Dance Feature: The MAP Report

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The term NEW MEDIA ARTS is used to describe both the process and outcomes of interdisciplinary arts practice. This practice should be highly collaborative in nature and cross artistic and cultural boundaries in ways that challenge and engage artists and audiences.

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Editorial

Welcome to the elite

It’s the morning after the election and it’s unfairly sunny, but at least a cool breeze damps the humidity of what was a tense, tropical election night. In the mild delirium of the after effects of an excellent election party (bizarrely spiced by a guest who monopolised astonishing tales about the lives and loves of our leaders, bodies of political victims under front lawns, US satellites singing us by focussing the sun’s rays onto Australia etc etc) I’m wondering what’s going to happen to sales tax exemptions on things like printing, of course, under a GST regime. Just as worrying in its own way, is a black and yellow handbill mailed out to various electorates last week which declared on one side, “Labor set to sneak in.” On the other it read, “Choose your preferences carefully. A vote for Labor can give you... [photos of Kim Beazley and Gareth Evans]...An extra $61 million for elite art funding [the last four words in bold], Work for the Dole GONE, Capital Gains Tax on Personal Assets, Gareth Evans...Treasurer? NO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.” What did artists do to deserve such elevation in Liberal Party demography? Who decided to run with this absurdity?

When Arts Minister Senator Richard Alston talks about elitism he’s usually referring to the Keatings as if they are still on Labor’s agenda. Otherwise, Alston’s attitude to the Australia Council in the course of the election campaign has been positive, though his funding promises are nothing to get excited about as we continue to struggle with the cuts of 1996. At its 25th birthday celebrations he warmly praised the Australia Council, confirmed ongoing government commitment to it and ran a kind of bi-partisan line that Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party was the enemy of the arts and that’s what we had to collectively fight (notably, this worthwhile celebration was not grasped by a Labor Party speaker, nor was Labor’s contribution to the arts invoked).

The Australia Council responded to the anti-elitist assault with a press release the day before the election defending “Australia’s leading artists from the government’s own previously stated support for arts funding and recent comments from the Federal Arts Minister, Senator Richard Alston.” The release goes on to argue that of course there is an elite just as there is in sport, and that something that brings Australia international recognition, and (music to Liberal ears) “the arts and related industries are worth $19 billion a year to Australia and employ more than 500,000 people. The arts network is pivotal to the network of small businesses across the country which indirectly thrive from growing arts activity.” These days fame and a decent contribution to the GNP make the arts worthwhile, funding is well spent.

However the release also cites “a recent research report by the Bureau of Statistics and the Australia Council (showing) a very high