "imagined communities" with people standing in to illustrate larger segments of society (“Engaging with the Popular: Audiences for Mass Culture and What to Say about Them”, Cultural Studies). In Planet Diana, we are often onlookers to those lining the streets and watching TV but there is no real recognition of whose faces we are watching, who is shedding tears. The writers as postmodern anthropologists collect and take samples of human behaviour from a distance, sifting and cataloguing ritual. Such exploration of national character is murky and stereotyped, particularly in analyses of London mourners. There are passing references to multiculturalism—Mica Nava maintains that racial and cultural diversity of response was visible within Britain where Di had support from those who felt disenfranchised: the young, unemployed and ethnic minorities—but you have to wonder about all the people who weren't lining the streets.

1983

We walk for miles in a scrappy group. Stratmore Primary School Grade 6. No shade. No regulatory hats or sunscreen. Hot asphalt sticky as gum. We are standing alongside the Tullamarine Freeway with little plastic Aussie flags. We practice raising them above our heads in sync along with the regal Queen—giggle—wave. I am ready to meet Diana. I've seen her on tele, extending her hand graciously. We have a lot in common. She's also a fan of Duran Duran. Our teacher is more excited than all us kids put together. I practise my curtsy, in my head, secretly, so no-one will notice.

Charles and Di are late. Kids are beginning to melt into the footpath. We are only two deep now so I will definitely get to have a chat. Here they come. The cheers go out. Arms up. Frantic flag waving. A crusade of grey vehicles hurtles past (Diana always travelled fast)...which one's she int which one's she int which one's she int which one's she int...a mantra of disappointment, I leave my flag behind and cannot even pretend I've seen her.

Stylistically, Jennifer Rutherford's essay "Diana: The House of Our Death" is the most experimentally poetic. By shifting the focus and situating Diana's funeral in the cultural context of 20th century deaths, she questions its long term impact, placing the event and response in perspective: '1914...Death: the leitmotif of the century. Its image proliferating in the anonymous death of millions. An external event, the event of 'others'...narrative gives way to this death, and to the enormity of its numbers, to the amassing of its bodies. We see bodies made trash, exhumed from mass graves."

Her writing is lyrical and unselfconscious, and the use of first person narrative brings a real sense of tragedy and grief missing in other essays—tragedy minus the hype: Sarah Knox in "Coincidence, or, The Last Days" also places Diana's death in a social context, seeing the funeral attendees as people "mugged by History" with links to JFK and that signifying, eternal question: where were you when...? A new generation now has that question to answer.

1997

Saturday night. Driving towards the dinosaur skeleton of the Olympics stadium. The passenger seat. Where is everybody? I ask. The restaurants are empty. The bars are lifeless. The street is aclive with the continual flickering of television screens, a silent wailing wall through the windshield. Everyone, it seems, has a Date with Ray tonight.

In Planet Diana the "people's princess" is carved, dissected, served on a platter with an apple in her mouth, mutated and purged. She is redefined endlessly. Although the true nature of Diana remains elusive, her spirit is captured best in Catherine Lumby's description of her as photogenic, literally a "marker of differentiation" for those new to Australia, symbolic of hope and beauty in the west: "Fairy tales like that don't happen in Vietnam or at least we were never told about them."

"Planet Diana: Cultural Studies and Global Mourning, edited by Re:Public (Jen Ang, Rhub Barcan, Helen Grace, Elaine Lally, Justine Lloyd, Zoe Sofoulis), Research Centre in Intercultural Studies, UWS Nepean, Sydney, 1997."
Channelling Expertise into Action

Diana Kiaoen attends a forum on the artistic future of Tasmania

It was definitely a good idea—one that was well overdue—to hold an open discussion on the future of the arts in Tasmania. The state has a flourishing visual and performing arts sector but it is beset by many problems, not simply because of its isolation, lack of venues and funding, but other factors including a lack of administrative professionalism, expertise, its small population and the consequent small-town politics, the difficulty of attracting corporate sector sponsorship, and a tendency to import expertise to ignore Tasmanian art activities. These are the sorts of problems that need addressing and the Forum: The Artistic Future of Tasmania promised to do so. By the time the forum began it was standing room only in the meeting’s venue, the bar of the Republic Hotel, a popular bistro in North Hobart’s restaurant strip.

With its striking poster designed by eminent printmaker Raymond Arnold and its potentially significant program, the forum attracted a lot of speculation in the weeks leading up to it. On the night, the audience—most of the local visual arts community—clearly anticipated something worthwhile. Notable by their absence were most staff of the Local School of Art and senior curators and administrators from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Hobart Council and various municipal arts centres. The word had gone out, however, that some of these organisations were to be in the firing line at the forum, so it’s not surprising that they chose to stay away.

After a general introduction from the forum organiser, Michael Denholm, a local writer who was founding editor of the literary journal Island, School of Art lecturer Bob Jennis’s impassioned speech opened the proceedings. He spoke on the possibility of establishing a Museum of Contemporary Art in Hobart—in the same spirit, perhaps, as the off-shoot of the Tate Gallery in St. Ivès in the UK or the recently opened Guggenheim in Bilbao. This idea has been in the air here since the early 1990s when it was mooted by Scottish writer, academic and artist, Peter Herald. Denholm’s basis for his argument was that ‘‘islanders’’.

Jenyns is part of a committee that is finally, actively investigating what could be a permanent basis of Hobart and Tasmania’s cultural and tourism infrastructure. There is apparently some resistance from some of the powers-that-be at Hobart Museum and Art Gallery, but it is surely not necessarily a proposal that would diminish that gallery’s standing. One of Jenyns’ points is that Tasmanian governments should cease looking for unrealistic ‘‘cargo cult’’ solutions to the state’s economic and sociological problems. Local painter Greg Hind spoke on the under-utilisation of a large number of historic Hobart buildings, most of which are currently unoccupied and used as offices for public servants. Some of these buildings could be revamped as public art spaces. Hind screened numerous slides of these buildings—many from photographs taken last century—and also showed some ‘‘then’’ and ‘‘now’’ images from the main local arts precinct Salamanca Place.

Michael Denholm punctuated the proceedings by reminding the audience of such recent anomalies as the closure of Textiles and ‘‘The Papermill’’ at the School of Art in Hobart; the animosity felt by certain local artists towards the School, the low incomes and limited opportunities for visual and performing artists; and the demise of several regular arts events, festivals and local arts journals. None of this news was to the assembled multitude and I didn’t hear any solutions being suggested to any of them.

Next, Sarah Day, one of Tasmania’s most widely published poets, read three of her own poems, in a short, engaging performance. The forum’s advertising had implied that Day’s participation would involve actively addressing the forum topic(s). As she did not present an address about, say, the role of government in Tasmania, it might have been appropriate for Day to select from her repertoire, poems that made some real reference to Tasmania or to the arts. But her contribution was entertaining and interesting—and served to remind us that there are many successful writers based in Tasmania.

It was interesting to note that the forum had attracted arts presenter Stephen Fennelly and a crew from ABC TV’s arts program Express. In the several years that Express and its predecessor Review have been running, the show has given Tasmania less than its fair share of coverage. There have been almost no stories about the state’s often innovative visual and performing arts, and only a handful of mentions in the ‘‘What’s On’’ section that closes the show. For some reason, Express’s camera seems genuinely interested in documenting the progress, at interval, of organiser Denholm circulating around the crowd with a large bucket, soliciting funds to offset the evening’s expenses.

After interval, Tasmanian Businesswoman of the Year, Annette Downes, from Tasmania’s long-established Terrapin Puppet Theatre, gave an inspiring address on the realities of ‘‘making it’’ in the ‘‘real world’’ with examples from Terrapin’s experiences. This was a useful address, relevant to arts groups and individuals alike.

The open, questions-from-the-floor session which concluded the formal section of the forum raised only a few (predictable) relevant comments and some red herrings before, unfortunately, degenerating into an unpleasant spectacle such as ad hominem name-calling directed at the arts writer from Hobart’s daily newspaper. And apart from some live music, that was that.

The forum’s media release claimed the event would be ‘‘the most important artistic statement to have taken place in Tasmania since Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin (in the early days of settlement) founded a museum, now known as the Lady Franklin Museum on a private basis—as a result of Lady Franklin’s vision of Hobart Town as that of a city of cultural achievement and learning. ’’ I may be missing something, but I found this a strange analogy to draw; whatever the Franklins’ aspirations, I am not aware of their having any ongoing impact on the contemporary arts, and the Lady Franklin Museum these days is an under-utilised, under-equipped suburban gallery intermittently used as an exhibition venue for Sunday painters in the realist style.

It is difficult to assess the success or ultimate value of the forum. It was a brave attempt and better than no public meeting at all. It raised some important points—but where are the working parties and follow-up meetings that it ought to have generated? There is a lot of enthusiasm and expertise in Tasmania waiting to be channelled. Perhaps the forum may yet inspire some entrepreneurial locals to galvanise some of this potential into meaningful action.

Digital museuming

A unique interdisciplinary conference on digital media at the Museum of Sydney

As a child I was enamoured of the spooky, dusty South Australian Museum. You could almost smell the mummies; there was more than a little of the morgue of history about the place with its stern elderly uniformed attendants and shadowy well-trod stairwells. The bird room in the Sydney Museum still has some of that Victorian gothic flavour, and the Macleay Museum (now being promoted for its erotica by the Historic Houses Trust) in the University of Sydney plunges you back quite astonishingly into a 19th century museum culture. These were and remain to a degree places to dream in: it was enough to look (and smell and wander), perhaps to press the odd button to illuminate a tableau. The Museum of Sydney shares that virtual with its slide-out drawers of old Sydney pipes, coins and bric a brac, but there is no smell of formalin or moth balls or dust and ageing wood. The Museum of Sydney has a video wall and it has a "Bond Store" packed with not-quite-but-almost hologrammatic characters from early Sydney (more everyday than famous and played convincingly by actors) ghostily telling their lives and singing songs against dimly glimpsed layers of sea and landscape. It's a room that benefits from a long and reflective visit, and has the requisite museum eeriness (of which education is only a secondary benefit), especially if you're in it for a long time and preferably alone. It's not a space for whiz-bangery and impatience.

Three years after introducing itself as a museum uniquely predicated on the virtues of new media technologies, the Museum of Sydney is reviewing the engagement between the past and the new both here and overseas in a 2 day conference featuring international guests. Curated by Gary Warpe, Director of CDP MEDIA (which specialises in multimedia projects for museums, galleries and the likes of the Botanic Gardens), SITE-TIME-MEDIA-SPACE, is billed as cross-disciplinary. It is broadly "intended to contribute to development of understanding and appreciation of the wider creative potentials offered by new media technologies." More specifically, and this is the nitty gritty we fantasists want to hear, it will "encourage consideration of the ways in which digital media might augment exhibition practices or be employed to create entirely new forms of visitor experience and interpretive techniques."

More interesting for artists is its promise that "(i) the core of the event will be an inspirational series of presentations from local and international curators, exhibition designers, media artists, filmmakers and other professionals at the leading edge of museum and technological endeavour" or "in the "digital" era we need a "digital" museum place and entire new form of museum culture."

The museum offers one of those historical moments of enviable perspective.

According to a draft statement about the conference, the internet and the world wide web have tended to favour certain developments in the museum—"collection management, promotion, publishing and communication"—"tending to preclude other applications of new media." Alertness to "local imperatives," and "staff members' special abilities and interests" and the prospect of "unusual, innovative, eccentric and specialist exhibition projects" are the new focus. A measure of the conference's success will be the degree to which it conjures possible ways of telling history and its various and sometimes contradictory truths, and whether it affords sufficient kinds of (sometimes interactive) experience for the visitor to become, as Ross Gibson has put it, "a provisional historian." (Metro, 109, Summer 1994/5)

Write sites

Kirsten Krauth looks at fiction on the net

http://www.temporalimage.com/beehive/index.html

Capital S style and capital C content, full of puns and buzzing with archives of fiction and critical theory, beehive is a recent grace-aiming to "advance hypertext media". The 2nd issue features Queen Bees and the Hum of the Hive, an analysis of subversive feminine hypertext, and The Red Spider and Razorburn, two short stories lacking bite and edge, about the banality of everyday life with your lover. Fiction this short (under 1200 words) can't afford to be lifeless; every word has to count. Volume 1 includes Steven Shapiro's theoretical fiction Docm Patrols, an anticlockwise patence game of wounds, flesh and Kathy Ackr. To play you need a Java capable browser.

http://www.gangan.com
gangway online mag has poetry, short stories and "experimental prose" from Australia and Austria with a sprinkle of Germany and Scotland. Useful if you're multilingual, which I'm not, so I probably missed the best bits. I couldn't find anything that resembled experiment in the latest issue but it may have been hiding in German. I was more attracted to the fiction that I couldn't read—1 manuscript and Destruction (followed by greek alpha thingamajig which I can't find in the insert symbol menu) sound more gripping than A Little Knowledge... or Requiem, A Lucky Dip. There's dus—watch out for poems about waves in Bondi and all in capital letters—but it only costs 25 cents and hopefully you'll draw out Andrew Aitken,

Venus the Harlem tennis-babe smiled at the interviewer on Sports Sunday. 'My biggest weapon's not my serve, but Dad's AK 47!'

http://www.ryman-rhythm.com

253 or Tube Theatre. An internet novel set on the London underground. 7 carriages, 16 seats = 252 passengers plus one driver, hence the title. Number of words for each passenger = 253. The guy who created this site is either crazy or a gogo. Every character on the journey is described: outward appearance, inward appearance, what they are doing/thinking. A pig myself—public transport grrr—I do this every day in my own imagination anyway, Meet Mr Donald Verda who is reimagining the ending to An American Werewolf in London or Ms Sabrina Foster who advertises in the personal column as a black woman (she soon regrets it... because she isn't one). Hypertext is used minimally but to good effect, co-workers linked, stories interwined, the sense of order works well and d/y humour, political barbs and intertextuality mean addiction for pop culture junkies. It's also an inclusive project, an intermingling of cultures (you wouldn't want a train carriage of Hansonites but then again...the train does crash in the end). Right behind, there's another train coming, stalled, full of passengers just waiting for a persona...

Have you seen any sites that feature hypertext, creative or experimental writing? Please email URL to Kirsten: opencity@timebeats.com
Dear Reader,

Please note: I have just re-read the finished letter and decided to use the conventional of underlining words to suggest hyper textual links. Rather than reading the line beneath the word as an authoritarian marker of emphasis, as if words were bound to the page like black flies on white flypaper, the reader is encouraged to interact imaginatively with the possibilities of the text (a little cerebral hypertext flow-seeing) See "Notes on Mutopia") This is just a suggestion.

It is deathly still in the room—the one sound is the pen scratching across the paper—for I love to think by writing, given that the machine that could imprint our thoughts into some material without their being spoken or written has yet to be invented. In front of me is an inkwell in which I drown the sorrows of my black heart, a pair of scissors to cut out me to the idea of slitting my throat, manuscripts with which I can wipe myself, and a chamber pot.

Nietzsche, Fragment of 1862 (quoted from Kittler by Tabbs, in Modern Fiction Studies, Vol 43, number 3, Fall 1997)

On The Letters K and Q

Sometimes there is a queue in our house to use the computer. I like this image of a bold Q forming, like a shallow pool, outside the room with the computer, and with me standing anxiously by. I am aware that two persons make not a queue. I am also aware that the use of the possessive 'our' is misplaced, since we do not, at the time of writing, own our own home, although we would like to. At the time of writing we do not even own our own computers (plural). Please note that interest in and enthusiasm for the net are no guarantee of computer access and/or ownership (singular). The fact that we want to own our own computer, everything wine and yours, or else it's over, and I'm taking the car—leads to my first conclusion: here, in what used to be called the Domestic Sphere but which now, surely, after it has had innumerable holes punched in it by penetrations of market, media, man, ought to be renamed the Domestic Here; here at least we are still in the Kingdom of the first person possessive pronoun, no matter what the PDH (Partie Democratique Hypertexte) tell us.

But I digress.

Re: The Uses of the Q. I'm sorry, I apologise. I have exaggerated too the intensity with which we want to use the computer, and the associated protocol. We do not queue, as such. I went a little overboard, because in order to parade the badge of (partial/virtual) knowledge, to lay claim to some right to write, I felt I must cite extreme feelings for the computer, that I must gesture towards addiction (see Ann Weinstein, "Welcome to the Pharmacy: Addiction, Transcendence and Virtual Reality", diacritics, fall 1997). Of course, the Q also introduces a hint of demonic conflict into the picture— even, dare I say it—romanticistionaly comedy. One man, one computer, one problem, one cat—another story. I confess to playing the junkie card, mobilising the (so-called) all too familiar scenario of the transatlantic rush, the nightly habit of queuing in a dark corner, waiting to make a purchase, a transfer, a transaction, and get on and get it out. Intensity sells stories.

Outside the study, gazing into the glassy eye of the letter Q, I catch a glimpse of myself. At least it looks like me, and in this day and age that is enough. I sink into the curvy embrace of the Q, wrap myself around myself, and take up my pen—a thin, black, felt-tipped pen. Most people, as they move inexorably towards middle age, develop a preference for one writing implement over another. They exercise their choice.

Optimum Scripture Technics. Sitting there, alone, I write—Each adjective that qualifies this pen of mine—thin, black, etc.—makes me think, My pen and me, we're special. We are singular types with something singular to say. Just for fun I sign my name, over and over, reducing my fragile and singular identity to mere iteration(1). And then I wake up and realise it is all nostalgia, that it is not me in the pool at all, and cross out what I have written. Unlike the screen and the stream of consciousness little trace, the course of what I have just un-written remains on the page. Interesting. Rather than waiting in the queue to pick up an interview with Paul Austin. He has just sold some manuscripts to a Library. A man who specialises in mediating between Libraries seeking manuscripts and writers who might want to sell them, comes to visit Paul every day for several weeks, putting the drafts in order, checking that the words that have been crossed out can still be read, so that the readers can see quite clearly where the writer has been even though he chose not to stay there. What a job, I think, not sure if I would want it or not. ('Excuse me Paul, is that a 'or' or a '3' I'm seeing here? Is that 'hat' or 'had'?)

What happens to the idea of the manuscript now? Should we be worrying I ask a representative of the PDH? Ought we all to be saving and printing our drafts as we go, just in case that little man from the Library should answer one day call? Is this a paradigm shift? Is this the future? Is there money to be made in places we never went? My emails are re-routed. The server is down—I feel something like that. Some say it all started with the typewriter. I believe the Heideggerians began this fingerpointing, but I am not sure. It was the typewriter that directed written language away from the body, the hand, away from the ME! ME! to the reproducible discourse of the SHE/HE, left to tap away peripatetically under artificial light, like neurotic battery bens. Around this time, some say, people became a terrifying prospect. Kafka felt it, and hence the letter K). Nietzsche felt it before him. Eventually all the big guys got it bad. (I realised the other day that I wanted to buy a typewriter. Why? It was the incredulous response. What ever thought we'd get nostalgic about typewriters? Remember the old IBM Golftball? The specky lads, Sgh.)

At last it is my turn. I sit down and study the illuminated square in front of me, I'm working about all those monks who wrote on the first letters of manuscripts. I think about solitude. About writing. About reading. Turning back the pages, I think about the time that is used to be just me, my book and my (moving left to I right from age: 7 or the present) banana, cold milk, chocolate, coffee, cigarettes, chocolate, tea, chocolate, and finally, herbal tea. I have renounced the lot. But have I renounced the intimate relation of the body with reading, writing, and thinking? Am I finally and once, for all, a severed head? (Of course, all this giving up and renunciation are merely a rhetorical play, the flip side of my addiction—simulation above). My mother is worried. My eyes, RSI, radium, micros, veiled dangers emanating from behind the screen. Don't worry, I tell her, reaching for a raw tomato something of that kind in my hands. I hold the little mouse tight. I click. It is a voyage of sorts.

Textual islands rise up here and there, archipelagos of quotations, aphorisms, fragments, and we sail from one to the other, trying to connect the dots, to get something sweet to eat, to make love in the shade. That is what I am doing here and now: hopping from island to island, lily-bald to lily-bad, oats to oasis, to enclose to enslave. I am anachronistic, but what counts is, I am quick.

Iain Cassidy-Ronay, "Notes on Mutopia" (Postmodern Culture 8:1 http://postmodern.culture.msu.edu/go/p/footprint... but only if a university near you subscribes, I believe.)

I read on. "What matters now is not the straightness and purity of connection, but how many things something can be connected to." Questions linger. Is the ideal world one in which everything is connected? Is this choice? Or the definition of paranoia? Remember the military-industrial-psychodiagnostics-multinational-corporate-artists complex? Is this what we want? Is this what we are getting? Why are all the articles I read online about East Coast American Universities? I keep my mouth shut while the battles are replayed on the liners. The Prophets of Doom vs the Angels of Rapture. Mea culpa, I say, one hand on the mouse, the other on the cat, I am just a beginner. I feel like a sneak, a voyeur. I recognise in my inordinate fear of exposure the working of power. I worry that the PDH has weakened their case, fetishised the footstep in the sand, instead of worrying a little bit more about whose boot was on whose foot. And what about this Hypertext? Authentic? How come hypertext seems to be the realisation of every theoretical dream of post-colonialism, postmodernism, deconstruction, and new even post-colonialism? (see Janhree K. Odlin, "The Edge of Difference: Negotiations between the Hyper textual and the Postcolonial", Modern Fiction Studies Vol. 43, No. 3 Fall 98). How can it be democratic, reader-driven and avant-garde as well? Have I overlooked something?

Outside, the queue is getting longer. The crowd is getting restless. I look forward to your reaction and could you hurry, please. People are waiting.

Sincerely,

Josephine Wilson
josephinaopera.jnet.net.au

Johpbeine Wilson and Linda Carroll were the recipients of the First Prize in the recent Salt Hill Journal Hypertext Contest (an international competition) for their project "water always writes in "plus. See RealTime 24 for Kirsten Krautsch's review and visit it direct at http://www.hypertext.com/shyhp98."

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Alive and kicking

Kirsten Krauth at the Dendy Awards in the Sydney Film Festival

The State Theatre. A small screen dwarfed by opulence—plush red seats, the roof a kaleidoscopic riot of snowflaked colour, word floating backlit bursts—like the interior of a casino there is no sense of night and day and the luxury seems curiously appropriate for a short film festival, such events often relegated to the outdoors or cold cheap space. The Dendy Awards opened this year’s Sydney Film Festival and I spoke to Kriv Stenders about his award winning film Tuck/Out.

Surviving Relationships

Tuck/Out is a powerful drama based on a play by Jim McNeil (a writer who spent most of his life in prison), about the negotiation of friendship in a gaol cell, a space where there is no physical or psychological room to manoeuvre. Jack and Tom are cellmates. Jack has fallen in love with a black plastic bag filled with warm water; he cuddles it, speaks to it, and one partner always has to compromise or sacrifice in order for the relationship to continue. “I wanted to make the film about was essentially the idea of infatuation with jokes about the nature of women, and in a fit of jealous rage picks up a knife. Faultless performances, chronic, constant dialogue, a simple camera set up, pared down script and brutal editing contribute to a claustrophobic tender exploration of what it takes to continue a relationship that is threatened.

Kriv Stenders, director and co-writer, cast ex-prisoners in the two leads, intent on making a film not so much about the injustices of the prison system but about the “offlilterness” and “poignancy” of a man “recognising a need for love and for nurturing” in an isolating environment. “What I wanted to make the film about was essentially the idea of compassion...it’s in the very nature of relationships to go through turmoil and certain crises and one partner always has to promise or sacrifice in order for the relationship to continue.”

Erica Glynn’s My Bed Your Bed also focuses on two characters, Della and Trevor, negotiating a relationship within a confined space. As Della loads her bedding onto a ute, the older women laugh in the background. It’s a playful but knowing laugh, mocking her inexperience. As she continues to load the truck, the to-ing and fro-ing predicts a long journey in the dust, but the women laughing get the joke before the audience—perhaps they are laughing at us for making presumptions—as Della reverses her truck only 25 metres down the road and begins unpacking. It is a clever opening to an elegant film. As Della puts her pink futon mattress down and buckles in the sheets, she claims her territory, her space. Della, like the audience, hears her “promised” husband before she sees him, sitting in the corner of the pink kitchen, crosslegged with a green guitar (again, the object of desire), framed smaller than the fridge. All POW scenes of Della’s outside world are through wire screens, distorted, a reminder that she is a prisoner of tradition. Her increased sense of isolation is highlighted when the neighbours wave but retreat to their houses. When she is alone with Trevor’s guitar, it offers her a way of connecting: she sizes it up, tempted, holds and sees its preciousness, touches the strings but is not ready to play. When outsiders arrive, Trevor at last becomes demonstrative, his position in the household threatened (her triumphant look reminds him) and he grabs his bed frantically, dragging the mattress next to her. The room suddenly fills with family noise, a sharp reminder of the innovative sound design: Trevor and Della communicate without words for 17 minutes.

Gagging on obsession

Kriv Stenders’ aim when making Tuck/Out was to not make a gag film: “I was a bit fed up with that whole [idea]...it just seemed there was a point where that’s all that seemed to be being made and no-one was really taking it seriously as a format, as a medium. I wanted to do something very dramatic and I think all good drama has humour in it.” Ironically, Bum Magnet and I Want You, the films in competition against Tuck/Out are gag films; obsessive love tales, Women-from-Venus-Men-From-Mars concepts. Bum Magnet is about a young hip grrrl waiting for the phone to ring. With a self mocking appeal and good design, the slippery surfaces of her bedroom contrast with the stupefied community of her stoned Rome. I Want You, darker in tone, is about getting what you want at all costs and, like the recent Junk Male, has some delicious fantasies about taking over the domain of the desired and settling in, having a shower, playing on his bed, greeting his girlfriend at the door with bad news. Both are crowd pleasers with neat twists.

Shifting histories

The documentary section reflects the changing nature of Australia’s cultural identity, with two films about China and one set partly in Ethiopia. Little Brother, Little Sister, about an Australian couple who adopt a brother and sister, Siaay and Eleni, from Ethiopia, has
immense emotional impact (especially for me as I have a brother adopted from Bangladesh) and is an example of how families, built out of fragments and fragility, can work. Anne and Steve are good interview subjects, open to the camera, intelligent, funny, articulate, and honest. They are trying to be brave, and I feel we’re really weird looking” comments Anne dryly before they meet their new children.

The film’s appeal is its wider interests and themes: the importance of maintaining a continuous connection with the childhood experience of both how Anne’s adoption story stems from her own childhood experience (insight from her brother Michael); the positive influence that technology (videos, phones) can have on bridging emotional distance; sibling rivalry and the importance of ‘your’ place in the family unit. A knitting of anticipating the children’s behaviour, and attempting to love and cherish an invisible child, for example when Japhet (their other adopted child, 11) is standing outside the front door, passenger seat, of the Land Rover, knocking on the window. Sissy is already sitting in this seat. It’s Japhet’s secret, Sissy’s secrets and talents gets out to move into the back seat but can’t resist a surreptitious punch on the way through; so perfectly orchestrated you can’t help but wonder if it’s been scripted.

A Dr. Lilli and Moulding desire on very different Chinae. Split into sections—childhood, passion, fish and water, suffering.—A Breath is contemporary, ambitious filmmaking attempting new territory in the genre. Using a combination of re-enactments, historical footage and voiceover, it brushes the layers of the lives of Huang Miaozi and Yu Feng, Chinese-Australian artists who “fought with the pen.” In rich sepia, blue and red tones the documentary oscillates between generations, the political and the personal. It frames the Cultural Revolution like a crime, the historical footage and voiceover, it brushes over the lives of Huang Miaozi and Yu Feng, Chinese-Australian artists who “fought with the pen.”

The general audience was barely able to discern the changes between generations,

The Sydney Film Festival was among the festival’s forums, director Gabrielle Finnane, declared “it was the event of the weekend.” Lynden Barber’s recent article “Festivals thrive when audiences survive” also described how the Dendy Awards attracted a large, young audience unlike the rest of the Sydney Film Festival. Lynden Barber’s recent article “Festivals thrive when audiences survive” also described how the Dendy Awards attracted a large, young audience unlike the rest of the Sydney Film Festival. Lynden Barber’s recent article “Festivals thrive when audiences survive” also described how the Dendy Awards attracted a large, young audience unlike the rest of the Sydney Film Festival.
Movie(s) matter

Peter Galvin reviews feature films at the 45th Sydney Film Festival

It’s a funny thing about Sydney’s film festival—a lot of the real action, fun and excitement seems to occur off-screen in darkened corners of the overwhelmingly plush State Theatre foyer. There, old (and not so old) film people ‘talk in earnest tones and swap stories and try to answer the question: “Why are we here?”

Is it to debate the direction of cinema? Is it to say that film festivals aren’t what they used to be and then complain bitterly that the festival should be doing more to push to further extremes the idea of what cinema can be? Is it to grab passing festival staff and crew, and chat about one’s béte noire or to make outrageous suggestions for future directions—more talk, fewer movies/a more curatorial approach...

Some try to convince themselves that turning up day after day, night after night, risking illness and the possibility that the country of their country won’t welcome them, has something to do with what used to be called ‘cinephilia’. Others just come to binge on a bunch of movies. And, more importantly, Kitano’s style far from determines the existential brooding. But, more importantly, Kitano’s style far from determines the film. It’s more than that.

The Museum of Contemporary Art’s Cinémathèque is a promise—but it’s not there yet so, what’s a cinephile to do? What was apparent after two weeks of talk stoked by nostalgia and coupled with libidinous outrage at the state of play in film culture was this: When there’s so much to be done, what the hell is a film festival supposed to look like?

All this aside, there were a few movies that seemed to matter a great deal—at least during the festival. Takeshi (Beat) Kitano’s Hana-Bi (Fireworks) for Japan for one. This filmmaker’s strange, beautiful, violent genre workouts haven’t penetrated the art house psyche the way that the movies of Kieslowski have; perhaps because they are way beyond the comfort zone of valued subject matter and cuddly aesthetic tropes of the heroes of the ‘scene’. Or maybe they do not have the enthusiasm of the buyers, exhibitors and programmers. When the end credits rolled at the screening of Hana-Bi, there were hisses, heard through cracks in the applause. Hana-Bi seems deliberate, antagonistic—by turns rapturous with a cheeky humour and horrifically bloody, absorbed in the Japanese traditions of the Yukaza/Gangster cycle of the 60s. The plot has Beat Takeshi in the lead as a cop losing his grip after a bad case, getting drawn into vengeance and retracing, at the same time, into a world of existential brooding. But, more importantly, Kitano’s style far from determines the moral economy of this set up, turning the film into something more ambiguous than a ‘revengers’ tale’. Hana-Bi is playful, mournful, sad and gruesome and it’s further proof that there are special ways to revise genre beyond the sharp, attractive, ironic distance of, say, a Tarantino (not that there’s anything wrong with that).

Atom Egoyan’s movies have been seen in Australia (and at the festivals), but he has had a tough time from critics and audiences. Demanding, deceptive, dense with ideas and labelled, too often and cruelly, as cold and cerebral, Egoyan is not an easy filmmaker. Perhaps, like Cronenberg, another Canadian, Egoyan must steel himself against the urge to merge with the force South of the Border; perhaps that’s why isolation, family, community and the violations that can despoil the promise of those ideals seem to preoccupy him. His movie this year, The Sweet Hereafter, based on a fine novel by Russell Banks about the impact a bus crash has on a tiny mountain community, is not only great Egoyan, but great cinema. It doesn’t have the mystery of Exotica, but it is a superbly controlled mood piece about incest and loyalty, yet it takes a great deal of time for the subject to emerge. Egoyan, like Kitano, is working on an intricate elliptical structure where flashbacks evolve ideas about the way memory seems an agony, where loss is performed forever in ‘the now’.

The other truly great film of the festival was Robert Duval’s The Apostle. I say “great”, but perhaps it is less great in its film style than in its imagination. It is a performance film. Like many an actor turned director, Duval doesn’t find much use for brevity or glibness. He wants (and gets) scenes that play out in real time. They are long and fierce and they risk restlessness and embarrassment at so much raw emotion. Once again, The Apostle takes an audience into uncomfortable, unpopular territory. It is a movie absorbed in the traditions of American Gothic literature (particularly Flannery O’Connor) about a preacher, Sonny (played by Duval), who’s trying to find grace. But as in the short stories of O’Connor, the frenzied religious fanatic is held up as neither villain nor tormentor but as an individual who’s trying to transcend earthly bounds—he looks for God everywhere and in this story a commentary emerges on Faith. Duval never laughs at this and the film is so alive with the fire of vigorous, naturalistic performances that it is impossible to ignore Sonny’s fervour.

Perhaps it’s seen as a flaw but those pictures are all getting a release. It’s good for the rest of us—but, some might say it hardly pushes the boundaries of a festival.

Marius and Jeannette, on the other hand, is a ‘typical’ festival film: small, French, attractive and ‘human’. This film does not seem destined for a theatre near you: it does not have sex and the wonderfully true, emotionally complex performances are the work of non-actors, discovered by director Robert Guediguian, all of whom seem to have faces that carry the weight of time rather than the look of desire. Its romantic plot is infused with politics (the movie is set amongst the working class of Marseilles) and the photography is grimy.

Thirteen is another typical festival film (which is to say that one couldn’t even imagine it finding a home anywhere else). Small, even clumsy, made on a low budget also with non-actors, it looks like somebody grabbed a camera, threw up a few lights and started shooting. The story is coming-of-age in a lower-middle-class black community. The point of view seems ‘give the marginalised a voice’. Yet, this low wattage, rough-as-bags kind of approach draws a few laughs and conjures some ideas about family and friendship. The plot has the heroine do a runner—but there’s no sexual horror as a result, no melodrama. It’s a movie about how the world is full of nice people too. A snapshot of the USA without the tabloid glare.

Gone With The Train From Slovenia and directed by Igor Sterk is an exercise in style and good humour. Slight, charming and relentlessly oddball, it’s about a train-board romance between a traveller who’s going nowhere and a girl who is also going nowhere. If there’s an allegory in there it eluded me. What’s really doing is working in memories of Buster Keaton, Chaplin and thousands of silent one-reelers. There’s little dialogue, intertitles, great use of music (to cue the comic climaxes) and some fine jokes: during a delay in the journey the soccer-mad rail workers have their convention, divide their numbers and start up a game trackside.

Then there was Cure (dir Kyoshi Kurosawa, Japan), a bleak thriller that creeps with such a sense of metaphysical dread that it makes Seven look happy-go-lucky by comparison; and First Love, Last Rites, a disappointedly flat, desultory adaptation of an Ian McEwan short story about sex.

There is no room to discuss The Butcher Boy or Gagio Dilo. Suffice to say that there was enough diversity, interest and excitement in the features this year to convince me that movies still matter—even if most of the so-called players these days don’t really want to admit it.


Peter Galvin is a critic, and broadcaster on film whose work has been heard on Radio National. He teaches screen studies and scriptwriting at University Broadcasting Service. At present he is developing a number of feature film projects.

Ian Holm and Sarah Polley in The Sweet Hereafter.
Reeling in the real

Jane Mills questions the nature of documentary at the 45th Sydney Film Festival

The word 'documentary' entered screen language when John Grierson, the grandfather of the nonfiction film, reviewed Moana (UK, 1926), Robert Flaherty's poetic film about South Sea Islanders. While concealment the documentary was a "creative treatment of actuality." Grierson bequeathed a moralistic idea of the form as necessarily objective with very different legitimations from the cheap thrills offered by the narrative fiction film. Along with a fixed view of reality, this is why the form has become widely perceived as a part of 'the discourse of sobriety. ' Alberto Cavalcanti, a leading 1930s documentarist, said "I hate the word documentary. I think it smells of dust and boredom." Another celebrated contemporary documentary filmmaker, Pare Lorentz, claimed the word gave him a headache.

According to British cultural analyst Stuart Hood, the term conjured up dreary notions of public education, high-minded moral purpose and --a turgid style of rhetoric"—an opinion shared by the Australian television presenter who, announcing a program during the 1988 bicentennial shenanigans, reassured viewers: "Don't worry, it's not a documentary."

This year's Sydney Film Festival gave us ample opportunity to assess whether such views remain valid. Of around 200 films, 67 were documentaries—plus another half-dozen films which, although classified as dramas, made the terms 'documentary' and 'fiction' virtually meaningless in the way they blurred the boundaries. Most notable of these was Jang Sun Woo's astonishing Timeless Bottomless Bad Movie (Korea, 1997), a relentless tour of the lives and minds of young Korean rebels as they drink, dope, fuck, rape, steal, mug and fight their way around Seoul. The description 'fake documentary' seems appropriate, but this denies that somewhere in the mayhem there was some sort of reality being represented.

The documentaries presented a variety of styles, of views about purpose and legitimation, of notions of what constitutes actuality, and of attitudes towards the documentary camera's ability to document, reflect, capture, distort or deny reality, as well as entertain, amuse and provide thrills which would have given many an early documentarist a terminal brain tumour.

The films ranged in length from the 11-minute Relative Strangers (1997, Australia), a peerless example of direct cinema which accepts filmic subjectivity, in a form usually associated with objectivity. Hep's film suggests the short doco could become as popular as the fiction short currently is in Australia for filmmakers and audiences alike. In terms of style, the audience favourite, William Gazecki's Waco: The Rules of Engagement (1997, US) about what 'really' happened at the 1993 siege in Texas which resulted in 87 deaths, could not have been more different from Friedrike Anders' experimental video, Die Farbe Braun (1994, Germany), about the 'truth' of Nazism. Both films explore official versions of historical facts. But while Waco... makes time-honoured use of archive footage and witnesses as 'evidence,' Anders consciously questions notions of 'evidence,' 'truth' and even 'sincerity' by an ironic manipulation of stylistic elements and narrative levels.

Many of the documentaries were unfair to experiment with form and style in order to challenge previously hidden hegemonic structures—although it was noticeable that of the audiences 'Top 10, only two challenged the codes and conventions of mainstream documentary filmmaking. In one of these, Anne Claire Poitier's poetic first-person Tu as Crié Let Me Go (Canada, 1997), the director/mother bares her soul mourning for her daughter, a heroin addict and prostitute found strangled in a Montreal back alley. Poitier gives us poetry; she gives us her truth. By insisting upon a personal involvement in the task of questioning what is 'real' and by refusing to privilege one particular truth or reality over another, the less conventional films provided audiences with the space to interrogate the practice of documentary filmmaking itself and reach their own conclusions about how the documentary form, in its many modes, contributes to an understanding of ourselves and of others.

Stanley Kwans Personal Memoir of Hong Kong: Still Lose You After All These Years (Taiwan, 1997) also incorporates personal history. Kwan's sexual orientation, his love of opera, and a fascination with the idea of denial show us a reality of the final months of British rule without a white person in sight.

Beverley Peterson's The Andre Sho (US, 1997) documents her adoption of a 10-year old HIV+ boy who uses a video camera to become the star of his own—at times hilarious, at times heartbreakingly angry—movie show. There is no pretence that all the facts could show the whole truth of what it must have been like to be Andre or any of the amazing adults in his short-lived life.

In her self-revealing film, Our Park (Australia, 1998), Gillian Leahy explains how her original intention to make a "nice quiet film about my local park" and the relationship between the city and the bush, became subverted by an escalating row within her community, and between it and the local council in which she plays a major role: her presence affects the film as it does the lives of her neighbours and the park itself.

David Perry's Dr Jazz (Australia, 1998), a personal favourite, allows us to share Perry's passion for jazz by drawing upon his experience as painter and experimental filmmaker: we hear, see and learn for ourselves how to connect the aural with the visual as a means of understanding the relationship between art and society.

The documentary is a constantly evolving form. It both reflects and contributes to the debates about representations of the 'real' and what constitute different modes of realism. There have been some key moments in its history when the documentary changed radically—in part, because old forms were no longer adequate to explain newly emerging ideas about the real. The observational style films of DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, the observational style films of DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, the observational style films of DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, among their eight films made it possible to explore how this particular approach to the representation of reality, with its intimacy and immediacy, appears to record 'actuality' in a way that seems to demonstrate historical authenticity and accuracy. Ultimately it fails. The documentary can only provide 'documents' which do no

All documentaries mentioned in this article screened as part of the 45th Sydney Film Festival, June 5 - 19

A documentary filmmaker for 20 years in the UK, Jane Mills is now Head of Screen Studies at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School.
Between professional diagnosis and dumb fascination

Colin Hood enters the spirit of Justine Cooper's Rapt

Justine Cooper, Rapt

What, however, would we ask, are the forces by which the hand or the body was fashioned into its shape? The woodcarver will perhaps say, by the axe or the auger, the physiologist, by air and by earth. Of these two answers the artificer's is better; but it is nevertheless insufficient.

Aristotle, On the parts of animals

"I wanted to take it somewhere else... create a wandering footstone to the Visible Human Project... and something else again." Justine Cooper took her own very live body through an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scanner and came out with the makings for what I could only describe as an un-hinged, immortal body clock.

Turn on the animated section of Rapt and watch it tick over... build, unbuild... and build again. Each time it re-assembles through a different axis and with different body parts; a body bag of bits and bytes, programmed to construct, destruct and reconstruct in unnatural ways.

Six hundred image files were generated through the scanning software. Cooper went to work on them, outputting living/dead body slices into two formats for presentation. The high-end process consists of a rendering of volume elements into a series of black and white 3D animations.

The second—low-tech—output form for this work consists of a curtain wall of individually sliced film images compiled into what seems at first a static installation. Readings of the work vary with the degrees of transparency and opacity offered by the film material, as well as the viewer's perspective—side on, front-on etc.—on these quietly complex compilations of the total body.

On viewing the animated section, the spectator is ushered from masterful exterior views of this one squirming computer-made body to unanchored fly-throughs of tissue, bone, sinew and strange body cavities. For a moment an eye-ball rush through the white haze of solid bone structure triggers a brief and beautiful association with moisture-bearing storm clouds.

Cooper remarks, "The movement of the body would be impossible in 'natural space' but in this fractured space-time the body spontaneously produces itself—in faithful anatomy—and in contortion. Time appears to dematerialise the body and then reconstitute it, hardly the normal cycle of decay. If entropy gives time a direction, time becomes circular in this case, not linear."

Some questions, however, remain unanswered: In what other ways could the raw body data be incorporated into objects/events that make art while acknowledging a debt to the technologies and output forms of 'unlovely', meaningful medicine? Cooper's choice of output and process solves much of the mystery.

The combination of projected 3D animation and vertebral curtain of inanimate photograms into a single bifurcated space, mixes pictorial models, reproductive technologies—disturbing the continuity of 'beautiful outlooks' upon a digital landscape. While the animation may be viewed with detached mastery, the ice-block of body slice-pics effects a psychological dislocation between whirling 'auratised' digital finish and cool, opaque originary data.

In Rapt, Cooper gives medical imaging back to the patient. The advanced science of healing (it gets smarter and smarter—we still die for pathetic reasons) is converted into a 'plain language' piece of art. It's a science show and a side show at the same time.

The work does not stand out in the field of progressive digital art. It draws back, bearing the scars, "the traces of the conceptual determination of the forms proposed by the new [medical] techne" (Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Inhuman: reflections on time; Stanford University Press, 1991). It also falls into some shadowy space between digital optimism and photographic nostalgia.

Shuffle a stack of X-rays and CAT scans from a personal medical misadventure. Fold them into the time-warp between future professional diagnosis and the lay person's dumb fascination with celluloid souvenirs of bodily catastrophe. You've just entered into the spirit of Rapt.

Justine Cooper, Rapt, installed at Sydney College of the Arts, March; video component screened in D.Arts, dLux media arts' annual showcase of experimental digital film; digital video and computer animation art, 45th Sydney Film Festival, June 5—19 and touring nationally, including MAAP, Brisbane (see page 35).

Curiously interactive, seductively simple, Janet Merewether's 5 minute video Cheap Blonde spurs its audience into playing along with its hand-on and set a mouse in sight. We're offered an apparently limited set of images with instructions and a computer-generated voice which switches from mole to female.

The film of a woman beside a wonderful, shot at one of the stalls at the SMITF film and television equipment trade show, leaves her into continuous motion. The lush opening image in cocktail colours shifts from colour bars to static in the filme backdrop vanishes and the camera moves to close up. As framing dissolves, a feeling of texture emerges. The woman smiles, folds her blonde hair over her shoulder, becomes familiar, though she never opens her eyes. This is a work or confrontational that we laugh as sentences implode and explode like a poetry machine, at an image of a 'cheap blonde' who might have fallen out of some dumpus advertisement becomes a site of intimate reflection, and the twelve word sentence ('A famous film-maker said 'Girlie is the history of men filming women') permeates radically just meaningful nonsense. This is every abstract prose theory you've ever heard made witty and powerfully palpable.

Cheap Blonde, dLux media arts' D.Art program, Sydney Film festival; MAAP, Brisbane (see page 31).
A classic of masculine melancholia

Noel King reviews Adrian Martin's account of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America* in the BFI Modern Classics series

In 1988, Adrian Martin contributed an essay, "No Flowers for the Cinephile: The Fate of Cultural Populism, 1960-1988," to the collection *Inland in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture*, Pluto, Sydney, 1998. The occasion of his piece was called "Once Upon a Time in America." Ten years later, Martin gets to write on Sergio Leone's great film of that name for the British Film Institute's 'Modern Classics' series.

To go "public on a 'Modern Classic' is to court two possible consequences. Will your act of passionate critical advocacy convey cinematic obsession in a way sufficiently alluring to persuade others to your view of the loved object? If the title of Roland Barthes' final essay—"One always fails in speaking of what one loves"—looms as one possible, gloomy outcome, then, the occasional columns in Sight and Sound ("Obsession") and Film Comment ("Guilty Secrets") show filmmakers and critics successfully discussing a film or films they love. Relax, Adrian Martin's stylish, highly readable book offers a distinctive take on a cinematic monument, elegantly informing his reader of the gestation, production and release of *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), covering some of the main critical commentary and controversy which has attached to the film (while also adding to that debate), and outlining the film's influence on contemporary cinema.

The heart of Martin's argument is that Leone's film offers a profound cinematic exploration of melancholia and ways of representing male friendship. This concentration on the issue of "virile male friendship" is absolutely appropriate to a "dizzy and hallucinating" film which has at its centre a massive, and massively misunderstood, act of male-on-male betrayal. A man (Robert De Niro's Noodles) betrays his friend (James Woods' Max) and lives a long, guilt-ridden half-life ("game to bed early") only to discover, in his time of the yellow leaf, that it was he who was consummately played and betrayed.

Early on, Martin says that Leone's film moves between "epic enchantment" and "massive disenchantment" as it plays its "key emotional note" of "melancholic disillusionment." He stresses, poetically and appropriately, the sadness and loss at the heart of *Once Upon a Time in America*: "This melancholy expresses itself not only through explicit narrative acts of betrayal and loss; it insinuates itself into every pore of the movie's texture, rhythm and mood." For Martin, this theme is "inextricably bound up with its presentation of masculinity." This strikes me as the one moment of critical risk for Martin's book, turning on the way he confronts and answers the potential charge of misogyny in presentation of masculinity." This strikes me as the one moment of critical risk for Martin's book, turning on the way he confronts and answers the potential charge of misogyny in presentation of masculinity. This concentration on the issue of "virile male friendship" is absolutely appropriate to a "dizzy and hallucinating" film which has at its centre a massive, and massively misunderstood, act of male-on-male betrayal. A man (Robert De Niro's Noodles) betrays his friend (James Woods' Max) and lives a long, guilt-ridden half-life ("game to bed early") only to discover, in his time of the yellow leaf, that it was he who was consummately played and betrayed.

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Deadly visions: at home in the abyss

Edward Scheer on representation of violence in Rowan Woods' The Boys and Bill Henson's latest photographic collection

Emile Cioran said that when he was an adolescent the "perspective of death" threw him into trances which he could only flee by visiting brothels or inviting angels. In two of the most unsettling works among recent examples of visual culture in Australia—Bill Henson's collection of untitled photographs at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney and the release of the Rowan Woods' film The Boys—these same elements combine: the adolescent, the trance, the violent breaking of the trance, and the uncanny (angels, as the living dead, are the ideal messengers of the uncanny). But what is also at stake in these works is a crisis within representation itself: how to represent violence and more broadly what should be the relations of representation to the world?

In The Boys the editing of Nick Meyers and the trance-like cinematography of Tristan Micallef seem to reflect the banality of suburban violence in a way which the earlier and generically similar Blackrock never managed to do. Images of cluttered interiors, long still shots of wall surfaces, chandeliers hanging over everything like the last vain hope of material success. It's a vastly different scene to Rubrick's A Clockwork Orange: the analysis in these films of sexual violence as a means of reclaiming self from society rather than as a vaguely pathological formation, is identical. In Stephen Sewell's adaptation of the 1991 play by Gordon Graham, the character of Brett Sprague (played by the angelic David Wenham) just released from prison is the catalyst for an unseen crime against an unknown girl. This is the only way he can effectively orchestrate after a day of failures and diminishments in his personal power base. The turning point occurs at the moment he realises he is impotent. His girlfriend, Michelle (Toni Collette) mocks him but it makes no difference as he knows only too well that violence is the only event, its place in the sensorium? Almost like police photographs of a crime scene, there is a clinical/forensic quality to these images in which the crime itself is absent but its traces are predictable and immediate effects: the brothers in custody, their anguished mother reduced over the phone. He does not permit the turning points to make here is surely that, as Barbara Ehrenreich says in her introduction to Male Fantasies, "we need to preserve the singularity of the horrors we seek to understand." Appropriately, the film is not rich in allusions, iconography or symbolism, it is openly unatractive. It does not seek to romanticise its subject, merely to dramatise it.

The Boys is not at a direct in its raising of these questions about the provenance of violent crime and the ethics of its representation. The producers John Maynard and Robert Connolly have been careful to distance their work from its association with the infamous Anita Cobby murder and this seems legitimate given the circumstances of its original production as a play (it is certainly less disingenuous than the denials of the Blackrock producers over its obvious connection to the Leigh Leigh sex murder at Stockton). But the importance of point to make here is surely that, as Barbara Ehrenreich says in her introduction to Male Fantasies, "we need to preserve the singularity of the horrors we seek to understand." Appropriately, the film is not rich in allusions, iconography or symbolism, it is openly unatractive. It does not seek to romanticise its subject, merely to dramatise it.

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OnScreen-August 1998
To be surrounded by sound is one of the prime means by which we place ourselves in the world. Next to gravity and air pressure, the directional spread of interacting and expanding sound waves constitutes the core phenomenological state within which I acknowledge my presence, my essence, my existence. Quite simply, it is in sound that I find myself centred: not 'made centre' as in some archaic ideology, but located within and between activity that forces me to accept that while I might be 'here', there's a whole lot of stuff happening over here. In this sense, the sonic is a liberating force. It takes the pressure off having to worry about the world because the sonic activity happening around you does not require you to be there for its existence.

But this calm, this pleasure is not for everyone. In fact, the breakdown between what could be termed the 'non-happening' self—the self that is not required for sonic activity—and the sonic activity around one—the city, the room next door, the truck in the street, the kid laughing as you walk by—can induce the most severe of traumas. Schizophrenia is currently advertised as something that can happen to anyone at anytime. The image is of a lightning bolt. A far more apt image would be a person trapped in a whirlpool of sound waves. The most apparent sign of a schizophrenic learning is the inability to distinguish between the imaginary location of one's inner thoughts as voiced by your aural voice box and the acoustic location of someone else's voice external to you. I have never experienced this and can only imagine the destabilising effects. Maybe I am already enjoying it and don't realise it, considering how much I wish the sonic to engulf me, torture me, paralyse me. But think: the 90s has seen an alarming rise in the sublimation of schizophrenic states via the transubstantiation of the human voice into all manner and form of oral/aural bodies. In other words, films have become obsessed with giving vocal identity, performance and character to voices which do not speak. In particular: robots, babies and animals. Frighteningly, they're all family members. This brief article is an attempt to address the insidiousness of encouraging children's imagination to hear/talk to the non-vocal only to damn that freedom in adult social spheres later in life. But a recent film is frightening enough to mark this trend as contemporary malaise.

The self is in. He's Eddie Murphy—he of the long tradition of loud-mouthed, rubber-lipped, tongue-smacking, in-your-face, motor-mouth comic viciousness. Now he is Doctor Dolittle—wringing the role from Rex Harrison on a musical fantasy island, and slamming it down in San Francisco. The doctor says a very telling line in the new Doctor Dolittle: "I'll end up like one of those people who is too busy talking to themselves. It ain't a good look." How right he is. San Francisco has one of the most dense concentrations of street/homeless people in all of America. From burnt-out acid casualties in Berkeley to the disenfranchised of the Mission district of San Francisco and the crazed hyperspace refugees in all of America, ten years ago, south of Market Street was acknowledged by the tourist trade as being the no-go territory to the city. And you start heading into the business district (where people wander around on mobile phones with lapel mics). Like a rising tide, street/homeless people populate at least five blocks north of Market Street, their increase emulating a living multimedia phenomenon. In America and Australia, these non-crazies are psychologically rendered invisible through the less fortunate ignoring their voice. You don't talk because they do not talk to you, and you engage in dialogue; you learn to treat their voices as voices not directed to you, but ensnared within an aural cocoon. Visually, they blend with the urban grime. But purely, you can trap them into responding. The social isolation is so great that potential echoing of one's own derision is amazing. For whenever one hears the floating voice of schizophrenia, one hears the potential reverse echo of one of their own derision.

In Doctor Dolittle, the term 'schizophrenia' is used, but it is screamed in every aural moment of the film's soundtrack. Like a mega mix of the soundtracks to Milo O'Gila, Look Who's Talking and Babe, a thousand and one wannabe comedians desperately vie for your attention on screen and off screen with their smarmy wise-cracks. Doctor Dolittle is like being forced to sit through a constant barrage of urban soundcapes—perhaps the most desperate of all social discourses: topical comedy. Comedians read the newspapers (as if newspapers are meaningful and relevant) and say something incredibly rude and dumb about easy targets like The Spice Girls. This form of comedy is a reflex action with no other cause except to be topical. Listening to all those living and dead, you wonder if this composited liveliness is like wandering through downtown San Francisco. It is cacophonous, pathetic, scary. It is as if at most fundamental, the collapse of communication through overload; the inverting of interiority; the ultimate surrounding of sound.

Doctor Dolittle goes as far as having Eddie Murphy interred in a psychiatric hospital because he claims he can talk to the animals. The film soon becomes hopelessly trapped by its own contradictory do-gooding, for at the end of the day, no one is going to believe anyone can talk to the animals and hear exactly what they say. The film itself is almost absurdly about television shows which try to mesh Cosbyesque altruisms with a critique of America's woeful medical system and to show a character with a cinematic white cloud. The more that urban vocal schizophrenia takes hold of the rural interiorization, the more we will try to ignore it, and the louder its noise will get. One must not forget the role we as 'non-crazies' play in increasing this audible threshold. Every time we ignore that person talking to themselves, the more we socially enforce a cone of silence which actually allows the person with schizophrenia to expand their 'acoustic self dome'. They figure that our silence is an acceptance of their expanded natural terrestrialization—which is exactly what it is.

There are people whose TV sets have added a new dimension. They are the people whose radios pick up broadcast frequencies unheard by the normal ear. There are people whose body parts have separated and caused considerable discomfort. They step onto the tram you catch and transform the aisles into a stage. They open their eyes and bank accounts to see booths into recording studios. They stand on a street corner and turn the whole city into an纲一ity of sound. This is not simply a question of vague shapes of silence in their surrounding noise. And all of them can talk to the animals.

Dr. Philip Brophy (PG), director Betty Thomas, cast: Eddie Murphy, Osie Davis, Oliver Pratt, writers: Pat Maudlin, Larry Lebova, Neal Jiminez, Lowell Gum & Babuwalas, music: Richard Gibbs, Australian distributor Fox.
Telediction

Mainlining: Jeff Gibson under the Spellling spell

A blatant come-on and a potent catchphrase, Channel Ten's turn on promotion cuts straight to the Faustian heart of media hedonism. If you watch TV habitually you'll be singing it to yourself by now. Go on: Turnin' more 'n man.

Teennnn: Feels good doesn't it? And think of what's embedded in these words... Marshall McLuhan, Hugh Hefner, Timothy Leary, and, just to irritate it all, Austin Powers, come to mind. In other words, sex, drugs, and global TV. Why wouldn't it feel good? Fast funky edits, scuzzy fonts and that infectious phrase, promise instant delivery through visual transcendence: And they do deliver. Most of the shows that matter are...Seinfeld, The Simpsons, X-Files, NYPD Blue, Law & Order, and of course 90210 and Melrose.

Ten rules, and even though some of these shows have had their day, there's no denying the enormous influence they've had on shaping the character and attitudes of this decade—which is not to say that TV fiends would greedily lap up whatever placebo's on offer. Supply meets a very sophisticated level of demand these days, and what seems to have hit the spot in the 90s is a blend of contradictory 'realness', manifest as a casual outing of fact amidst fiction—indicating not only a palliative for corruptible futures, and they looked so unmissable. As for mirrors, you can't go past Aaron Spelling's Beverly Hills, 90210 and Melrose Place. There have been numerous other Spelling series cast from the same mould, but none so durable. Remember Savannah, Pacific Palisades, Malibu Shores, Models Inc, The Heights? Probably not. Indeed, between the two of them, 90210 and Melrose have got the whole normative youth catalogue sewn up.

Teem drama turned soapy, 90210 has now been running for an amazing eight years—three in high school, four in college and now the first year out—ratcheting up around 240 episodes. In essence, a neo-Manichaean duality that's developed since. Though always impeccably dressed, the old gang are up to. Johnny, a drug fiend photographer who strolls on the sunny side of the street. Donna gets it on with Noah, David gets it on with Val, but Val also gets it on with Johnny, a drug fiend photographer who is HIV positive. As the mix of praise and parody on the web would seem to suggest, the good love these shows, and the bad love to hate them. Either way, we addicts are powerless to resist such delectable candy.

Jeff Gibson is an artist who lectures at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

The Australian Film Commission and Triple J present
an online initiative <Stuff-Art> designed to generate engaging internet art

In late 1997 the AFC commissioned 10 artists to develop interactive and compact works for the web. The challenge was to make an entertaining interactive work that was less than 1,485K in size and download quickly.

The results can be found at www.stuff-art.com.au

But <Stuff-Art> does not end there.

Applications are now open for <Stuff-Art> '99. The Australian Film Commission and Triple J will fund eight new works, with a grant of up to $5000 to each successful applicant.

The aims of the initiative are:

• to produce challenging and original Australian interactive online art, which is immediately engaging and is driven by concept rather than purely by technology.

• to provide an exhibition outlet and showcase for "compact" Australian interactive online art.

• to showcase the creative abilities of Australian digital artists to national and international audiences and others who may further the careers of the exhibiting artists.


dLux media arts

Lodger Studiosntroductory retrospective of Peter Callas's influential work...

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 British Cultures funded by White Rabbit Projects and the Australia Council for the Arts, with support from the Australian Government through the Australian Cultural Diplomacy Program. For information please contact dLux media arts

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disappearing down a manhole while slothling on the sunny side of the street. When viewed distractedly, and both shows are so tired now it's hard to view them any other way, conscious propriety and subterranean forces coalesce. As such, there is no better portrait of centrist subjectivity in the 90s—90210 is the public face of PC liberalism while Melrose represents everything repressed in the name of moral rectitude. It's like those cartoon saints and devils tormenting Fred Flintstone in his hour of reckoning. Just picture the good one as Brandon Walsh, and the bad one as Michael Mancini.

With some 95 movies and TV series under his belt (eg Dynasty, The Looe Boat, Charlie's Angels, Starsky and Hutch) Aaron Spelling is Mr Television. Predictably, the net is brimming with sites devoted to Spelling productions, and of course there are plenty of satirical digs. There is one dedicated solely to slaggling off Tori, and another recording an entirely unremarkable pizza delivery to the Spelling residence. (The security dude took the pizza at the front gate. That's it. Go digg.) And if you want to know the synopses for the next 10 episodes or so, just check the official site. It's best to leave behind Kelly head for the altar but bail at the last minute, Donna gets it on with Noah, David gets it on with Val, but Val also gets it on with Johnny, a drug fiend photographer who is HIV positive. As the mix of praise and parody on the web would seem to suggest, the good love these shows, and the bad love to hate them. Either way, we addicts are powerless to resist such delectable candy.

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Disconnecting the larynx

Mike Leggett on Being Connected at the AFC's multimedia conference

The fourth of the Australian Film Commission’s (AFC) annual multimedia conferences, mounted in chilly Melbourne, was the cleverly phrased Being Connected—the Studio in the Networked Age, a label that managed to be interpreted through most of the 35 presentations in the assembled, hypothetical or simply descriptive senses.

The focus at the previous AFC conference, Multimedia Languages of Interactivity, had been on teamwork models from quite distinct production environments. The suggestion at Being Connected—the Studio in the Networked Age, that producers were hyperlinking the production process was less convincingly projected. With so many more completed products and projects than earlier events to use for show and tell (multifarious websites being invaluable for this purpose), the tendency was to survey outcomes with little opportunity for formal interaction with the presenters, a shortcoming noted at previous events (seeking to amplify the interactive element within multimedia).

The notion of the integrated interactive production team, rather than not so strange to commercial producers, was less evidenced that producers were hyperlinking the ‘virtual’ facility houses servicing Hollywood from London (such as www.sosi.cfc.co.uk). Able to access extraordinary resources, it came as no surprise that whilst those companies were able to work in a wide-band virtual studio, the outcome seemed simply to improve their bottom line, whilst not so strange to Southern producers, was the community of interest are brought together by being connected with nature and into the biological virtual-cosm. (www.techon.net/index2.html)

The AFC-funded whoseland.com, could enable a good voice, and will connect Indigenous people globally around land issues into a documentary form that, under the management of Jo Lane, will ‘live’ for the next two years. Writer and filmmaker Richard Frankland, a man from the Kilkurt Kilgar clan of the Goundditch—Mara nation in western Victoria, spoke eloquently about this opportunity for interaction to occur between all those who, see the Land as the focus of our survival rather than our extinction, culturally “in many forms, not one generic form—generalisation is not an option.” (www.whoisland.com)

Hypermedia futures were intriguingly projected by the mercurial Andrew Pam, Technology Vice-President of Xanadu (Australia), the research group assembled by Ted Nelson, one of the definers of multimedia. As the world wide web begins to stretch at the seams under the incursion of non-standard mark-up and background browsers, Project Xanadu—as the ideological conscience of the World Wide Web Consortium—works to encourage standards whilst developing further enhancements and extensions of the multimedia: OSMIC, a versioning tool that will identify original sources; scalability standards to prevent fragmentations across different browsers; replacement of the URL (Identifier) such that a page can be located regardless of which server it sits on; and transpilcating, transcryptopifying and micropayments as a means of making media more freely available for minimal cost to the end user. (www.xanadu.com.au)

Hypertext achievements featured strongly. Katherine Phelpes gave us a thorough “History of Digitally Based Storytelling”, 1960s to the present. Kathy Jeremejko’s cloned trees for the San Francisco Bay Area, combines, in a meta-project metaphor, symbol and material presence, using a website that will record the life of each real tree, and a CD-ROM that will algorithmically reproduce a tree together within a host computer. Here the geographical community is between them, and they choose to live and work. Peter Webb’s demo reel of visual effects for Romes—bull-et hyped scenarios with so much digital manipulation and mentioned, almost in passing, the innovative ‘video fast’ ISDM network set-up linking Melbourne and the studio execs in LA.

John and Mark Lyctce (The Lyctce Bros) described how they had collaborated using the hardware and software attachment back and forth between Melbourne and Vienna over a matter of hours to devise a prize-winning T-shirt design. Providing JPEG image attachments to Tactelles clients in distant cities is now well practised—whiteboard websites to enable the clients to monitor a project’s progress via the web is standard.

“Technology changes at the speed of habits”, Clement Mok reassured us, as internet telesales boom in the USA. The corporate design guru and information architect suggested that we don’t need metaphors but relationships. “The net should improve the relationship between families,” he said via the teleconference link from his Studio Archetype in the USA. (www.clementmok.com)

For the 3% of world-wide families who are able to link there is also Victoria Venza’s recent investigations into how to build “a virtual community of people with no time”, OPS:MEME (Online Public Spaces: Multiple exploratory Experiences In Multiuser Environments) follows the celebrated Bodies Inc project and likewise delivers deeply into the anticipatory forums such as Being Connected, but, given the kind of patents that may result from these discussions, the spectre of the virtual mercurial. (www.arts.ucsb.edu/~cesna)

One Tree, expert Australian Natalie Jeremejko’s cloned trees for the San Francisco Bay Area, combines, in a meta-project metaphor, symbol and material... waiting for a stranger” is also the verbal metaphor for Perth writer Josephine Wilson’s “stumble from printed page to screen”, which in collaboration with Brisbane artist and writer Patrick Corrall, was the writing project hosted by AMAT. “water always writes in plural,” (www.peg.apc.org/~noodleboy)

Flightpaths: Writing Journeys, a meta-project involving CD-ROM, installation and radio, was described by Berni m. Janssen. Utilising the talents of many other writers who contributed via email from across the country to the process, a CD-ROM was produced.

Flightpaths was one of an impressive group of 13 recently completed CD-ROM projects which were exhibited in the conference foyer. Artists who spoke about their work included Michael Buckley. His The Good Cook integrated words and images as a poetic whole (the production was completed in Dublin town hall), addressing the contemporary urban condition through the (hypermediated) loops and repetitions of the hopelessly insomniaic cook. The city and its culture was explored by Sally Pryor in her multi-faceted CD-ROM Postcard from Tunis. Part travel diary and part language coach, Postcard ... won the prestigious Gold Medal at the 97 NewMedia InVision Awards, and secured a French distributor. (www.ozemail.com.au/~spyr0)

Troy Innocent’s continuing adventures with artificial life systems delivers Iconica, which combines the multimedia capacity of the CD-ROM with the dynamic interconnectivity of the web, whereby the capacity of the software to evolve its Icons, Forms, Entities, Spaces and Language is extended through interaction with other evolving copies of the system loaded onto other computers also connected to the internet. (www.peg.apc.org/~noodleboy)

Such a metaphor (for the conference as a whole perhaps) produced a rare moment of humour as it became more difficult for the demonstrator to locate one of the “beings” resident within Iconica: “No it’s not there...or there...ah there’s one, no it’s gone...” Observing artificial life, it seems, is to be as elusive and misleading as observing one’s neighbours through the curtains. Quite distinct from the observations made by the keynote speaker Denis Scanlon, whose issue of the theme, ‘in the networked world, the more technology is able to “remember it for you wholesale”, approaching the real tradition of knowing what you can recall. At this stage of the game, “are we ready for the evolutionary loss of the larynx”?

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**Multimedia Funding**

The AFC supports the development of multimedia through a range of programs and activities including funding the development and production of multimedia works. The objective is to encourage Australian initiatives which explore the creative potential of multimedia, both on the internet and in other digital media.

The funding program is currently seeking applications from the entertainment arts sector and other interested members of the multimedia industry, including artists, writers, performers, producers and other exploratory and innovative. The fund is open all year round and is available for the development and production of multimedia titles.

For guidelines, application forms and further information contact Kate Hickley/Lisa Logan or visit the AFC website at http://www.afc.gov.au

AFC Sydney Office
Tel: 02 9021 6444 or 1800 206615
Email: mminfo@afc.gov.au

AFC Melbourne Office
Tel: 03 9779 3400 or 1800 338430

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**The 1998 Australian & New Zealand History Festival**

Queensland Cultural Centre, Brisbane
27-30 November 1998

**National Cinemas Sites of Resistance**

Keynote Speaker: Geoffrey Nowell-Smith [editor of the Oxford History of World Cinema]. Panels and papers on national cinemas in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe and Asia.

**Registration Details**

Full registration $220 or $180 (before 30th September), $80 students

Day registration $80, $40 students

Phone: (07) 3840 7536 Fax: (07) 3840 7840 Email: b.hodsdon@slq.qld.gov.au

Website: http://www.slj.qld.gov.au/history.htm

Australian Film Commission Conference, Being Connected: the Studio in the Networked Age, RMIT, Melbourne, July 9 - 11. Conference papers and audio CDs, speakers’ URLs will be available for a limited time at: http://being.connected.afc.gov.au

Mike Leggett acknowledges financial assistance from the NSW Film and Television Office to attend the conference. legart@ozemail.com.au
A question of questions

Stephen Jones offers a biased account of the Towards a Science of Consciousness III Conference, University of Arizona

What is subjectivity? That’s the issue. How does a physical, biological system like a human being come to have that which we call subjective experience; the experience of the world which is ultimately available only to oneself and expressible only through the most devious of means? Moreover, what is the self that is conscious of this experience?

These were questions explored by the 800 or so people from many disciplines in philosophy, the social, biological and physical sciences, as well as cybernetic specialists and even artificial intelligence, who came together for the Towards a Science of Consciousness III Conference. The range of contributions and possible answers run from complete denial of subjective experience through to the utterly mystical. Important new information about our neuro-biological processes and several new approaches to a quantum physical “mind field” explanation were presented but, ultimately, this edition of the biennial conference brought us no nearer to an explanation of conscious experience.

Great advances have been made in the biology of consciousness, or at least the description of the cognitive aspects of dreams are what happens when, with the USA have mapped a highly suggestive residuum within our emotional brain through the agency of those relations. This great synthesis has become input to the normal visual processing neural-assemblies in the inter-relational architecture of the cortex and the sensory relay station called the thalamus. This is a biological knowledge does not resolve the issue of how it is that we have subjectivity. What is that intangible experience of the information flow through one’s brain that I, a ‘self’, experience? Is the biological process all that is going on, or is there some other thing occurring? This problem seems to arise from the fact that what I experience as first person process is so utterly different from the third person, physical description of the world. For example, what we report to each other about the ineffability of a glorious sunset simply hasn’t got the depth and intensity of the direct experience of that sunset. The greens of the leaves may well match a Pantone colour chart but how can I tell you of its intensity when walking through a forest? (The nearest we seem to get is some special colour. This was the major philosophical problem discussed at the conference. What is this explanatory gap? And most importantly, if it is, how do we bridge it? This has become what David Chalmers (Australia/USA) describes as the “hard problem” for a science of consciousness. It is what produces some of the most outrageous proposals and makes the whole area so interesting. How do we get from one’s first person experience of something to the third person description of an experience? What gives the experience of a colour or a smell its intrinsic feel, its depth and intensity, its “quality”? Given the intuitive explanation of what is happening in my experience of a colour, why do I experience it at all?

Evidently, quantum physicists are having the most fun with these questions. As somebody noted during the conference, for every quantum physicist there is a different interpretation of the quantum physical world. Stuart Hameroff (USA) still holds to the idea that quantum collapse (the manifestation of a consciousness of something) occurs in the skeletal structure of the neural cell, and is still challenged to explain how this could occur in a system operating at biological temperature. Fred Wolf asserts that there is a field of “mind” throughout the universe, that everything actually occurs within that field and that we simply tap into it for our dose of consciousness. This is the most theologically inclined suggestion and is presumably the best hope for the mystical and transpersonal psychology types who speak of the “spirit” being primary. But it still remains to ask how it is that this biological “I” might have access to my personal part of this field?

Towards a Science of Consciousness III Conference, University of Arizona, Tucson, April 27 - May 2

Stephen Jones is a recipient of an Australia Council Fellowship for his work The Brain Media Arts Fund. His website, titled The Brain Project, is at:


The installation version of The Brain Project was exhibited at Art + Design, Sydney, July 2 - 25. Stephen was recently commissioned by dLux media arts to create Synthetics: video synthesis of emerging technology with visual arts and challenges the audience to see, seek and speak via on-line technology, interactive multimedia, video, screen based animation.

MAAP98 incorporates emerging technology with visual arts and challenges the audience to see, seek and speak via on-line technology, interactive multimedia, video, screen based animation.

See the first National Digital Art Awards, seek out courses on web programs, and speak at forums on new technologies and indigenous culture.

MAAP98 is being held in Brisbane but you can SEE, SEEK and SPEAK more through MAAP’s website http://www.maap.org.au

At last an arts festival you don’t have to travel to see!
Reviews

A filmmaker’s guide to the digital

Annmarie Chandler reviews a new book on film and postproduction

The film industry came into the arena of digitisation relatively late. For approximately 70 years, from the 1920s and up until the early 90s, filmmaking and its associated post-production processes proceeded with little creation of the most secure and stable ‘assembly line’ in the media arts sector.

The computational film editing and the digitisation of cinema imaging which started taking hold of the industry in the early 90s, however, destabilised this former linear model and introduced a number of alternate pathways for filmmakers. For many people, as production technology displaced shock to traditional work practices leading to an environment of confusion and uncertainty. At last a comprehensive guide on the subject has arrived, published in the highly reputed Focal collection on media techniques and authored by an Australian, Dominic Case, who is Technology and Services Manager for the Aftab Australia group.

Film Technology in Post Production describes the function of the film laboratory and film’s interface with other postproduction technologies. The text is divided into nine chapters covering the properties and gauges of various film and screen stocks, the alternatives in postproduction pathways and what happens in film processing, printing, editing and telecine operations. It also explains negative cutting and the management of ELDs (Electronic Decision Lists), laboratory and digital effects, soundtrack compilation and the quality stages leading to release prints including grading and answer prints. Each chapter is illustrated with diagrams, flowcharts and budget spreadsheets.

There’s been a lot of hype about new digital techniques and visual effects in filmmaking. This book is an essential reference for directors who wish to understand the quality control they have over aesthetic decisions and visual styles involved in the laboratory. For those who read the concept of ‘contrast’ (which remains the most distinguishing visual feature of the film medium) is explained clearly, with details on how various stocks and camera exposures can be manipulated in the photochemical reality, to be ‘pushed’, ‘flashed’, ‘bleached’ to manipulate image resolution. The comprehensive coverage of both digital and photochemical processes will provide filmmakers and others needing to update their knowledge of the craft with a solid understanding of the postproduction pathways, and therefore assist the quality of creative decisions in planning and negotiating projects. The book ends with a section on information to practitioners in a film industry which is undergoing rapid technological change.


Annmarie Chandler is a senior lecturer at UTS Media Arts and Production. She is also researching new work practices emerging within the film industry through digitisation.

Waiting for the fourth dimension

Dean Kiley queries A CONCEIT at the RMIT Project Space

It was the kid who showed us how it works.

The project—‘exhibition’ is too inertly flat—was launched by Kevin Murray. He gives a long, slow and apposite speech, Murrayman marching nearly out in squadrilla of analytical metaphors that line up and do smart manoeuvres on the conceptual, discursive and cultural fields territorialised by A CONCEIT. He talks (off, through and around the exhibition program) about mapping, about ideas of, and, as space. Inevitably he relates to old Borges’s story of the one-to-one map, the positivist fantasy of the model meeting its referent in an exact fit.

Meanwhile there’s this kid (oh I don’t know...about nine, Enid Blyton-blond, blue-sly-eyed, jerky and restless) standing at the kiosk computer in the centre of the (attentive) audience. Unlike the previous well-behaved gallery goers who’d clicked halfheartedly (next page please) or left the mouse primly alone, the kid discovers a geometric game hidden in the overlapping spheres onscreen, drag’n’dropping this on that and on that till an exact fit begins another scenario.

Murray continues to elaborate what we’ve already worked out: that the invocation of the literary version of ‘conceit’ as per A CONCEIT’s project name (Donne et al)—as a deceptive, ingenuous and elaborated fusion of disparate and surprising elements—model the way the project moves from map to model to choreography to synaesthesia. And back again, providing either a send-up or escape-clause for the empty slogomenic and abstract-arty pronouncements.

Meanwhile the kid examines the documents, captions and other orientation figures taped to the gallery floor. He does a bad-bunker mime of arm-pumping Ready? Set! Go! and skitters from one floor-marking to the next, inscribing as Timezones vector the designs Murray is describing as Arthur Murray dance-steps.

Murray gestures at some of the stockpile of mapping devices we’ve already collected on our way through the exhibits: keys, symbols, lists, dot-points, typologies, numberings, pointers, drawings, equations, stylised representations, icons, ant tracks, axes, directional arrows, blueprints, movement vectors, flowchart lines, procedural manuals, tables, calibration marks, schematic charts, constructible (think Chemistry-class-to-scale model) movement assemblages, captioned instrument arrays, bricolage whiteboards.

This is one project where the thematic metaphor providing a coherent model and coherent programme is, precisely that of models and microcosms, so the collaboration is more than five artists working with roughly commensurate rubrics. In a nice extrapolation of the working principle, it’s difficult to know who—from John Lytette, Greg O’Connor, Darren Tofts, Christopher Waller and Peter Webb—had done what or worked with which bits...until or unless you sifted through the archive afterwards. The launch resonates with an anxiety of provenance and of navigation: should one watch multimedia as side-show; does that do anything, ought we be touching that; am I stepping on an exhibit?

Meanwhile the kid fiddles with anything that moves and immerses himself in whatever doesn’t, bouncing from one item to another in a Chinese-checkers or string-art geometry until he’s seen the sites, covered the territory and can safely be bored.

A CONCEIT worked on mapping the exhibition time-space in three dimensions. There’s the planet (print program), with its ironising of the comprehensive modular diagram of co-ordinated indexes of EDLs or commentary or interpretive key. There’s the site (gallery installation), with its playful proliferation of topographic ideas, objects, studies, readings, sonics, nodes, connections and breakdowns using computer screen, video, slides, models, mounted displays, documentation and all available surfaces.

And then there’s the virtual (onscreen), framed by kiosk or pulled-out down the modern line, with its (false) promise of precisely-articulated 3D working model and its slight fantasy offering uncontextualised tourist circumnavigations of static excerpts. It was effective work, despite a troublesome baroque of vague abstractions (‘songlines?’ It’s possible that this is a place for the intellectually amplified?) that may add to the work’s issue. Perhaps instead of a frustrating hesitancy (refusal?) to use the usual couplet places (program, website) to disseminate diverse modelling practices that are not reducible to each other except via the abstraction, simplification and re-presentational work (‘?) that may be the archetypal gallery experience.

They simulated all three dimensions at once. Given this, I’d have thought further reflexivity was a natural extension: a working back to gallery praxis (eg what’s a curator? and do they decide on the map’s borders?) and to exhibition constituencies (how are we the users/readers/audience placed and routed and corralled?) via the project.

The 4th dimension, that of interactive working through, was generously modelled by the blond mischievous boy: less official in the brandish-miscuevous less: official map-than quick sketch, less hermeneutic (songlines?) than heuristic. Better, he demonstrated how to play the work(s).

A CONCEIT, a collaborative mapping in 3 spaces, curator Christopher Waller, artists and authors: John Lytette, Greg O’Connor, Darren Tofts, Christopher Waller, Peter Webb, RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, June 2. www.diagram.com.au/conceit

The WIFT report

Charlotte Faunce reports on recent developments at WIFT

In a coup for WIFT (Women in Film & Television), Erika Addis, one of Australia’s most experienced and diplomatically skilled cinematographers is its new president.

Two of her recent projects received acclaim at the 1998 Sydney Film Festival—Relative Situations directed by Gillian Leahy and Out Park, directed by Gillian Leahy. Other credits include the Ride of Passage (directed by Mark Jendrisak), the ABC series (Women in Film Australia) and Man’s Main Sait (a finalist in this year’s Dendy Awards, directed by Sally Ingiliss)

Following the second National WIFT Conference entitled Tools of the Trade—Skilling Up for the Future, held in Sydney last October, WIFT continues its skilling initiatives. Its NSW Mentor Scheme Editing Initiative was launched on July 2 at Island Films in Glebe. Working in consultation with the Australian Screen Editors Guild and with the support of the NSW Film and Television Office, this scheme offers professional mentorship to women in television and film. Other WIFT initiatives. Mentoring has proven to be one of the most effective and rewarding ways for experienced practitioners to benefit from the guidance and support of accomplished professionals in their particular field. While the scheme is currently focusing on editing, it’s not exclusive to this area with previous mentoring extending across all as a Taste For Film. WIFT continues to provide an invaluable way for women to create and maintain contacts at every level across the film and television industry. President Erika Addis looks forward to keeping WIFT on the map in discussions on screen industry culture, pursuing the WIFT scheme, the Sydney Spring Film Event Pitching Event. Recurrent events like the Women on WWIN Film Festival (September 25 – 27) followed by a national and British Australian screen culture with work on film or video tape under 30 minutes in a non-commercial atmosphere. For the competitive there is the short film section offering a Best Film prize of over $15,000 in-kind support from industry sponsors and there’s an audience prize for Most Popular Film. Previous winners have included Penny Fowler-Smith’s At Sea and Sandy Leppere’s 9.

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For further information about WIFT’s national WIFT NSW, Sydney Film Centre, PO Box 522 Paddington 2021 or 9332 2400, fax 9330 4311.
Bent virtual

Shane Rowlands sees Ultraviolet at Griffith Artworks

Arts Queensland, Brisbane City will align it with the Queensland Art Gallery’s Asia Pacific Triennial in 1999. It explores the world of cottage, beats and sin. Also included in the program: SIGGRAPH 98’s international compilation of new New Media festival in Brisbane. An Anglo-Greek friend says to me after the preview screening of Head On, I know what that’s like, to be stuck in the middle. Yes, but what is this ‘middle’, I ask. Ari (Alex Dimitrakis), the film’s 19-year old, alienated, drugged-out, unemployed protagonist, at odds with his father, with politics, with community, knows no middle, because there is no certain other against which to locate a middle. This is where the film’s power lies, in the subjective uneasiness of Ari’s position in the world, in the camera’s framing (our sight blurs and glares with his), in the soundtrack shifts (always the world Ari hears, in the street, at home, at the club, on his Walkman). The otherness of his life is the mapped onto the frame (Johnny) is other, but he’s also part of the dominant culture through women’s oppression, challenged slyly by the soundtrack of detached observations in the duet-oneurs of X-rays of flesh and fleesy rose pink. In Cyberflesh Girlmonster (1996), the interactive CD-ROM by Linda Demont, the body parts of various women are re-membered and re-articulated as monsters (also also explored in a diocese-close-up of an arm in Julie Rap’s Sniff Movie). One way to read the navigation of the gilmorists and the various texts across the screen is a virtual beat offering anonymous (lesbian, trans-sexual, cyborg) sexual encounters. Given that the (often violent) sexualised experiences may be the ‘real’ bodily memories of the flesh donated by others, it’s significant that opportunities for safe, anonymous public sex for women are usually virtual.

WA will be showing at Sunshine Coast University Art Collection. Shane Rowlands sees Ultraviolet at Griffith Artworks, curated by Eduina Bartleme, Griffith University Art Collection, administered by Griffith Artworks, Queensland College of Art, July 5 1998.

A new New Media festival in Brisbane

A spectacular collaboration of acronyms-QAG, QUT, QUTM, QXDN, dLux and IMA—with assistance from Brisbane Festival, Griffith University, Metro State University, City Council and Macromedia, has given birth to MAAP 98, a brand new festival focussing on Art and Technology in the Asia Pacific region to be held in Brisbane in September.

Incorporating public events, forums and exhibitions using online technology, digital animation, video and national television and involving a range of innovative artists in new technologies and screen-based media, MAAP’s regional emphasis will align it with the Queensland Art Gallery’s Asia Pacific Triennial in 1999. It also offers an opportunity to see and compare some of the best recent work in this technology.

The screening program (SEEK) includes: Technophilia curated by Beth Jackson for Griffith Artworks and Queensland State Library including work by Linda Dement, Ian Haig, Ross Harley, Peter Callas, Patricia Piccinini, Stelarc, Csaba Szamosy, John Tonkin, Robyn Webster; a selection of 11 artist from Asia and Australia online for television. The Substation in Singapore. The institutionalised and internalised anxious body parts in interiors and bandaged body parts in effect evades the body's self-awareness.

Digital acronym rior

A new New Media festival in Brisbane

Another piece in the puzzle that is Sea Change—Shoreline—Particles and Waves curated by Beth Jackson and showcasing 12 artists from Asia and Australia online and at the Queensland Art Gallery, Game Play, an exhibition from Melbourne’s Experimenta Media Arts; and Virgin on Hard Drive an interactive multimedia installation by Brisbane artist Lucy Francis and others at Metro Arts.

The TECHNIK exhibition from Digital Arts WA will be showing at Sunshine Coast University College and also at the interactive party at The Hub Internet Cafe that winds up the festival. An exhibit from WA features over 30 artists presented in large screen projections and 12 computers. In Alice Springs Paul Brown web hosts an exhibition of his recent work from The Substation in Singapore. The National Digital Art Awards will be presented at the IMA and works shown until October 3 and there’ll be a special MAAP98 edition of Fine Art Forum online site at http://www.cdes.qut.edu.au/~fineart/online/

The SPEAK program includes Australia and Asia Pacific Think Tank—a forum to discuss current issues and develop future strategies for digital art networks in the region and New Technologies and Screen-based Media, MAAP’s regional emphasis will align it with the Queensland Art Gallery’s Asia Pacific Triennial in 1999. It also offers an opportunity to see and compare some of the best recent work in this technology.

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OnScreeon-August-September

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Head On

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How many performance artists does it take to change a light bulb?

Dunno, I only stayed for four hours

Virginia Baxter does the rounds of her MCA exhibition with Marina Abramovic

Marina Abramovic is collecting jokes but I can't think of one. She whisks a small group of arts writers through her exhibition Objects, Performance, Video, Sound at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. It will have to be a quick preview, she says, because she needs time to get nervous before her performance at 6:30pm. It will be useless. In the flesh, she appears somehow lighter than I imagined, easier. Can this be the woman who sat for 16 hours tied by the hair to her partner and collaborator, Ulay, before letting the audience in? She's dressed in black but I spy under the flaps, her wearing fishnets.

We enter the rooms of what she calls her transitory objects—sets of smooth stones lining the walls, inviting the audience to place parts of themselves (head, heart, sex) against them, to eye the walls. Others require them to lie with eyes closed or sit looking at walls. This is the way her art is heading, she says, the gap between audience and artist shrinking—what they make of the work becomes part of it. She is a bridge for opposites. Inner Sky, 1990 requires the participant to stand under a hollow rock and look up. In Wounded Guru, a high metal chair leaves feet dangling child-like as you look along a monumental “wounded” amphitheatre gride in the centre of the table.

The essential visceral element of performance art makes its appearance on the wall of the central exhibition space where in Spirit Cooking Abramovic has spent the afternoon scrawling in pig's blood instructions for the performance of some actual rituals for intrepid lovers—“Spin around until you lose consciousness. Try to eat all the questions of the day.” In God Punishing, 1991 on the opposite wall a line of whips made from the hair of Korean virgins suggest more tantalising possibilities till you read the sign, “Due to constant use, these whips have become too fragile for public use.” Elsewhere, we enter a smaller room in which two quartz cliffs awe the feet of another collaborator. Again, the invitation to stand in the shoes and “make a departure” is temporarily withdrawn due to possible damage. On the way out, someone recalls the 1981 Australian performance Gold found by a diamond ring. She enters the shop. How much for the ring? she asks. The ring is not for sale, says the salesman. How much for the hand? No. The curtain then? Sorry, he says. If you don’t mind me asking, says the woman, what do you sell here? We de-sex totems, says the salesman. Tomcats. What’s with the curtain, the hand, and the ring, she asks. Well, he says, what would you put in the window?

Abramovic's solution is to look at work from the past in the spirit of the present. So, with the photographs, a split second stands for hours. One is taken prior to a performance, one during, another after. There are 12 photographs of 11 performances including one from her famous Rhythm O performance in 1976 in which she lay naked in a Naples gallery surrounded by a set of 72 objects—among them, a sheet of paper, a pocket knife, a Polaroid camera, an axe, a lipstick and a loaded gun—and invited the audience to use her as desired. “I am the object. During this time I take full responsibility.” She was rescued after 6 hours after being cut and when someone held the gun to her temple. The photographer made me shiver.

This exhibition suggests that Marina Abramovic may be embracing a new age. Not I think, as has been suggested, the New Age (though I noticed an advertisement for the exhibition found its way into the catalogue of the Mind Body Spirit Festival). At 52 she appears to be moving away from works of such frightening endurance as real-fake tears. In the next room, on a vertical bank of video monitors the artist rolls up her sleeves and vigorously scores a skeleton.

Abramovic's lecture-performance, Performing Body (MCA, April 8), is packed which is encouraging given that the MCA has not yet put on now shown much interest in performance. A new audience of the fashionably curious mix it with the performance artifact. Mike Parr blows a kiss to Marina while someone in earshot whispers “Who is this woman?” I’ve been carrying around this article from RealTime [Edward Schear, “Shock after aftershock”, RT24] all day but haven’t had time to read it.” Mirroring a section of her new audience, onstage in white light Marina Abramovic is transformed in crimson Miyaki shirt, stretch pants and high heels. “She looks like a rock star,” says a young woman near me. Marina announces that she will be driving the show like a video jockey and that for tonight’s performance she will be dissecting the body into head, torso, arms and legs. She carries a scribbled map of instructions—to fix the format, she says, would be deadly.

Her nicely loose talk is illustrated with an exhilaratingly inclusive array of work—alongside Burden are Butusel and Bausch. As well as her own work, there are young artists, famous artists, non-artists. A fascinating inclusion is a taped section (since edited out of the official version) from a televised broadcast of Pope John Paul II’s audience in America in the early 80s. In it, the Pope faced with an audience of cheering, whistling adolescents, waits for them to settle. After a long time in which he simply smiles, he says “Woo-woo” and waits. And again, “Woo!” he says, “Woo!” and looks at the audience, seeking their attention to the moment when he announces languidly, “Charismatic moment” and smiles. Deliberately, he is brought to his senses by some of the cardinals nearby. John Paul confides to the audience, “We’re ruining the broadcast before proceeding with his prepared speech. Again, true to the form, many of Marina Abramovic’s performances over the years have involved pain (she etches a cross into her belly with a razor blade), endurance (over days, and Ulay share a room with a bald man under the light bulb), and didn’t realise till I left the stage that my feet were on fire. Marina Abramovic sees as one of the functions of performance to remind us of the capacity of the body to exceed its limits, and to unearth fear. For her, art should be nothing less than a matter of life and death. Critic John McDonald is unconvinced. A few beats away, he’s jotting “...is a matter of judgement and taste.” (‘She’s suffered for her art, now it’s your turn’), Sydney Morning Herald, April 25 1998).

Death may hold no fears for Marina but the end of her relationship with Ulay after 12 years together was clearly traumatic as you’d expect from a couple who created performances with instructions like: “We kneel face to face. Our faces are lit by two strong lamps. Alternately, we slap each other’s face until one of us stops.” In a romantic gesture befitting such an enduring relationship, their final performance involved a trek along the Great Wall of China from opposite directions. They met in the middle, only to part. One of the last sequences she shows is of a performance (Biography, 1995) which she conceived after the split. Here her performance borders on the theatrical though, as usual, she plays herself. Adopting a series of costumes including a freckled Bergman’s wave in the final scene of Casa Blanca, she announces dramatically, “Goodbye pain. Goodbye extension. (she Goodbye self-denial), and finally “Goodbye Ulay.” Lately, says Marina, she has had to learn to accept it all as part of a process for glamour. She finishes with the final frames of the scene from Sunset Boulevard where Gloria Swanson descends the staircase on her way to the asylum, a scene in which Billy Wilder manages to contain Swanson, Norma Desmond, himself and his fictional film crew all in the same mirror.

Marina Abramovic: Objects Performance, Video Sound was organised by the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford and has travelled to Edinburgh, Dublin, Munich, Ghent and Lyon. It showed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney April 8 – July 5.
Pitch black performance

Aleks Sierz talks to Tom Morris, artistic director of London's Battersea Arts Theatre about a season of work performed in the dark.

One of the classic distinctions between British and European theatre has always been that while Europeans have 'spectators' (those who watch), the Brits have 'audiences' (those who listen). To explore the theatre of the word in the flexible auditoriums of our heads, London's BAC (Battersea Arts Theatre in the Battersea Arts Centre) put on an innovative season of plays in total darkness.

Called Playing in the Dark, the 9-week season featured a wonderful variety of experiences, all played in complete pitch blackness.

Tom Morris, BAC's artistic director since May 1993, says: "We normally unify from the blind violinist in order to confirm the idea as far as we can..."

The season includes a boy's own adventure live on stage with music and words by Simon Hunt; a full-length dance production by Nodoyo Music and Dance Company's La Barden and Hadoya; and a re-invention of primitive theatre by a group called Tangerine's Theatre. The performances and music presented by The Performance Space and the Stephen Cummins Bequest.

To make the piece, we held hands with our neighbours. Winds blew our faces, hairly spiders fell on us, and strong perfume wafted across the theatre. After the show, we stumbled into the light, and found that our wishes had been written in black pencil on a black envelope. A king of clubs and the few drops of water left in a satchet were all the evidence that remained of 40 minutes which mixed giggles with childhood dread. It's amazing how much we trusted each other. As the sign said: 'It's all in the mind.' What does Morris think of Primitive Science? 'Well, normally this highly visual group creates a slightly sacred atmosphere in its shows. It's a bit of a cult. Artists sit in complete hidden silence almost immediately. By contrast, Theatre Dreams had an incredibly rowdy audience—because they were asked to interact with the performers there was constant bickering and shouting. It's the first time Primitive Science got such a vocal response.' Did anyone have a bad trip? 'Yes, Morris says. 'In one show, a pair of tourists whose English wasn't good didn't realise that the show was in the dark—and they had to leave soon after it started. Also, some people discovered that they were frightened of the pitch black. If a show is one hour 40 minutes without a break, you lose all sense of time. Many people said that they'd never been in the dark for so long—it does funny things to the imagination.'

Keep Breathing and Piets Ploogwijn's The Shadow Knows sound collage.

"The idea of playing work in the dark is one of the things that are likely to take off as a result of this season—it's cheap and easy and produces no unusual expense." And Morris sees one of the lessons of his innovative approach as confirming "people's imaginative involvement in theatre. When you're in the dark, it's completely unlike film or television—it's more intense, more like reading a book." Everyone will have their own favourite memory of Playing in the Dark. I enjoyed the camaraderie of Primitive Science's Theatre Dreams, in which a moving figure told us a ghost story (set in a theatre) and a female guardian angel led us to an envelope sealed under each seat. After opening it, we had to drink the contents of a satchet, hold a card, and scribble a wish on the envelope.

To make the wish, we held hands with our neighbours. Winds blew our faces, hairly spiders fell on us, and strong perfume wafted across the theatre. After the show, we stumbled into the light, and found that our wishes had been written in black pencil on a black envelope. A king of clubs and the few drops of water left in a satchet were all the evidence that remained of 40 minutes which mixed giggles with childhood dread. It's amazing how much we trusted each other. As the sign said: 'It's all in the mind.' What does Morris think of Primitive Science? 'Well, normally this highly visual group creates a slightly sacred atmosphere in its shows. It's a bit of a cult. Artists sit in complete hidden silence almost immediately. By contrast, Theatre Dreams had an incredibly rowdy audience—because they were asked to interact with the performers there was constant bickering and shouting. It's the first time Primitive Science got such a vocal response.' Did anyone have a bad trip? 'Yes, Morris says. 'In one show, a pair of tourists whose English wasn't good didn't realise that the show was in the dark—and they had to leave soon after it started. Also, some people discovered that they were frightened of the pitch black. If a show is one hour 40 minutes without a break, you lose all sense of time. Many people said that they'd never been in the dark for so long—it does funny things to the imagination.'

Playing in the Dark, BAC, London, May 12 - July 12
Jan Lauwers speaking

Keith Gallacher encountered Snakesong/Le Pouvoir at the 1998 Adelaide Festival and talked to its Belgian creator

If the audience experience of Le Pouvoir, the second part of Needcompany’s Snakesong Trilogy, is profoundly (and beautifully) unsettling, writer-director-designer Jan Lauwers and his ensemble are also feeling delirium—of severe jolt, of reviving a show not performed for some eighteen months and coming just when they are reassembling the trilogy as a single performance with a group of eleven musicians, not to mention continuing development of another work premiered at the major visual arts exhibition documenta X in Kassel, Germany in September 1997.

"But it’s okay," says Lauwers, whose intense gaze and spare delivery can be interrupted by bright-eyed laughter and brief flurries of enthusiasm. The man is like his work. The ground constantly shifts in Le Pouvoir. An opening blackout is epic. The fire complete image is a lie, a kind of theatrical. The next has the audience more brightly illuminated than the performers. What commenced as an elliptical performance work, intensely visual and aural, a nightmare—a primal peering into the dark at half shapes, a dim purgatory—the senses both denied and overflowed, is now a play. What a play. Language is filtered through succession of translations (as part of the drama) as the Queen and her adviser, the Professor, interrogate Leda and Zeus. There is no set to earth—design is generated by the actors’ mapping out of space, by the sparest of lighting, by the stark differentiation in costumes. Language is as uncertain as the Queen’s diminishing authority. The words ‘dead,’ ‘death,’ ‘die’ fly about as we grasp at them—how it is that Leda and Zeus are dead if they are before us, their deaths described so vividly… and sexually? It’s not surprising then that Lauwers has directed Needcompany in Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra, where dying is orgasm, that little death, and very real death; nor that Lauwers draws on George Bataille; he is intrigued by Joyce’s position he implicates us in so deeply in the performance’s blacked-out opening and fawr emerging images. A man and a woman appear to be engaging in a gross sexual act—but what exactly are they doing? Then there’s enough light to see that she’s vigorously mincing with what looks like a ventrilquio’s dummy which she tosses away as she exits. This sex is illusion. But then we are faced with a very real Zeus. But then again, he’s a god, a myth… and Leda ruthlessly interrogated by mortals greedy for the gross facts—was the coupling rape, mutual pleasure, was there death, what kind, what size is his organ, who came and when?

The second act of the play leaves mythical time and enters the domestic present, the Queen now a mother with an addiction, banished, isolated, and enfeebled, like the Queen, by the Professor-husband. However, the banality of this present is increasingly saturated with death. In the lines stemming from the first act—blood appearing literally as characters dip their fingers into a bowl of stage blood and express alarm at the sight of it, cuts, vaginal bleeding… in the second act stylish plinths are dressed with toaster, coffee-maker, flowers, objects of art and a dead white swan. Everyone is standing, but they speak as if they are sitting down. The mother dies still standing, but still speaks. No one refers to the on-stage swan. But one of the women tells of running over a swan in her van and then backing over. The tale is told through wild almost hysterical laughter with the audience drawn in, giggle and then raucous, implicated—in the night I saw Le Pouvoir. Lauwers is pleased with the response, and at the forum on design (March 6, recorded by SUV), thanked Adelaide Festival audiences for their good-humoured response for what he admits is one of his darkest works. He explains to a worried young audience member at the forum that Le Pouvoir was written at the time of the Bosnian war ("only ten hours away by road”), of political corruption and appalling crimes against children in Belgium. The Belgians didn’t like the work. In Munich it was met with silence, until he added at the end a knowing smile offered the audience by the Queen/mother. Snakesong has been a success, its capacity to unsettle relied by its international audience.

Lauwers says to me later that his new two-play work (premiered in part at Documenta) is a touch more positive, more hopeful, treating what we lose when someone is no longer with us. Based on Camus’ Caligula, it has been created for part one to be performed in an art gallery, part two in a theatre. He smiles: "We need cities that have both a very good gallery and a very good theatre." A key moment in Camus’ play is Caligula’s dance for which he demands the judgement of others. In the Lauwers version a dancer is added to perform for Caligula, judgement still being the issue, the dancing unfolding for 7 minutes in a very small space. This challenge is set for a leading dancer and composer in each city that Needcompany visits. "There will be no set, no lighting, no costumes, just a table and chairs and a square metre space for the dancer." "Do you select the gallery room?" "Yes." "Do you mind what paintings or other works are in it?" "No." "But it’s lovely." He laughs. "A bit." Like Alain Platel from Les Ballets C. de la B., Lauwers has the facility to disappear himself from apparent acts of choice and power while otherwise displaying enormous authority and vision. Working the Snakesong Trilogy into a single performance has proved no easy task. "I don’t want it to be a 6 hour play. No play should be 6 hours." So he must edit and he must refrain the whole. "Snakesong is about the Professor, played by Mil Seghers, even though I wrote Le Pouvoir about the Queen for the actor Viviane De Muynck. He sat in a wheelchair throughout the performance—" Even in the interrogation scene? "Yes—with one hand shaking uncontrollably, all the time." He says this with relish. Because the music in this complete version of the trilogy will live and on stage, the opening blackout of Le Pouvoir is out: "There is the music," he declares, as if to say that Rombout Willems powerful score is more than enough for Lauwers’ dark purpose.

"Why the Professor?" A Snakesong program entry begins: "We become "suspect[s] that the professor has more than a few traits in common with the artist Lauwers himself, Mil Seghers, who plays the Professor, is a great actor. Though he is not an actor. He came to work for me one day at the beginning of his business failed. He looks like a professor. I think that’s where it starts."
The getting of an audience

Roland Manderson interviews CIA's David Branson

David Branson is an extraordinarily prolific theatre makersperformer, director, producer, creating work in bars, cafes, television in collaboration with Stopepa, Canberra Youth Theatre, Tagtaguran Community Arts and many others. For 12 years a central figure in Splinters Theatre of Spectacle, David is joint artistic Director of CIA (Culturally Innovative Art) who have just finished working on 'Bum Sonata' and are embarking on Brecht's Threepenny Opera before a Festival of Pinter. I dragged Branson out of a rehearsal of Canberra Youth Theatre's Wild Things to ask about the theatre he is driven to make.

DB While we have a rich theatrical history, a lot of it is done. So rather than 'world theatre' here in Canberra we get World's Best Theatre Season—procreation with naturalism from the major state companies. Which is not to attack the quality or the content, but we need greater diversity. People aren't as interested in seeing experimental live performance. The arts-going population has diminished, as has general support for local performance. It's about priorities for people's value for money, exciting things to do, knowing what they'll get.

So we've been strategic in the getting of audience. Festivals are important, for example The Canberra Festival, which wasn't an arts festival but we've been pushing, and the Festival of the Contemporary Arts. And it's about trying to play the game, building on things you know, such as modern classics, but working in an exciting way theatrically. We did a Durst Fo Festival last year using an ensemble, in the rough style; a sort of 'world theatre' approach to known texts. It's also about partnerships, like with Tuggeragong Community Arts, building audiences and promoting work together. Also playing the game of labelling. Using The Street Studio as a place for new work, and encouraging other companies to develop the venue in that way.

RM Live music is very much a part of CIA. But it costs money.

DB Music is a pure form of art, it talks beyond words. For the same reason that you go to rock concerts, you are reacting to other bodies. If I want to do a show whose concerns are epic, if there are artists who want to be involved, and we can do it, we will go for the big thing. But then if the opportunity comes we see how we can fit into other programs,

work in with other producers, not overtaxing our artistic pool. Canberra people remember the first Neil Cameron (Carmen Bara), and Abaraham Night, and the Splinters opening of the National Theatre Festival—we don't have to be mainstream. Something to crow about now is that our work in small spaces, intellectually challenging and fairly experimental, is getting full houses. Something is going on. And we are alone because Elbow, and Odd and Stopepa are doing similarly well.

One of the things we do have is an opportunity as peers to talk about our work in critical ways, through Masa [a Canberra arts street paper] to a degree... and interestingly it is under attack. Which makes me wonder who is threatened by it.

RM And which raises the point about developing work.

DB I totally miserable if I'm not creating something new and original and relevant to our culture, whatever that is. But you have to be very canny and find ways of slipping it into your next festival or mainstage event.

RM Don't you ever get to develop one piece of work over time?

DB Working with Splinters we did it successfully. Fuck Jesus Coke in Adelaide became Theatrical Fiasco in Melbourne became Howling in the Halls of Night, Also Village of Captive Souls, when we worked with rural communities in NSW developing the show with workshops in each place. Actually I must like to be busy because I was coming back to Canberra each weekend to do Piper at the Gates of Hell with Youth Theatre. I like working on something experimental and a larger framed work at the same time.

But if your head is just buried down in theatre you... you've got to see the rest of the world reflected in the art. It's not just performance but the real life that is around us that people aren't necessarily exposed to. I have to challenge myself and my audience to be outward looking and inward working. I believe it is important to use your work in this case it is art, to change the world. It sounds incredibly diggy but it's true.

RM And how do you turn that into theatre?

DB I have gone for a lot of intense training—with Kellaway, Headlee. I use training as the base for ensemble. We get a director or have a special workshop on the weekend and then apply it immediately in our work. So I have these skills and really strong aesthetics, and what you say emerges out of the process. And there's gut feelings. I'm angry about Pauline Hanson being on the front page day after day. Angry because what is rewarding for me is difference. We've got a Prime Minister who believes a child will do better if they are spanked when they are wrong!

Perhaps that's why Bum Sonata, with a two week process is still a bit confused. I need the opportunity to sit back and see what I have got, not what I wanted or I thought I had, and to see where that goes. There would have to be another process of working with the material and then going back to the floor to create a piece which speaks about where we are specifically... but which could also tour.

The Australia Council in the past has been vigilant about that, but because of the diminishing pie, and the lack of exciting work, they've turned around and thrown money at the audience and marketing instead. Marketing is important, but it starts with the work.

RM Where is your work going?

DB To the world! I didn't go travelling at 19 or 20 or 22. I was so single-minded in my devotion to work that I thought I'd go travelling with my work. My frustration leads me to think that I need to do professional development outside of Australia or move out of Canberra and start again, because I'm hitting the same roof.

RM Theatre in Canberra: is it viable, is it worth it?

DB I think there's enough of us who believe it's important that we'll find a way, I keep being surprised at the competition for the small amount of resources at the top end and conversely delighted at the sharing and thieving at the bottom end.

RM What about the recent ACT Professional Theatre Forum? I wasn't invited but I hear it was stimulating.

DB I think I'm a bit paranoid, I go there and get obsessed with how much everyone hates me. But there's a real desire to maximise what we've got. Everyone thinks we can do better than we are doing back to the audience-wise and artistically. I'm worried that I'm seen to water everything down.

RM Because you do so much?

DB The work I'm doing I give my full energy to, and I think the quality is often very high. Where I shoot myself in the foot is not being paid to do it very often, except by magnificent institutions like Canberra Youth Theatre.

RM Are you getting paid for Threepenny Opera?

DB ...

The Threepenny Opera, CIA and Stopepa, written by Bertolt Brecht, The Street Theatre, Canberra, August 6 - 15

Marrickville Eyes
September 11 to October 4

Marrickville Eyes
September 11 to October 4
The pleasures of another’s nightmare

Keith Gallash on recent Sydney theatre and performance

Eugene O’Neill, Mourning Becomes Elektra

It was going to be one of those once in a lifetime experiences. How many times was I ever likely to see Eugene O’Neill’s Mourning Becomes Elektra? Much. But wonder of wonders, the Sydney Theatre Company engages Barrie Kosky to direct it, to rehearse it at length and to work with his long-time designer-collaborator, the architect Peter Corrigan. The result is not pseudo-American, the theatre air is not thick with over-determined American accents, certainly not with the aforesaid intoning—this is not the Steppenwolf Company (who frightened Sydney Festival-goers sometime in the 80s with their peculiar poetics). The approach is expressionist, Kosky’s idiosyncratic take on the European tradition: the set is both sculpture and dream (a monstrous furry evil-eyed dog was given a snout that would snap at the audience), a giant wall-cum-bird seen from different angles, a floor with toxic eye), a house sloped and riveted like a shipdeck. The voices dwell, hold notes, intone, wear their hearts on their tongues (Anthony Phelan, General Ezra, Lavinia Manon, Melita Jurisic, Lavinia Manon, voice their roles sublimely as if they’ve always done it that way and all but sing—O’Neill, rightly, as opera. The sound design (composer Paul Healy) murmurs and dreams uninterrupted through whole scenes and recurrently and alarmingly erupts into a dark, seat-shaking chord as if triggered by the monstrous, melodramatic utterances of the characters. We quake, like Pavlov’s dogs, but do we ever learn? The actors embody a tense, sculpted stillness out of which movement and emotion burst. The pared-down text opens out time and space for this four hour nightmare to cast its spell. Some don’t leave the theatre for the two 20 minute intervals, staying to witness the quiet ceremony of the redeployment and turning inside out of the set. It is one of those once in a lifetime experiences: O’Neill works. As alien as that American vision is with its secrets, guilt and murderous foreshadowings, the horrible and magical inevitability of the story hits home for a moment, the result of directorial vision and committed and skilled ensemble playing. From the opening moment when two pairs of hands tear apart the black plastic that covers the set to reveal the overwrought Lavinia (as if born bereft), Mourning Becomes Elektra becomes your dream.

Eugene O’Neill, Mourning Becomes Elektra, director Barrie Kosky, Sydney Theatre Company. The Wharf, opened May 9

Deborah Leist, Regina Heilmann, A Room With No Air

Again, the realm of dreams: a red wall sits towards you, a red floor rushes to join it, the rest is black. A long up-ended table. A woman, short hair, trousers, leans into it, asleep, murmuring, singing in the dark. She dreams. A woman in a white dress, hair pulled back, enters. Has she been conjured by the dreamer? She knocks gently on the door. Has she chosen to wake the dreamer? What is he dreaming now? A German is dreaming a Jew and vice versa, or more accurately, Australian descendants of German and Jew. In a brisk transformation the lowered table becomes house, barren, refuge as Leiser begs, “Let me in,” pursued by a racist mob in suburban Australia. We are suddenly in the world of What if...? A suddenly possible one nation. Without venturing into literal narrative, Heilmann and Leist make a world of tentative refuge, a set of scenes and images in which the two women exchange anxieties, guilts, cultural cliches and a recipes, in which they establish the possibility of communication and contact in verbal and physical tussles, and a demolishing and unifying dance. But not before things go wrong, into reverse. Heiman does a boot that locks itself onto Leiser’s neck in one of the most frightening passages. In another dance, of power and manipulation, the boot has an apparent life of its own—was it only following orders? The stark, expressionist set that houses this exchange also has a kind of life, hiding places and trap doors, and a tiny window that opens out onto an aural world of old German radio broadcasts. With director Nikki Heywood’s guidance, Leiser and Heilmann perform A Room With No Air with a psychological intensity I’ve not seen before in either, and with a physical incisiveness that charges the scenario with tension and symbolic power. I entered this disturbing world twice, once early in the season, once late, witnessing the marked perfecting and transforming of an emerging work, and the white heat intensification of the performances. Curiously, for a performance work, the limits of the work are in its too tentative engagement with narrative: having set up a relatively literal scenario of the problem of offering refuge and establishing a new political context, it moves inward and stays there. There’s also a problem in the framing, the initial conjuring is left as a given and not explored. It’s not surprising then, on two counts, that for all its power the work left some unsatisfied, experienced as fragments of something more complex. Whatever the basic propositions, images and performance strengths of A Room with No Air mean that it is work ready for deepening and opening out.

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Regina Heilmann, Deborah Leiser in A Room with No Air

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A Room With No Air, performer-producers, Deborah Leiser, Regina Heilmann, director Nikki Heywood, designers Leonie Evans and Clarissa Arnol, Belvoir St Theatre, Dominating, July 1 – 19
Tongue power and head butts

Physical Theatre goes communal, industrial and head to head at the Sydney Opera House

In RealTime 24 ("Various gravities", page 33), Thoe Blomfield of Legs on the Wall put the case for a national physical theatre conference in the productive wake of last year's Rock'n'Roll Circus-hosted Body Contact, a kick start for companies and artists to think and function collectively on issues of training, funding and marketing. Where there's a physical theatre will—and where there's Australia Council and Opera House support—there's a way. The conference is on.

Intriguingly it's titled Head to Head suggesting an exercise of tongue power, brain muscle and maybe the odd head butt. Participants should also bring their budgets, calculators and prospectuses if the lingo of the press release, quoting Blomfield, is anything to go by. The conference will “debate future directions in the Circus and Physical Theatre industry.” "As Physical Theatre is now one of Australia's leading cultural exports it is important that the key players have the opportunity to discuss the direction of the industry and how the business can be enhanced both in Australia and overseas.” Blomfield cites "20 new (physical) theatre companies forming in the last five years." Well, it sounds like an industry, so head first it is into the future in the language of the moment. However, issues of artistic import will rank high on the agenda. Still at the planning stage when I spoke to him, Blomfield hoped that one of the forum sessions will be devoted to NICA (the proposed National Institute of Circus Arts): “I'm hoping that all participants will be in favour of getting behind the proposal.” She also thinks that the conference will help improve the image of Physical Theatre: "It's improved a lot in recent years, but we're still not taken that seriously compared with theatre, dance and music." I wonder if this is not a little paranoid given the praise lavished on the likes of Legs on the Wall, Desoxy and others (not to mention the attention given to Physical Theatre at the Performing Arts Markets). Not at all, Sue declares: "This will be a conference of celebration about how far we've come, of the energy that Physical Theatre is.”

The conference will screen videos of significant Physical Theatre works, present some small scale performances, and collaborate with the Opera House on a day of performances for the public immediately prior to the conference, featuring some of Australia's leading Physical Theatre groups and performers. Both the Opera House and Australian Contemporary Circus (aka Physical Theatre) are celebrating their 25th years, an interesting juncture of high and not so low culture, and bound to be heady.

Head to Head, National Physical Theatre Conference, Sydney Opera House, October 5 - 7. Enquiries: 02 9350 9887

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Humanising the enemy

Sarah Miller sees White Men with Weapons at Black Swan

I was really scared in this show. At times I found it terrifying. At times I found the audience terrifying—although I wouldn’t want to hang an opinion on that. Not understanding the jokes in Afrikaans told by one of a series of mostly horrendous characters played by Greg Coetzee, I couldn’t tell if they laughed because they found it funny, confronting for its moments of great humour and poignancy. It’s much easier to de-humanise ‘the enemy’ and don’t we all want to do it?

Coetzee explores that moment of change: the night of President De Clerk’s famous announcement that rocketed South Africa into post-apartheid politics. Where once a white man in the South African army had almost god-like status, what now is a white man with weapons to do? At the least he is superfluous and, at the worst, he is to blame.

Coetzee’s performance is articulate in every sense of the term. It’s a character piece and he lends it the kind of performance that on film wins Oscars. The questions he asks us are both intimate and harrowing. History is personal and immediate. Yet it is still somehow surprising that this graduate of the University of Napal (majoring in Dance and Drama) spent a year as a conscript in the SADF. I realise that I cannot imagine the fact of conscription.

Black Swan Theatre are deservedly well known for their work with South African theatre artists and writers such as Jimmy Chib’s Bran Nu Dae and Corrugation Road. They have been equally successful with their adaptations of West Australian literary classics including Randolph Stowe’s The Merry Go Round in the Sea and Tim Winton’s Cloudstreet. A more recent development has been their growing relationship with South African Theatre as evidenced in an earlier presentation from the legendary Athol Fugard in Valley Song and most recently with The Actors’ Cooperative Production of White Men with Weapons. I hope they continue to produce this kind of essential and relevant work.

On the tip of its tongue

Kirsten Krauth at the stage adaptation of Dorothy Porter’s verse-novel The Monkey’s Mask

White Men with Weapons, written and performed by Greg Coetzee, directed by Garth Payne, Black Swan Theatre Company, Sabha Theatre Centre, June 2 - 14

She’s a brick and I’m drowning slowly. Tied to the one you love.

Addiction. It’s in her eyes. Private detective, butch dyke Jill Fitzpatrick, “pint sized Cliff Hardy”, is investigating the murder of Mickey, victim poet, gets distracted, taken off the scent by femme fatale Diana and too much Patsy Cline.

Marianne Bryant gets the balance right on Jill, a physical, fleshly, at times fragile performance. As she disrobes for the audience and Diana, consumed by the red-light-heat of lust and the possible taste of betrayal, the audience too wants to touch her soft/hard leather, brown corduroy, booted body. She has all the modern girl attachments too—mobile, answering machine, slide projector and screen—handy articles to navigate a murky undercover world, supposing her life remote control, a jerky stream of images, clear and obscure, to complement her moods.

As the solo performer (and audience) struggles to overcome gregarious crowd sounds outside the theatre, pace and humour skid in the middle, the momentum lost as subtitles from Dorothy Porter’s original text are transformed into visual clues (re)forced around our throats like Nick’s large hands. Other characters—Diana, damp pseudo-Christian Bill, new age scene-queen Lou—lose focus and become soggy, Bryant’s sometimes one dimensional performance obscuring the potency of Porter’s words on the tips of their tongues.

Minimalist set design, photography, digital imagery, voiceover and solo performance give The Monkey’s Mask potential to be gritty and nervy in-your-face theatre. In such an intimate space, I wanted Bryant to grip the audience around their elegant necks and haul them out of their safe seats, swinging them into the tribal beat, daring them to get wet in the jungle rhythms of inner city Sydney where “Mickey’s ghost walks in the tropical rain.”

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Maturing blends

Stacey Callaghan samples the vintage at Brisbane’s Cab/Sav

With very little financial support, each year Lesbian and Gay Pride presents a festival that speaks to the diverse queer communities of Brisbane. With this in mind, Cab/Sav, a season of short works, followed a cabaret format with performances ranging from the highly physical to the intensely vocal. What to some punters seemed surprisingly lacking in “queer content” was a reflection, I suggest, of the evolution and maturation of queer performance in Brisbane resulting from the combined performance histories of such collectives as Pride, Cherry Heron and the now defunct Crab Room.

The second collective have fostered the continued development of many of the movement-based performans in Cab/Sav. The evening opened with Caroline Dunphy’s flippan flight attendant, complete with flashing semaphore wrist bands. The frivolity of her piece Transonic—a monologue in few words was the exception in an evening of somewhat sombre pieces.

Christina Koch’s Giant’s Hopscatch Party, was an innocently executed dance of death which showed the macabre joy of a giant crushing ‘the little people’ with various Suzuki influenced walks and stoms. Although the piece lost focus towards the end as the movement became smaller and more intimate, it was one of the few performances I have seen where heightened Suzuki movements actually drove the narrative.

A strong physical presence continued with Brian Lucas’ take on war, religion, politics and Patty Cline in psychotherapist #1—Joan of Arc. In his simple adjustment of a skirt, Lucas transformed from a hooded, softly spoken, petite Joan of Arc into a towering queen dancing to Patty Cline. His repetitive use of movement, recorded and spoken text and music created several personae through the connections between them we were not always clear. Several images from John Utans and Jason Wellington’s performance remained long after their piece ended, particularly the chalk outline of one of their bodies traced after an intense contact improvisation. Unfortunately, the physical subtleties were often combined with slides of heavy-handed text.

A complete departure from the physical was Shugafix, a selection of songs sung and melodramatically gestured by Lucinda Shaw accompanied beautifully on cello by David Sells. Technical difficulties made the lyrics almost impossible to understand and as the audience were quite adept at reading bodies by this stage of the evening, this still and self-absorbed performance seemed rather incongruous. Mark McLean’s humour, however, managed to successfully traverse my physical expectations of the night in his understated Four Songs. McLean’s exquisite command of both French (La Vie en Rose) and German (Fallin in Love Again), his soft camp introductory patter and his confidence in his own stillness created the intimate cabaret atmosphere promised in the production’s title.

By far the highlight of the evening and the crucial performances that both linked and questioned the separation of the voice from the body was the combination of one of Brisbane’s most talented experimental vocalists (Christine Johnston) with one of our most inspiring physical performers (Lisa O’Neill). In All Tomorrows Parties 1 and 2, Johnston used such diverse musical influences as the humble Hammond organ, Velvet Underground, Bach and the theme from the film Orlando to contrast with O’Neill’s tap-dancing, Suzuki-stomping and sassy dancing. The dead-pans, dry humour and occasional stealing of looks from one another created a sense of two aesthetically similar performers desiring each other’s inherently different forms of expression. Throughout both pieces, we gradually saw each performer attempt the other’s skill, from O’Neill hesitantly joining Johnston on the organ to Johnston’s slow walking exit from the space. The final image of the night gave the impression that the physical and the musical can successfully embrace each other with O’Neill’s sudden possession of the Flying V guitar.

Overall, Cab/Sav may have benefited from a curator or an outside eye. It seemed that the event was drawing on a cabaret format, however, the relatively serious ‘theatre’ atmosphere and absence of alcohol at Metro Arts created an environment where the audience were less able to relax. As a season of short works, Cab/Sav continued local queer performers’ exploration of conceptually mature vocal and physical vignettes which would give its Sydney counterpart, eLUB BENT, a run for its money.

The Second National Circus and Physical Theatre Conference, Metro Arts Theatre, June 17 - 20

Stacey Callaghan is a physical theatre performer, writer and director. She is currently devising when i was a boy, a solo circus theatre performance which explores the concepts of trust, risk, pain and safety inherent in both physical performance and intimate relationships.
Practice as difference

Eleanor Brickhill examines the studio space in dance practice

In dance, some people are beginning to talk about studio practice as if it might be different from other kinds of dance practice. And yet it’s self-evident that any dance artist would have a studio practice: that is, something that they do in a studio, some repeated, habitual exercises, or whatever as opposed to theory, that is part of their performance-making. But there are several ideas about studio practice which need stressing, if only to assist in separating out some kinds of work from others, and to emphasise their differences rather than similarities, if dance practice is not to be imagined as an homogeneous enterprise with a uniform, singular focus or ideal.

Picture two idealised scenarios: a studio, permanently occupied by several dance practitioners who are there for several hours a day, most days, often by themselves, or playing and talking with each other, pulling old ideas apart, finding out what still interests them, rejecting some material, expanding other movement ideas, finding new ones, showing them to each other and getting, feeling out each other’s ideas.

Another scenario: an hour long, highly organised practice session following immediately after a specifically designed technique class, fitted tightly into a schedule of other back-to-back rehearsals; dancers move quickly from one choreographer to another, one dance to another. Each work might be allocated 4 or so hours a week rehearsal time, during preparation for public performance. Choreographers in this case need to know almost exactly what they want to happen in that hour; each move is described by referring to the dancers more or less common vocabularies, with small choreographic differences here and there, a rearrangement of what is already known. Working at this speed could not be managed if each move had to be investigated first.

The first scenario admirably a particular notion of research, something physically-based, on-going, and different from academic or theoretical research. Here it refers to careful inquiry and critical investigation of the body, looks into meanings of action and senses of aesthetics alive and developing in a person’s body. The notion of research in the area of company-based or even independent dance, is often applied to those more or less imaginative re-arrangements of off-the-shelf steps. While this might extend known theatrical tradition, it may not necessarily challenge the wider body of dance as an artform distinct from that theatrical tradition.

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A1lre ther, the potential open space available—and doubtless anyone would find that particularly grand and cavernous auditorium challenging, and the ensuing vulnerability so often disarming—for someone built to investigate the nature of practice itself, something not as easily accomplished within the second scenario.

How might these differences manifest themselves in performance? Decades ago in Australia, theatre and dance practitioners were seeking to expand audience awareness of what theatre practice might encompass. For many years, audiences have been invited to participate in informal studio showings; we have also had performances in the round, in site-specific, non-conventional venues, open rehearsals, works in progress, and the like.

But it seems to me that in dance—may be not so much in theatre—these events are often thought of, perhaps unconsciously, as mere practice for some other more important main event—the proscenium arch performance, or something that approaches this. And so, without acknowledgment or even realisation, the work performed in these venues has been made with these grand public front-on venues in mind.

Proscenium stages are performe with some profound and intimate. The audience are therefore situated in a place where they might safely claim allegiance and derive identity.

On the other hand, in a studio space, performances occur in what can be thought of as much more private space, inhabited as if by guests rather than an unknown public. Performances here are less about the kind of intimacy and invitation. This kind of space seeks to remove the one pointed, single focus. And in a theatre, that proscenium arch stage creates. By removing the formality of wings, frame and curtain, we are less subject to its frontal perspective, and have the possibility of analysing what was previously hidden. The relationship between what is hidden and what is visible becomes fluid, less subject to the audience’s discrimination. Preparation, awareness, hesitation, concentration, focus, small shifts of weight and intent all become part of the work performed.

This intimate view needn’t be relegated to the important view. Dance has often been seen as people, particularly physical animals—albeit of a highly attuned and not so ordinary variety. Anything less other-worldly or fairy-tale-laden than the ones we have been asked to see previously on stage. It allows for a much more interesting view, more personal, complex, immediate, and multi-layered.

The idea here is one about difference: about a person dancing, whose dance is about his or her own body, whether in performance or rehearsal; or the dancer who is trying to be someone or something different from their ordinary selves in performance, even when they’re simply trying to be a dancer. There seem to be two quite different performers here, and an almost unbridgeable gap between them.

The time for students and other dancers to become aware that what they assume to be their own practice is really based on their relationship to someone else’s class technique. For pioneers like Martha Graham, the purpose of technique class was simply to help her dancers better perform her choreography, so it was firstly a choreographic tool, rather than the pseudo-religious dogma it later became. The class, with ballet techniques, the kind of presentation of the body and the steps by which this is accomplished form the basis of the 19th and 20th century classics. For dancers to begin their practice past that kind of externally imposed discipline requires effort, intense, in a will to investigate the nature of practice itself, something not as easily accomplished within the second scenario.

Not only are these different kinds of perspectives possible with proscenium and studio performances, but they are also unavoidable. I am reminded of many events where problematic spaces caused the fluidity between the proscenium arch to be misplaced and worked against the better intentions of the creator.

For example, Angels Margot M rthropo choreographed Hilton 1109, performing it at the 1996 Adelaide Festival, for a tiny audience of 10 whom she invited into her hotel room. We saw what I interpreted as the confined ennui of a dancer on tour. But I wondered how she could have overlooked the subtext in such a loaded and coded vocabulary. Even in such an intimate setting she became a character, other than herself, as if she was using the stylised dance to project herself from the intimate scrutiny she had actually invited. Her character appeared blank and distant, without the subtle revelation of real personality.

Many of the dance performers at Sydney’s Newtown Theatre (such as the Mobile Bodies seasons) have been required to ignore the potential open space available—and doubtless almost anyone would find that particularly grand and cavernous auditorium challenging, and the ensuing vulnerability so often disarming—for someone built to investi}
Pay attention to the moves

Sophie Hansen sees contemporary world dance in London—Stuart, Forsythe, Clark, Miller, Selwyn Norton

To launch his 12 month residency at The Royal Festival Hall with a bang, British choreographer Jonathon Burrows curated an evening of international contemporary dance extravaganza. The foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall was all a-buzz as what seemed to be London’s entire dance-world twirled and tingled in anticipation of the rare delights of this one-off event. Screens showing videos by Peter Newman hung over the packed auditorium, creating a backdrop of party-night animation and punctuating the pauses with inspiring sky-diving, flame-throwing visuals.

Burrows had worked his connections with the Ballett Frankfurt to bring together choreographers sharing his preoccupations with time, structure and physical detail. A booklet of conversations held with each of his guests illustrated the braininess behind this dance. Best read after the performances, it foregrounded many of the thematic similarities of approach made so richly manifest on stage.

Americans Meg Stuart and Amanda Miller performed their own work, William Forsythe showed a duet made in collaboration with Dana Casperus of his Ballett Frankfurt, and prodigal son Michael Clark was back with a sneak preview of his new work. Paul Selwyn Norton, going soon to Melbourne to choreograph for Chunky Move, opened the event with a duet for two extraordinary dancers from the Ballett, the expert improviser Michael Schumacher and Vitor Garcia.

Selwyn Norton’s Proxy was the longest work of the night at 20 minutes and as such ignored the less is more dictum. While Selwyn Norton delights in the incredible range of expression of his virtuoso dancers, allowing them quirky and elaborate articulations, he distastefully overwhelms these revelations with an unnecessarily generous embrace of theatricality. Strange props, such as the enigmatic rubber mats which littered the stage, and tomscooly with a mike-stand clutstered the fascinating exchanges between Garcia and Shumacher. The recorded sound-track (Gavin Bryars’ A Man in a Room Gambling), a fictional radio crash-course for card-sharps, said it all, “Pay attention to the moves”, lifted the seductive Latino announcer, “because they are so simple that they need some audacity in order to be performed.” Shame then that Selwyn Norton didn’t give them more space.

Meg Stuart’s solo, XXX for Arlene Croce and Colleagues, was the palate cleanser required after Proxy. On a bare stage she danced her iconic response to the New Yorker critic’s now famous description of Bill T Jones’ AIDS related work Still Here as “victim art.” Infused with human strength and frailty her contortions were both beautiful and abased. To Gainsbourg’s Je t’aime moi non plus, her scrutinised up face, jittery hips and stiff sides were bountifully defiant. Ten minutes and she had said it all. The pause hummed with approval.

And catty expectation, because bad-boy Clark was next on, with a glimpse of his first full stage work for 4 years. Dancing with Kate Coyne to a breathtakingly anarhistic score by Mark E Smith of The Fall, Clark was in characteristically provocative form. Blending his straining audience with 6 full spotlights at 12 o’clock the duet was barely visible. While the others later sniped that he was hiding, it was fair to say that Clark certainly wasn’t making his new work easy to see. “Welcome to the home of the vain” intoned Smith in his liconically spireful drawl, and Clark collapsed again from point to splay in a decadent and downright ugly drop. You’ve got to love him.or loathe him.

Amanda Miller’s Paradismonema translates literally as “leftovers” and her solo comprised “fragments from earlier group works that I felt didn’t get communicated.” Miller flowed around a dark stage like a spirit, ghostly unmuscular amidst the exertions of the evening. Perhaps that was why her whimsical work seemed so brutally dismissed by Forsythe and Casperus’s show-stealing duet, The The for Jone San Martin and Christine Burkle.

Expert interpreters of Forsythe’s angry physical intensity, these peculiar twins knotted themselves together across the floor, in a seared version of a tantrum which surged through their bodies producing the most extraordinarily exciting shapes. A recorded voice read out time to remind us that there were intellectual battles raging too. As an extract from the full-length 6 Counterpoints, this duet was a thrilling introduction to a world of intellectual and physical rigour. As the end to an evening of vivid provocations it was a perfectly abrupt and unsatisfactory end.

Kick-starting a year of commissions and collaborations with an adrenalin shot of creativity, this event left the audience even more full of questions and opinions than when they arrived.

As it is—Choreographer’s Choice, curated by Jonathan Burrows at The Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, Paul Selwyn Norton making Proxy for Michael Schumacher and Vitor Garcia, Meg Stuart making a solo, xxx for Arlene Croce and Colleagues, on herself; untitled work by Michael Clark for himself and Kate Coyne; Parlimonema by Amanda Miller for herself and Seth Tilley; The The by William Forsythe and Dana Casperson for Jone San Martin and Christine Burkle; video installation by Peter Newman, July 9

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Shadow pictures, words of light

Cassie Plate experiences the words and works of Allan Sekula

In late May—the last days of waterside-workers-as-front-page-news (but not the last days of the never-ending dispute)—American photographer and critic Allan Sekula presented his Fish Story. To the audience at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the timing was uncanny—Fish Story narrates the contemporary maritime world and the history of representation of the sea. The deadpan brevity of the title belies the depth of the story told in a verbal/visual ensemble reaching back to illuminated manuscripts and forwards into our era of visual overload, requiring a whole system of captions to intricately trace "the network of hidden relationships obscured from view by the total contingency of 'visual information'."

(Benjamin Buchloh, "Allan Sekula: Photography between Discourse and Document", Fish Story, Reiner Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1996)

Allan Sekula was delivering the Ian Burn Memorial Lecture 1998 and speaking as part of a symposium considering issues in the history of photography. In her closing remarks, one of the organisers, Helen Grace, pointed out that at the last event of this kind in the 80s, photography was discussed strictly within art discourse and that now it clearly exceeded this "connoisseurship of art history", drawing instead on a rich mix of anthropology, media and cultural studies. Photos can speak across and from all these discourses.

The myth that photos tell the truth has been supplanted by the myth that they don't. Allan Sekula

Speakers at the symposium discussed the origins of photography (Catherine Rogers as 'Pencil of Nature' (1839) even then problematised by an early awareness of the contradiction between nature—what the eye could see—and technology—what the camera could see; photography as a way of reading American material culture (Sally Stein); and the idea put forward by Robyn Stacey that acknowledging all photography as a technology deletes the argument of the computer (or digiral photography such as Photoshop) as a manipulative tool.

Most writing on photography stresses the veracity of the photo in relation to the real. Robyn Stacey

Christopher Pinney's concluding slide show was a fascinating comparison between the strongly iconoclastic photography of the English colonial regime in India (those endless photos of 'types') in contrast with contemporary portraiture which is infinitely mobile and contingent—in no way tying the image to fixed (essentially Western) ideas of character or temporality, "What matters in India is culture, not technology." (Pinney)

In India the term for photography (and painting) is "shadow picture.

Photography—"the medium's paramount attraction was, for me, its unavoidable social referentiality, its way of describing—albeit in enigmatic, misleading, reductive and often superficial terms—a world of social institutions, gestures, manners, relationships... At that time (1971) photography seemed to me to afford an alternative to the overly specialised, esoteric, and self-referential discourse of late modernism, which had, to offer only one crude example, nothing much to say about the Vietnam War." (Allan Sekula, Fish Story) Which returns us to the uncanny unfolding of a history of maritime disputes and the reversal of 19th century ideas about the relationship between land and sea. Stretching from Hermann Melville (not just Moby Dick) and Jules Vernes 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea and into 20th century images of mutinering dock workers and sailors (Battleship Potemkin), and embedded in ideas of montage and realism, we arrive at this floating coffin, the giant (virtually) crewless container ship (called Sea-Land Quality?) which has assumed the shape and dimensions of land at sea—as sea-born factories in the long line from convict hulks on the River Thames to slave ships and immigrant ships. We are shown the idea of ships functioning as both prisons and as engines of flight and escape, as the watercolours of Winslow Homer and the Dutch maritime painters of the 1600s are drawn into the story. Allan Sekula's weaving of word and image revealed the questions at the heart of his photographic project, reflecting the labour of representation and the representation of labour. "His accounts of the instability of photographic meaning continuously oscillate between a conception of photography as conceptual [as a discursively and institutionally determined fiction] and as referential (ie as an actual record of complex material conditions)." (Buchloh, Fish Story) The record of Fish Story is the complex story of work and unemployment on the restructuring waterfront and waters, in ports now removed from sight, container terminals in Korea, abandoned warehouses in Los Angeles. Unlike Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado's famous images of work, Sekula's story neither romanticises nor pronounces this toil dead.

Maholy-Kupka called this "the century of light", so 'Words of Light' as a description of photography probably also belongs to him. For Watermarks Sekula introduces characters Under the Sea and 20th century images of mutinering dock workers and sailors (Battleship Potemkin), and embedded in ideas of montage and realism, we arrive at this floating coffin, the giant (virtually) crewless container ship (called Sea-Land Quality?) which has assumed the shape and dimensions of land at sea—as sea-born factories in the long line from convict hulks on the River Thames to slave ships and immigrant ships. We are shown the idea of ships functioning as both prisons and as engines of flight and escape, as the watercolours of Winslow Homer and the Dutch maritime painters of the 1600s are drawn into the story. Allan Sekula's weaving of word and image revealed the questions at the heart of his photographic project, reflecting the labour of representation and the representation of labour. "His accounts of the instability of photographic meaning continuously oscillate between a conception of photography as conceptual [as a discursively and institutionally determined fiction] and as referential (ie as an actual record of complex material conditions)." (Buchloh, Fish Story) The record of Fish Story is the complex story of work and unemployment on the restructuring waterfront and waters, in ports now removed from sight, container terminals in Korea, abandoned warehouses in Los Angeles. Unlike Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado's famous images of work, Sekula's story neither romanticises nor pronounces this toil dead.

Pretty much all the illumination at Andrew Osborne's recent show in a modestly scaled city warehouse was afforded by his works. Outside, more than a few people said "Is this where the opening is?" as they found themselves in an alley (not remote by any means) off one of Adelaide's busy restaurant strips. The unnamed doorway to the Gerard & Goodman Building added to the ambience of Osborne's exhibition inside. A glance up the laneway gave you a vista of commerce and population inside the darkened warehouse visitors with requisite bottles of Stoli or Skoltrick in hand peered into the glowing interiors of the works. Andrew Osborne makes objects that hover between furniture and art. Recently his work has become less utilitarian. His works are beautiful things whose meaning is unfixed, or fleeting. The materials themselves are sensuous. Turn a lever and coloured lights rotate inside a glass housing showing gently coloured scenes; sometimes just blurry colours, sometimes an eternal internalised narrative: a diver moving from air into water, or abstraction of a boxing match where the choreography orchestrates a muscular dance. Outside, on what was a warm autumn night, one retained the memory of light in darkness, of lightness, and the fact that art, craft; and the experience of the world are always interconnected.

Christopher Chapman

Vacant Spaces, Andrew Osborne, Gerard & Goodman Building, Synagogue Place, Adelaide, May 27 – 31

Christopher Chapman is a curator and writer on contemporary art and culture. He has worked at the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of South Australia. In August he will take on the Directorship of the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.

Richard Grayson's work evidences his long-standing interest in representing a conjunction between the private and public. Past projects have employed handwritten fragments of letters (sent and received by the artist) as the equivalent of found objects, the resulting images forming a kind of history of abandoned and anonymous personal inscriptions.Grayson's new paintings at the Greenaway Gallery in Adelaide extend this interest in both history and the personal through the form of a kind of storyboard 'tossing up the question what if?'. If mother and father had never met each other I wouldn't exist—a troubling thought for any small, sensitive child.

Richard Grayson, AMP - Frankie

Grayson's paintings attempt the daunting (and doomed) task of reworking history—beginning with the reversal of every known or assumed historical fact. Appropriately enough, the paintings are boldly titled, Alternate History Painting, and with the emphasis in the texts being equally and decisively rhetorical. Phrases such as "The Illuminated Run My Bank," "Harold Holt Retired," "Joan of Arc Was Dead," "Alison Didn't Want to Know Me." suggesting the splendour of the newspapers headlines, billboards, political posters, concert fliers. The texts looked slapped down, the colours cursory, the typographic tricks pro forma—slipping, swelling, condensing, expanding. The effect is alarming. Everything about these works seems so visible and immediate one has suspected Grayson of having squandered away a second order of meaning. And there it is, suddenly blown into (comic) relief, the binary two-step of 'partly problems'—field versus incident, form versus content, finance versus depth.

John Barbour

M. Bradley

Alternative History Painting, Richard Grayson, Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, May 29 - June 14

John Barbour is an artist and writer. His work is represented by YaliCrowley gallery, Sydney, and he has contributed critical writings to many publications on contemporary Australian Art. He teaches at the South Australian School of Art.

Andrew Osborne, Fragile
Cues, metaphors and dialogues

David Sequeira responded to selected works at the 1998 Adelaide Biennial

Despite widespread criticism that the 1998 Adelaide Biennial, All this and Heaven too, lacked cohesion and the works were poorly exhibited, individually and collectively many works were judged rewarding. Eds

In their catalogue essays for All this and Heaven too, Juliana Engberg and Ewan McDonald discuss everyday experiences from the encounters with their potential to signify meaning in contemporary life. This encompasses ideas beyond the confines of the instationary archive and acknowledges the role of memory, personal symbols, dreams and wishes in the development of history. At first glance, All this and Heaven too may have been a trip down memory lane. For me, it was a sequence of cues which prompted the consideration of personal histories which have meaning beyond individual experience. I saw David's first four works with which I felt a strong resonance. This is not to dismiss other works in the exhibition, but rather to demonstrate how a particular grouping of artworks began to form a dialogue.

Each of these works draws attention to the bed, in which objects, materials and experiences of the past have become powerful metaphors for current ideology and values. Change and transition are important sub-themes here: Colin Duncan reminds us of a time when we leave this consciousness in favour of dreams; Greg Creek shows us the moment at which the note or sketch becomes the final product; David Watt addresses the grey area between childhood and adulthood; Ricky Swallow illustrates the point in reality at which the imagination can go no further.

Colin Duncan's installation Sleeplesness features a series of beds in a darkened room. Dressed in crisp white paper sheets and pillows, these beds highlight the rituals of sleep and dreams. The clean, blank bedclothes are empty pages upon which we make notes. The bed is the place where we picture dreams. Duncan's beds become a symbolic point of departure from one reality to the next. Considering the bed as a point of interchange, I recalled an activity a teacher gave me when I was at school. "Imagine that what we do in our dreams is real and that what we do in real life is just a dream." Would our lives be any different? Dreams represent a liberation. They allow you to be something different.

The small group of single beds suggests the individuality of dream experience. We enter the subconscious alone. The title Sleeplesness, though, suggests an inability to shift into dream mode, but undisturbed bedtime implies a wish to remain firmly in this world. Duncan's work signals an incapacity to go beyond the limitations of ordinary experience. Dreaming is a common enough practice but is often perceived as extraordinary. The fragmented scribbles and notes in Greg Creek's Desk drawings encourage the eye to scan the surface of his desks, dipping now and then into his pool of sketches and writings. This installation of drawings, presented as a series of desks, suggests at first a classroom or an art school. Further investigation reveals that Creek is the only student here and that he has been sitting at the front, centre and back of the room. The learning and teaching that he has experienced at each point and from each perspective has taken place solely for him. The classroom is his studio. Creek's process has become his product.

The doodles, details, blanks and jottings on each desktop form a pattern which invite us to examine the artist's private domain. The desk tops act as evidence of thinking; a testing ground for new ideas. Above all, these markings show Creek's attempt to identify and assert himself. He tells us clearly that he is an artist and explains a trail of experiences that illuminate his particular studio practice. His studies of faces reveal an ongoing interest in the relevance of formalist painting to his practice. Written references to mowers and shakers in contemporary art can be understood as part of Creek's identity. He shows us his environment, or the art climate in which he practices. His drawings are his way of exploring where he fits amongst it all.

In Plan of the month, David Watt presents a toy train which travels continuously through his constructed world. The train must journey through a landscape hand-crafted in plywood and rich in symbols. Certainly Watt's process deals with the "quiet, reclusive masculinity of the shed and the garage" that Gordon Bull describes in his catalogue essay, but there is also much to be gained from the imagery itself. The train follows Watt's concocted path. It repeats its journey over and over. Watt has set the scale, rhythm and obstacles for this passage. Is this a toy? Is this art? It is at once an instrument of childhood and of grown-up play which makes the distinction between boyhood and manhood blur. Using trains and carpentry as the language of both big and little blocks, the artist acknowledges this rite of passage with warmth and humour. His tableau represents a particular kind of order, an idyllic miniature world which he has created and which runs like clockwork.

The warm plaid patterns of Ricky Swallow's Blanket sharks and Blanket turtles recall a time before the doona, when blankets and bedspreads were common bedroom accessories. Their woolen dressing gowns with gimp tassles were worn with flannelette pyjamas and Goosey slippers. For me, this was a time when my single bed with its bookshelves could become anything—a pirate ship, a submarine or an aeroplane. Familiar, yet strange, Swallow's creatures are earthbound. Trapped in a gallery, they signify the fruits of the mind and yet illustrate the point at which imagination is incapable of becoming reality. Grounded in the domesticity of winter bed clothes, the creatures of Swallow's fantasy do not come to life. They remain stagnant on the gallery floor. They are in a sense a fantasy half-baked. These soft looking sculptures are a sharp reminder of the role of art and art institutions. The futility of the hammerhead shark is belted by its domestic textile form. This echoes the sometimes alienating nature of contemporary art, underlined by its display in a public institution.

Duncan, Creek, Watt and Swallow explore the premise of All this and Heaven too with considerable success, asserting their individuality and providing a meaningful context for each other.

All this and Heaven too, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, 1998 Adelaide Festival.

David Sequeira is a Canberra-based artist and the Co-ordinator of Public Programs at the National Gallery of Australia.
Awakening to the dream in a room with wheels

Mark Jackson climbs aboard Sleepwalker

Caravan

We see a small caravan, a little sad-looking, slightly abandoned in the centre of an empty asphalt carpark, a slight desert mirage, a little phantasmagoric, dream-like, unlikely site for a work which quite simply frees up a thinking about the condition of exhibition, about a long tradition of visuality, about the white cube and its lineage, its genealogy, to the camera obscura. There is a constellation here that palpably arouses a Benjaminian thinking of the dream, of awakening, of the dialectical image, of the cross-roads of magic and positivism, mythic history and natural history. Its wish-word is "Sleepwalker"; its mythos is the dream; its cryptonym is forgetting its object is the commodity; its syntax is the uncanny—a ghostly dwelling.

Some great somnambulists

You are a man of leisure, a Sleepwalker, a moluc. The definitions vary according to the hour of the day, or the day of the week, but the meaning remains clear enough; you do not really feel cut out for living, for doing, for making; you want only to go on, to go on waiting, and to forget.

Georges Perec, A Man Asleep

What we do in dreams we also do when we are awake: we invent and fabricate the person with whom we associate—and immediately forget we have done so.

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Let me dream a little about your falsehood, false duality of man.

Louis Aragon, Paris Peasant

Aragon was one of the great somnambulists—the heightened experience of Paris as in a surreal dream. We must remember as well that there was nothing more intoxicating for Walter Benjamin than to awake from this surreal dream, but without the sacrifice of the unconscious. As he says in the Paragon-Work, "Whereas Aragon stands firmly in the realm of the dream, here the constellation of awakening is to be found...of a still unconscious knowledge of what has taken place."

Taking Place

Sleepwalker is a collaborative exhibition curated by Brona Iwaniszczak, which includes works by Mel O'Callaghan, Alex Gawronski, Matthew Gerber, Jackie Redgate, Philipa Vetch and Iwaniszczak herself. It is the second in a series of caravans exhibitions currently being staged in Adelaide, in conjunction with the Experimental Arts Foundation, and assisted through funding from the Australia Council. It is intended that the caravan move at some time to other regional upland centres and Australia for further series of installed exhibitions.

A title and a housing, and which is housed, we would always want to separate these out, to unravel the indeterminable in their binding, make it speak as the location of the taking place of a work, as if Sleepwalking takes us nowhere that would not have been better traversed wide awake. Picture this: a small sealed room in the outdoors, a room with wheels, a room that can be towed around, a room lined internally in white board, a room no longer capable of supporting a kind of nomadic dwelling, unreachable for a caravan, a little ghostly, haunted by a two-fold precursor, ancestors who double up. One can hear them laughing, joking, mocking this condition of the white cube, the delineating here of a lineage of a bringing to an inside the very frame and condition of a capacity to see, the camera obscura's inverted capture of its own outside, in short, the stakes in exhibition itself. Unhomely not only for living, we could say, but for seeing, for showing, for any taking place. But here's that Benjaminian flash of recognition, that dialectical image. The camera obscura was one of the privileged metaphors used by Marx to describe the commodity. Another, of course, is the mirror. For poor Marx, there were mechanical mechanisms that caused misrecognition, mechanisms to be avoided, to consciously step outside of. Benjamin's awakening was to a recognition that misrecognition was no dream but rather a composition of the political, the economic and the aesthetic, authenticating exhibition value of any thing as the condition of the work of art. Simply put, the things exhibited in Sleepwalker meet this condition of the work—"half-way" as Benjamin would say.

Between title and thing there is something buried, some crypt, some kernel, an underground, avoided, guarded against. Let's see: Vech's The Witt of the Stanzeeze, with its hand-erased tape recordings of dreams. Gawronski's Switch, an object of schizo-electric speech, Gerber's Self Portraits, a small wall of narcissism, O'Callaghan's Haunt, Iwaniszczak's The Crossing, photo-document of a simian assortment, Redgate's Fountaine 1917, a wall's house, shanty, The catalyst of the forgetting", but forgetting what? I would say that it is Sleepwalking which approaches newness the condition of the dream, that the ruse of sleeping eyes wide open with two feet on the ground that is it simply not dreaming. Sleepwalker awakens us not from the dream, but as Benjamin would have it, to the dream, to its veracity and its exhibition.

Sleepwalker, an exhibition curated by Brona Iwaniszczak, Adelaide, June 8 - 28

Andrew Gaynor sees national arts graduates Hatched

In Jonathan Wilson's Bedroom the mouse wheels keep on spinning, spinning, spinning. Sometimes the dreamer or a wheel may fail and its companion takes up the slack, increasing revolutions by the nth of a degree. Ultimately, one wheel remains still spinning, faster, incandescent, as the others lie in torpor, wondering what the hell it was all about.

Now in its 7th year, and still the only Australian survey of its kind, Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show has rolled on into Town. Conceived in 1992 by the then director of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Noel Sheridan, the event with its accompanying forums has become a pivotal zone for engagement between hypothetical discussions on the worth of various tertiary visual arts courses and the tangible fruits of their endeavours. The exhibition is big, occupying every room at PICA. Some of it is shiny. Some of it is bold. There are moments stilled by contemplation. It contains art worth less than its media and art worth more than it all.

This should come as no surprise. Hatched presents a real opportunity for graduates as artists to jostle with their peers, but, given the exhibition's brief, it is difficult to separate the products from the courses they promote. And promote them they do. Each group has been selected by their respective institution as worthy of representing them on these walls and in the catalogue where the grouping system is formalised. Here the clusters of artist entries are preceded by the soft sell on the validity of each course now on offer. The feel of this is car yards and hypermarkets, with the efforts of young desirables paraded like goosebumped flesh in the hope that some may squint and like what they feel then sign to join the course.

Mouse wheels.

Paul Hunt has stumbled on an answer where illusion is just that. In Construct we walk on painted stripes and need help to change our view. It comes through blinding input: "There he is. There's Wally" and the tumbled crowds just flatten, backs off into ground. Wally is no mystery and he stands out like a sore thumb. You suddenly can see him no other fractured ways. At PICA Paul's stripes are mediated through a cold and scrutinious eye. Telesma. A monitor from security. You realise that you're climbing stairs. Startled, you trip and fall flat on your face.

Artworks must be cognizant to the competition screaming from adjacent walls. It is one of the major difficulties for audience perception that group shows are often governed by simplistic practical aspects such as scale, similar hanging requirements or a need for small darkened spaces. This is hardly a revelation or an isolated problem but it makes for some interesting jumps. For example, the main space downstairs at PICA is visually dominated by hillboard gimmickry and candy floss colour, moments of self-aggrandisement that are effortlessly deflated by the consummate skill evident in an adjacent kiln glass platter or a wired industrial chair. A pink floral material, with gently stylised images of hardy horn boys, tells more about awakening, desire, identity and attempts to conform that the piles of body-politic cloth demanding attention elsewhere. Mysterious videos in degraded black and white give glimpses into memories of Victorian psychic experiments. Or would do, if the recorded space from the adjoining installation didn't keep intruding with its grating prattle. Minute stadiums of infinite joy, comic books and bottled fruit do winning battle against examples of aesthetic agendas whose textual banalities blare a lack of context and get loose on their own perils.

This horizon line is infinite through etched by Jessica Long, a kind of, wake and squints on to the periphery. But the way there is blocked with words. Unread and regarded simply, these words, tantalising like chalk marks on a path, a softly textured hieroglyph. Deciphered, the mystery vanishes, but leaves no meaning. The focus must return now to the craft, to avoid the proclamation and present this set position.

With all the questions, possibilities, positions, splendour and despair that such a show in itself is a real reminder that after 7 years the National Graduate Show appears once a year on the edge of the continent and never does the tradition. If Hatched continues to be denied mobility to catalyse some wider debate, it runs a real risk of becoming a purely didactic expo of tertiary art courses to tempt an isolated community.

Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, June 19 - July 26

Andrew Gaynor exhibited in the Original National Graduate Show of 1992. He has just graduated again.
Distinctly black

Cate Jones gets a serious laugh from seeing Black Humour

Black Humour is a big exhibition. Big in the sense that it represents the work of about 20 Aboriginal artists but also big in each artist's powerful and vigorous response to current and historical political conditions. If, as explained in the catalogue, comedy is composed of a combination of truth, pain, parody and hostility, then this exhibition is an exhilarating level, countering dominant white versions of history, exposing the myth of representation and confronting contemporary dilemmas. Its humour is distinctly black.

Gordon Hookey's paintings reverse the power relationships between the subordinated and the oppressor. In All The Natives Laughed As The Cuit Joke Was Played On Poor L'il Fink, Aboriginal people are portrayed as laughing, native animals in a pub. A dingo poisons the beer of a half-pig, half-human John Howard-like creature who is choking and reciting backwards from his chair. The painting is crowded with detail. The animals glue over the pig's violent end, beer cans fall from the table, a crocodile's gold tooth glows from its jarring, gaping jaws and a kangaroo holds something in its paw that is either a bomb about to explode or an incredibly huge joint. The painting is cooking with all the elements of a drunken night at the pub.

In Pinklash Backlash an Aboriginal warrior spears in the chest a corporate-suitied white man riding a rearing horse. A packet of McDonald's fries and a can of Coke fall from the rider's hands as his chest spouts blood. The horse runs at the mouth, this lumps of ectoplasmic green and pises pus while the American flag is raised above parliament house in Canberra. If this painting weren't so profoundly incisive it would be reminiscent of those obscure drawings kids at school do of teachers they really hate.

The Campfire Group's installation is a portrait of Pauline Hanson's fish and chip shop. "Pauline's Menu of Truth" stands against a display fridge full of crumbed Aboriginal artefacts. From the menu, for pre-referendum prices, political dishes such as "Fischer's Combo", "Seafood Pasta-ratif" and "Cajun Katterfish" and "Van-stone fish" (char grilled) can be selected but "Borridge's Balls" are not available because, as the menu board states, he has none. On top of the fridge are small tins of "start-arse" sausages, and cans of preserved "Hamson ideologies." A photograph of Murri Island, that Eddie Mabo fought for and won, hangs at the back of the display fridge, framing the installation, and warning that while political manoeuvring fluctuates and wave, native Title will endure.

Harold Wedge's painting, Pauline Hanson (Don't need to explain any further), is a straightforward, compelling statement. On a background of finely crafted dots Wedge has written, in the colours of the Aboriginal flag, the words, "Pauline Hanson" and "amoral." But Wedge's words drip and run, so that the painting bleeds, like a premonitory emblem. At first glance the word amoral read appropriately, but mistakenly, as remorse [a sucking fish that attaches itself to others like a parasite. Eds].

Brenda Palma's work explores representation and identity through the reconstruction of appropriated imagery and white definitions of Aboriginality. She uses old household paint logos, trademarks and newspaper articles to subvert the colonially defined, homogenised, anonymous representations of Aboriginality. Darlene McKenzie writes about these definitions as abstracted bodies of knowledge designed to subordinate: "Foucault views knowledge as a weapon that serves definite purposes, the principle one of which is the oppression and legitimisation of the unequal power relations which exist in society. The monopoly on knowledge by the dominant ideologies and its means of implementation, subverts and contains the interests of the oppressed."

Darlene McKenzie, "Looking at them looking at us", Racism, Representation and Photography, Inner Education Centre, Sydney, 1994) Palha's work articulates that for Aboriginal people, identity is directly linked to, and continues to grow out of, the racism of colonial history. Black Humour communicates powerful energy, openly exposing racial antagonism and confronting issues and politics surrounding Aboriginality. Central to the works, is the deconstruction of imposed identity, and the reconstruction of Aboriginal identity based on a powerful system of support and humour charged with autonomy. Black Humour celebrates marginalisation as: "a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds." (Bell hooks, "Marginality as a site of resistance", Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1990)

Black Humour, curator Jane Barney, Neville O'Neill, a Canberra Contemporary ArtSpace touring exhibition; Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide, July 10 - August 16; Boomalli, Sydney, August; Maldonau's Koori Heritage Trust, March 1999.

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Injection to ease the pain

Keith Gallash talks to Penny Thwaite about artists and infrastructure support

Last year the Australia Council's Visual Arts and Crafts Fund announced an initiative for emerging artists and artist organisations working in collaboration with contemporary art spaces. In response The Performance Space commissioned visual artist Penny Thwaite to develop her project Injection to devote funds in a way that both supports artists in their practice while setting up some other significant principles.

PT Injection/ Acquisition means that as much money as possible goes directly to artists. The other part of the bequest was that the project involve artist organisations in some way.

KG By "artist organisations" do you mean artist-run initiatives?

PT Two Victorian artists, Brett Jones (West Space) and Richard Holt (Platform), came up with a new term to bypass perceived discrimination. While there's no brief from the Australia Council saying only organisations with "professional" administration will be funded, for some reason, in the last round, no independent artist-run initiatives were funded in the categories open to organisations.

KG How will the injection be delivered?

PT There are three amounts of $1000. We put out a national call for artists to send slides and CVs. We're in the process of selecting three works which we'll purchase, exhibit and then donate to a number of artist organisations.

KG Are the organisations in this case assumed to have galleries or spaces?

PT Not necessarily. The idea is that they put some kind of proposal to us that outlines the way that a work might be of value to that organisation. They might use it to negotiate a deal or a sponsorship or as an asset that they simply exchange for money. They may choose to pool the works, exhibit them and collectively charge an entrance fee or auction to the highest bidder. I see it as a way for them to get funds for their own spaces and to see the art of their peers as having value in that way as well.

KG The concept of the "emerging artist" is contentious. How have you dealt with it?

PT We've concentrated on artists who are within the first 5 years of their professional practice, who are beginning to exhibit. This bypasses an age criteria which is often irrelevant. We received over 100 submissions.

KG There's also Injection/ Forum associated with the event.

PT The Australia Council is funding the acquisitions and The Performance Space funds Injection/ Forum. We want to test the premise that the best way for governments to support artists is to financially support artist organisations.

KG How serious is the situation?

PT Extreme. When a gallery like Sydney's First Draft loses its funding, its charges go up. So, not only have rental costs gone up and employment opportunities gone down but artists are now in a situation where it's becoming too expensive for them to exhibit. This seems to me a dire situation because, without these structures being affordable, you have less opportunity for artists to exhibit. It puts a whole new level of competition out there. For example, contemporary art space is able to exhibit perhaps 10 solo shows a year. And it's hard to be an artist without exhibiting.

KG It's ironic then that the first of the Australia Council forums had as its topic "Are there too many arts graduates?"

PT Perhaps from their point of view, there are.

KG Let's go back to the issue of administrative professionalism. Is this a real problem?

PT I think the funding bodies are committed to a more hierarchical concept. I don't have an arts administration degree and yet I've successfully worked for 2 organisations. In studies of artist organisations, it's been shown that the artists running them are highly motivated and successful and you would have to function as an artist and an administrator plus hold down another job so you can support your art practice as well as your voluntary administrative position.

KG It's interesting that in the UK where funding was pulled from artist-run organisations in the Thatcher years, a lot of small galleries sprung up, run by artists with a very business-like mentality. Now these places have become totally commercial or folded and there's an air of disappointment and loss of idealism. I'm sure there's an element of this kind of thinking here now—if they're really motivated, won't artists go it alone.

PT In our line-up of forum speakers we have people who've received funding, no longer do or have never received funding. We have speakers from regional galleries, young artists like Anna Epbraim working in Newcastle, Penny Metham from Watt Space, a gallery network funded by the Newcastle University; Melissa Chiu from Gallery 4A funded through the Australia/Asia Foundation; Brett Jones from West Space in Melbourne, Lisa Havelish from Project in Wollongong, Pam Lotts from Watch This Space in Alice Springs, and David Cranwick and Kathy Cefland from Streetlevel in Western Sydney. We also have Deborah Ely from the NSW Ministry for the Arts and Billy Crawford from the Australia Council's Visual Arts and Crafts Fund.

KG The sitting duck from the Australia Council

PT No, he's very positive about the forum. We're not just saying we need money from the Australia Council. That's one option, but there are others and we want to get debate going. We're also setting up an internet message board to include people who can't make it to Sydney.

KG So then, the acquisition is a political gesture. The money is dispersed in a practical as well as symbolic way.

PT Obviously I feel very strongly that artists need infrastructure support and venues simply can't operate without money. There are other avenues like private sponsorship and user-pays though they're becoming less of an option in the current economic climate.

KG How do you choose the arts organisations that the works will go to?

PT We'll put out a call to Sydney-based organisations and ask them to submit ideas, taking into account the media used in the work purchased. At 6 pm on August 22, the day of Injection/ Forum we'll announce the acquisitions and open the exhibition in the new Performance Space Gallery. At that point the money will be handed over.

KG Devolution complete.

Injection/Forum will take place at The Performance Space on Saturday, August 22, from 10 .00 am to 5.30 pm (registration 9.30 am). Admission is free. On-line message board address: http://www.culture.com.au/scan/np/ Injection/ Acquisition will be exhibited at The Performance Space Gallery, opening August 22, showing August 26 - September 5. Enquiries 02 9608 7235

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Bebop as pivotal

Nicholas Gebhardt reviews two recent books tracing the history of jazz

Since the 1970s, most studies of jazz have discarded the radical materialist analysis and political critique initiated by the civil rights and black power movements. The advent of Reagam and the increasing marginalisation of the post-1960s black leadership cemented this process, promoting an historiography that preferred endless literary allusions to 'strategies of signifying' to a clear political analysis of the relationship between jazz, racism, economics and American ideology. The result is an idealised concept of black music that finds in the accumulated conditions of black slavery, poverty, violence and disenfranchisement the ultimate source of a timeless black creativity, ignoring the historically specific force of that creativity. In these terms, jazz is cast as a sign of a transcultural sensibility, while the devastating effects of ghetto-isolation and state repression are offered up by multi-national record companies and 'hip' academics alike as natural modes of self-expression and resistance for a disenfranchised and cynical Western bourgeoisie.

Two new studies of jazz beg the question: how is the study of black music to pull itself out of this mire of neo-liberal thought and the conflagrations of textual idealism? Correlatively, how is jazz itself to break through the mould of individualised, existentially hyperbolic that has accompanied the backlash against free jazz and the experiments of 70s fusion? One answer has been to install jazz within the institutions of American high culture: universities, public arts organisations, the non-commercial media, festivals. This has been accompanied by a general reification of styles along a line running from New Orleans to Montreaux, to the point where jazz's radical creative achievement has been submerged under the weight of an historical imperative that would restrict jazz to its most essential elements and affirm its relation to the state as the benign 'soundtrack' to American prosperity. In opposition to this rampant historicism, there's been a recent renewal of materialistic analyses of the conditions of jazz production that engage with the critical force of jazz creation and its complex relation to the political economy of late-imperial America.

Scott DeVeaux's Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History is one such work. Vivid in its scale, his study begins with the proposition that to really understand jazz, one must understand bebop because bebop is "...the point at which our contemporary ideas of jazz come into focus." Complementable with neither the substantivist logic of the 'jazz tradition' nor the assumption of an intrinsic revolutionary, DeVeaux emphasises, as a prerequisite for any history of American music, an adequate explanation of the role of art in a capitalist state and, in particular, jazz's place within the specialised economy of music. This approach leads to a timely centring of the liberal historical consensus that would banish economics, race and class from jazz altogether so as to capture the music as a pure image of democracy. Against this nationalist ideology, DeVeaux pursues the origins of bebop as a powerful but contingent, musical force that, in the face of devastating segregation and economic hardship, attempted to "...reconstitute jazz—or more precisely, the specialised idiom of the improvising virtuoso—in such a way as to give its black creators the greatest professional autonomy within the marketplace."

The scope of the work is exhaustive and quickly establishes the limitations of earlier studies of bebop. Rather than an inventory of styles and players, or a hagiography of alienated genius, DeVeaux proposes a different socio-historical framework. Through the figure of saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, whose career vaults the critical and ideological division of swing from bebop, DeVeaux asks the question: "What did it mean for a young African-American man to pursue the career of professional jazz musician in the first decades of the century? In particular, what did it mean for him to be progressive?"

This question informs the whole analysis and enables DeVeaux to trace the constellation of social forces—musical, historical, technological, racial, political, and economic—that opened up the musical rupture wrought by Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Max Roach and the other practitioners of the new music.

While DeVeaux's text is exemplary in its attempt to grasp the creative moment of bebop as a material encounter with the oppressive logic of American capitalism, a less than satisfactory work is Ted Gioia's The History of Jazz. Gioia aims to encompass, in a single narrative, the entire history of jazz from its precursors in the blues, spirituals and ragtime to every possible current permutation (John Zorn, Henry Threadgill, Geri Allen, Wynton Marsalis, David Murray, M-Base etc.). I'm doing so, he follows a standard evolutionary narrative that foregrounds the role of individual musicians as general proof of jazz's global ambitions. This presents a number of difficulties, not least the tendency to reduce complex political, musicoeconomic and economic forces into a series of truisms about the underlying role of tradition and historical continuity in securing jazz its musical and moral legitimacy. Names and styles are ticked off as the discussion lurches toward Gioia's main contention that jazz is "the most glorious of monarchs", a form anticipated centuries before in the Moorish conquest of Western Europe, but only realised on the heels of American capital. This retrospective logic allows Gioia to emphasise jazz's historical inevitability and to institutionalise it as fulfilment of the "...image America had of its own destiny."

Although The History of Jazz might serve as a suitable introduction to jazz history, its Chomskian agenda reduces jazz to a symbol of the free market and a sign of America's manifest synergetic power. For Gioia, jazz has become a global perspective that could, like the American dollar, "...encompass all music." DeVeaux's The Origins of Bebop is a welcome, but not to Gioia's jazz pandemic, offering instead a sense of the essential dynamics of jazz production and its difficult relationship to both the commercial world of mass entertainment and the machinations of the American art world. This is a study that turns on the important task of understanding jazz as an integral part of modern American society. As the novelist Ralph Ellison noted in the 1960s, "any viable theory of [black] American culture obligates us to fashion a more adequate theory of American culture as a whole." DeVeaux has set the study of jazz on that difficult path.
used his *Lexus Aeterna* and part of the *Requiem*. Like almost everyone else, my first experience of Ligeti's music was indubitably wedded to Kubrick's images of higher intelligences manifesting themselves to humankind through the medium of an oversize credited card.

Thirty years later, how do the works of Messiaen and Ligeti fare in my estimation? Messiaen's music, I have argued elsewhere, does not bear well repeated listening. There are no hidden depths, driven as it is by the urgings and symbols. Excepting very few instances, the discourse is expounded by little-modified statements of leitmotifs ("Theme of God") etc with barely any need for musical commentary around the musical logic. Similarly, what sounded sexy and adventurous as a student to Messiaen's harmony, in his most famous, pre-war, pieces at least, has a mawkish quality that threatens to sabotage the poetry of his intentions. The works which continue to impress are, surprisingly, the later, leaner, Modernist pieces, which largely eschew the self-indulgence, extravagancies and predictabilities which give the earlier works their kitcheniness. Syncretically it now seems that there will be any argument if I assert that Ligeti's music of the 60s has lasted better than that of many of his contemporaries. Today, the works that were most often compared to Ligeti's, Penderecki's early, Modernist, pieces, elicited smirks rather than admiration. Xenakis' work, especially, is an untamed genius of the last 40 years, but he was always rather lonely, isolated, figure and that has not changed. Ligeti's impact on American Minimalism is undeniable (when Ligeti's music was new we drew no distinction between the various threads of modernism: Terry Riley was as exhilarating as Stockhausen, and vice versa). Ironically, subsequent works of Ligeti since his opera *Le Grand Macabre*, the Piano Concerto, *Piano Etudes*, *Horn Trio*, seem treaasuously postmodern in their allegiance. And what about Ligeti's big break: 2001. The "fit" of the music to the film is questionable, had we known Ligeti's music first wouldn't she have been more promoted? Anyway, the inevitable and pernicious association of film and score has permanently compromised the music's right to an innocent ear. Also, for me a great deal of tension arises between the prosaic, cut-and-dried patterning of the musical mechanisms and the implicit broader expressivity. In the *Requiem* and *Lexus Aeterna* Ligeti is dealing with eschatological themes, but his means to this end are anything but transcendental-Ligeti himself has said, "I love whatever is constructed." And yet, I find the equally artificial computer technologies of Ockeghem, or Taliis's *Spons in Alum*, no impediment to an appreciation of those composers' feats. Perhaps we're still having, Chris, certain terms with the relish of much Modernist music. Could that be why a few modernists seek so insistently to debunk such a suspicion of the "fit", however painfully, actually deliver the spiritual goods?

**Bite and worship**

Andy Arturs hears new works by Topology and speculates on new music audiences

As Messiaen and Ligeti are celebrated at a concert hall, Chris Dench evaluates their legacies.

If we were to ask a cross-section of composers in their 40s to list their formative influences, I would put money on all of them, no matter where in the world, mentioning both Olivier Messiaen and Gyorgy Ligeti. Nowadays a small industry has built up around each of these senior composers and it is increasingly hard to recall the initial impact created by their ideas of the mid-50s. Also, each has generated ranks of imitators— not, on the whole, their pupils—who have numbed their colleagues and us to an almost insuperable extent. It is a tribute to the individuality and integrity of Messiaen and Ligeti's music that it is still possible to separate out their distinctive characters from the mythology that has grown around them.

Messiaen was born in 1908, the heir of the sound-worlds of Debussy, Dukas, Massenet and Emmanuel Chabrier. Messiaen was obliged to produce a series of treatments which lay out in great detail the technical armoury of his compositional method, and which explain...nothing: the how of Messiaen's music is, in my view, rather narrow and uninteresting. His titles, on the other hand, advertise compositional nonconformity of a particularly French variety, compounded by expansiveness, fervent Catholicism, exoticism and a disproportionate familiarity...speeches—Messiaen, not surprisingly, was an admirer of Berlioz. His gradual improvement in the last 30 years, from his anodyne, gormandising Indian rhythms, numerologies, served to enrich a single purpose: to articulate musical aspects of the character of his God, Worship, in short.

Despite his faith, Messiaen was clearly shaken by the Second World War—he had spent time in a Nazi prison camp—and both his first and second major post-WWII works, a song-cycle called *Harawi* and the overture which lay behind the odyssey, are rare diversions from theological concerns, although their musical voice is recognisably that of Messiaen at the end of his output. Messiaen's conviction did not inoculate him against the urgency of Modernism, either. From his next two compositions, Messiaen collected birdsong; occasionally vetues of this interest would influence his melodic writing, but from 1951, almost without warming, our composer has proliferated in his work, replacing functional harmony with kaleidoscopic, non-developmental, and almost directionless gestures. By the early 70s he had produced some of the most startlingly original soundings—and the long, these scores were unprecedented—music, a compositional vision *au generis*. Not only that, but the musical language, and much of his output was intriguingly sexy, which didn't yet strike any jarring note with the emphatic theologist in a companion bloodstock. Ligeti, too, had a hard war. Born in 1923, he was a young man when he ended a love affair with the 1954 Russian tanks precipitated his departure from Hungary; between, the deadening encroachment of Stalinitism denied him access to music of the modern—"Modernism." In the words of Paul Griffiths, "suddenly at the age of 33" he became the "unfrocked Ligeti." (Anthologies: *Composers: Ligeti, Robin Books, 1983, 1997*). This "real" Ligeti, after producing a series of technically-trying works, *Atmospheres* from the *Chamber Concerts*, was effectively "outed" from the cloisters of the New York School by Messiaen, Chris, in 2001. A Space Odyssey, in which Stanley Kubrick...
The personal versus the global

Matthew Leonard attends the 24th International Feature Conference in Warsaw

Comrade Stalin had a moment of grim humour in 1965 and donated the Palace of Science and Culture to the people of Poland. It now palpably dominates the grey residue of old Europe's great pre-World War II cultural centres. The vigorous social allegories hanging from the façade decorate a building that remains an essential part of the continental infrastructure, hosting great ballet, music, kits, theatres and the hystericly monobric Museum of Technology. In the surrounding grounds, stabbledUniversal boogied Nuke, ear & cabbages. Welcome to Warsaw.

Twenty four years ago, Berlin-based Peter Leonard Braun, generally acknowledged as the driving force behind the radio feature, inaugurated an annual conference that would enable radio makers from around the world to gather, listen, learn and, above all, bitch about each other's work. While 'Leo' has officially handed over control of the event to the colleagues from the European Broadcasting Union, his presence, both physical and otherwise, remains formidable. Producers have been reduced to tears after a hammering from him and a thick skin is indispensable if one of your own pieces is up for discussion at the event.

Unlike the glamour prize events, such as the Prix Italie, the Feature Conference has remained a space for professional development and a chance to expose your work to a receptive, if intensely predisposed, professional audience. It remains the most serious forum for professional development in this field. The highly-crafted production conference is a chance to put your work in position within state broadcasting across Europe. This is particularly noticeable to those of us from the ABC, where feature output has come to be regarded by some as an expensive luxury. An example of the kind of audacious project still undertaken in Europe is that conceived by German freelance Helmut Koperzyk. A day in the life of a German will air at 11:00, starting at dawn, networked simultaneously through a collection of German stations.

Programming over the 5 days of the conference will converge, challenging contemporary musical and technological forms.

The mere possibility of manipulation sent many people into paroxysms of hypotonic information. Paradoxically, this kind of creative disorder was somehow an affront to the more 'authentic' forms of the radio feature and documentary... all of course manipulations of another magnitude.

The event is a strong challenge to the truism of 'global culture' as it quickly becomes apparent, both in example and discussion, that national narrative modes remain stronger than the international. An understanding of cultural specificities (moreso than language) is essential when interpreting the subtle moments and gestures in programs, even with the almost universal trend towards using personal stories to reveal larger themes. Lurking beneath many programs too, is the spectre of orthodox journalism which seeks symmetry, pseudo-objection and closure. Resistance is essential.

The 24th International Feature Conference, Palace of Science and Culture, Warsaw, April 25 - 30

Matthew Leonard is Executive Producer of the features and documentary program Radio Eye, broadcast on Radio National every Sunday night from 8:20pm. Australia will host the 27th International Feature Conference in 2001.
Concerted effort

Keith Gallash leaves 20th century music to Sydney is rarely so awash with new music. You have to watch out, read the small print in the press and on handbills, but it's increasingly in evidence and amplified too by a recent visit from Ensemble for the Fourierier. Another trio of concerts by another Brisbane ensemble with a rapidly growing reputation, Topology, The Song Company are doing a return concert of their nationally lauded account of Stockhausen's Stimmung. Richard Vella and Andre Greenwell got an intimate hearing of vocal works recently at the Conservatorium. Most significantly, The New Generation Network, a newly formed organisation of 12 Sydney music groups is promoting contemporary music with brochures, newsletters and a strong membership campaign aimed at the curious listener.

At the big end of the scale, the SSO's contemporary music series began boldly years ago with 6 concerts in one year, but almost immediately reduced to 3 per annum with a smattering of Australian personnel and some very memorable experiences, for example the late Wotid Lutoslawski concert in 1991, the SSO's participation in Sydney Town Hall's 25th birthday concert which saw world music, dance, Dene Olding on violin and an emerging band playing in the auditorium. Three concerts a year still seems hardly enough. However, new music takes many forms and sometimes small but potent is what it's about.

A recent sample of accessible new work in varying era's can be gained from the New Music from Darlingophon Composer Drew Crawford, William Fraiser, Michelle Morgan and Nick Wall. Each composer presented several works, allowing the audience to listen for that distinctive voice. Michelle Morgan as performer (not always enunciating clearly) and composer ranged from scat to Laurie Anderson song writing (“Just the other morning before i woke i dreamed of victory”), and performing with herself on tapes with Berrian/Rego gases and orgasmic cries, made her strongest impression in a work where she shared the singing. The a cappella Book of Ruth exploited the use of microphones with hard consonants, heavy breathing and guttural pumaing, characterful voice, an early 20th century democratic distribution of parts. Over all, Morgan presented too many compositional voices for the audience to know which was the one that counted.

William Fraiser's Dissemble, a clarinet trio, didn't live up to the composer notes promise of night, bars, alleys ways, hotel rooms”, offering instead a gentled Poulellecish pastoral harmony. The well received Vals, for tenor, shying bass, electric piano, guitar and cymbals, emerged from precious fragments into a hypnotic near-recession. Vals also represented a distinctive voice, especially in the shape of the work, while the closing pieces, Music for String Quartet and Tableau, were a tender look into a tenuous relationship between the instruments and, despite all the work, inevitably sounded like something out of the Krems catalog.

Drew Crawford's Quadratium—marimba, vibraphone, glockenspel, crotale, Chinese cymbals and crystal glasses— with its open end, was soaring simply pulsed with increasing speed and intensity to a white hot shimmer (and some nice relaxed playing); a sonic dream poem for the audience. The utterly different 5 excerpts from the musical Why Are Our Porn Stars Killing Themselves were sung with a cagey charnel, a big moment and an October, wherein somewhere between Lambert, Hindricks and Ross virtuosity and Stephen Soundheim lyrical theoretics and replie with nightclubs moodiness, musical grit and melancholy. Arias just as soulful was String Quartet 2, for Jeff Buckley. Initially reminiscent of Krems, larynx into Hendrekt (opening stinging chords), it finally evolved, without literal reference, Buckley's arching hymning. Quadratium aside, here is a compositional voice capable of narrative emotional depth, not quite distinct, but close.

Nick Wall's offered a less conventional, more perplexing set, the only one of the night that embraced contemporary popular culture and technology. Cranks: Set is for miked solo violin with a range of absorbed influences, pop and cross cultural; Indian Giver is a dance track with moody string sound; Stoie movie music with wind and percussion giving edge to the strings; Butterflies an interesting mix of song, spoken word, string quartet and quirky percussion in, writes Walls, "an acoustic rendering of drum'n'bass". Walls' work proved the least and the most familiar music of the concert, an unusual voice working with an unusual mix of means acoustic and electronic.

Second hearings are vital and rarely offered for new music. A Night of New Music will be broadcast on ABC Classic FM, on New Music, August 26, an opportunity to hear not the most challenging of contemporary Australian music but a variety of emerging voices working their way well away from academic formalism.

In the same venue Ensemble 24 presented a largely well-executed and ambitious concert of works by Carl Vine (String Quartet No 2), George Lentz (Gael Enraptured IV, introduced by the composer), and Olivier Messiaen (Quartet for the End of Time). The Messiaen was accomplished, very good in the clarinet solo, Aberdeen (The Birds), but worth hearing for its inevitable and enduring sense of totality. The Lenta is a curious, sometimes powerful, sometimes meditative work ripe with silences, an enormous eruption of sound (the spatial

Aural arrangement places four perceptions with a cymbal each in a semi-circle around the quartet, a satisfying atonal evocation of the universe and a curiously ordinary tonal resolution, an interesting disturbing of such resolutions in Gubaidulina and Silvestrov, this one seemed out of place, the work had already achieved its kinetic co-ordinate by other means. (Ensemble 24's next concert comprises Steve Reich's Different Trains and Tan Dun's Ghost Opera for string quartet and pipes; September 27.)

The committed and the curious packed Sydney Town Hall to hear Simone Young conduct a Messiaen concert. The 1936-37 work, Poèmes pour Mike about marriage and its sacred corollaries, provided an acute and sustained dialogue between the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and soprano Deborah Riedel. The orchestral writing looked back to Debussy and Ravel, the soprano voice emerging angelic out of the strings, and offered glimpses of the post-war Messiaen.

Nigel Butterley's The Woven Light, for soprano and orchestra (1993-94) was unfairly pitted against the Messiaen, its relationship between singer and orchestra short on dynamic (and clarity), until the long melancholy string-dominant closed. Messiaen's Coucous de la Bride (1963) and La Ville en chaud (1987) offered string transcendence and Michael Kieran Harvey adroit on piano against majestic clouds of brass and waves of percussion. Young's taut direction yielded better Messiaen than Edo De Waart's account of Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum at the Adelaide Festival. The opportunity to play more of the Messiaen repertoire might account for at least some of the difference.

A Night of New Music, Darlingston School Composers, Eugene Goossens Auditorium, ABC Sydney, July 3; broadcast, Classic FM New Music, August 26

Ensemble 24, Vine, Messiaen, Lentz; Eugene Goossens Auditorium, ABC Sydney, July 12

Sydney Symphony Orchestra, 20th Century Orchestra 1998; Messiaen, Butterley; Sydney Town hall, July 17

Acoustic power

Keith Gallash on a new CD from the Nova Ensemble

Junkelan Nova Ensemble NOVA CD002 Distrib. Nova PO Box 692 Fremantle WA 6912

nova@opera.iinet.net.au

This WA outfit of six composer-performers, formed in 1983, is about to participate in a Synergy concert in Sydney with their distinctive percussion sound, and if the sound on this CD is anything to go by, theirs should be an intriguing concert for the watch. They have a long history of making instruments out of scrap metals and plastics, the more weird the better. The refinement of metal instruments developed over recent years. Here and there the musical metal clangs with the pulse and wave of gamelan—sometimes wistful and delicately to 'toy' gamelan pitch, sometimes with a rich indigenous quality, and other moments drifts into delicate melodic flautine against a tinny tick. Yes, there is a harmonic flume, the occasional percussive hum. Here and there is no gamelan—many of the ensemble's instruments don't ring a bell (several, cog box, BC resonator, ABC resonator, sign-a-phone etc), but make deliciously, and many a gong and prayer bowl is struck and metal dropped and glass (apparently) shattered and water let drip. Remarkable sonic textures are achieved acoustically and layered rhythms seduce with an eerie depth of field. The melodic invention is simple, occasionally bordering on New Age quaint, but inventiveness and the sense of complexity always out win. Mind you, you can miss a lot if you don't turn the sound right—I don't know if it's the recording or the sound system or if this CD has been cut at a very low level.

Nova also do great things with rustling, murmuring and guttural voices, for instance on Track 10, the introduction to the second work Ritual Fragments (a dance theatre composition). They're also adept at the whirring whistles, beginning conventionally enough but transforming (continuously from Tracks 13 to 15) into a rabble of bird call and human cries and then into a chorus of monkeys from Balinese dance who are soon accompanied by a forward plucky funky bass running with them note for note on one of the theatrical highlights of the album. Three brief tracks contribute to the lyrical alto saxophone wrapped around with dancing bass and a plethora of voices, and signals the way as an all too restrained and gentle ending to an album full of pervasive pleasures and surprises like the massive, pulsing Cosmic Chord. I want to see how they do that.

In Realtime 27, Peter Constant, Sympathetic Resonance, Classical Guitar music with Australian Composers on MOVE and Machine for making Sense's Amanda Stuart solo on SPLUT.

Letter

Dear Editors,

"Blame REM or The Hunters and Collectors—Sando are an instant ingredient that post Kurt Cobain, 20 something white boys MUST be heard." (Vikki Riley, "Counter histories, future directions and manly regressions", Realtime 23)

I didn't mind the 'anti-hero' sound-bite so much as the mention of REM and Hunters and Collectors. I would not have thought we were so offensive. Interesting cut-and-paste style review, though, and by far the most damming I've yet to read.

"...imitation Leonard Cohen"—hell, we must be boring. Perhaps somebody should such up the mouths of all 20 something white boys, so we can listen to some authentic angst from the remainder of the population. I would be interested to know which sectors of the population hold the monopoly on valid emotions and experience, according to Vikki Riley.

It's not often I get the opportunity to reply to journalists. I like to think that I would never bother, but this review was just a little too much of a character attack. You're more likely to stir people up if you have a go at somebody famous, rather than some local nobody like me.

Regards,

Gareth Edwards
Disc
governments

Vikki Riley reviews new CDs

Various Artists
Dislocations: incessant electronic remixing
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Unless you're a member of The Angels, TISM or The Dirty Three there's no need to panic over the current CD legislation. The brouhaha is going out into the corporate industry like a wildfire. What's happening is that the corporate executives are putting their profits at risk by breaking the law. The only way to stop this is to publicize the fact that they are breaking the law. The only way to do this is to make sure that the media is aware of it. The only way to make sure that the media is aware of it is to write articles about it. The only way to write articles about it is to find people who are willing to write articles about it. The only way to find people who are willing to write articles about it is to pay them. The only way to pay them is to sell the articles. The only way to sell the articles is to have a market for them. The only way to have a market for them is to have an audience. The only way to have an audience is to have a product. The only way to have a product is to have a manufacturing plant. The only way to have a manufacturing plant is to have a source of raw materials. The only way to have a source of raw materials is to have a mining operation. The only way to have a mining operation is to have a government. The only way to have a government is to have a country. The only way to have a country is to have a culture. The only way to have a culture is to have a history. The only way to have a history is to have a past. The only way to have a past is to have a present. The only way to have a present is to have a future. The only way to have a future is to have a destiny. The only way to have a destiny is to have a purpose. The only way to have a purpose is to have a plan. The only way to have a plan is to have goals. The only way to have goals is to have a vision. The only way to have a vision is to have a dream. The only way to have a dream is to have a passion. The only way to have a passion is to have a love. The only way to have a love is to have a need. The only way to have a need is to have a desire. The only way to have a desire is to have a want. The only way to have a want is to have a wish. The only way to have a wish is to have a hope. The only way to have a hope is to have a faith. The only way to have a faith is to have a trust. The only way to have a trust is to have a belief. The only way to have a belief is to have a conviction. The only way to have a conviction is to have a commitment. The only way to have a commitment is to have a dedication. The only way to have a dedication is to have a devotion. The only way to have a devotion is to have a sacrifice. The only way to have a sacrifice is to have a selflessness. The only way to have a selflessness is to have a无私ness. The only way to have a无私ness is to have a无畏.
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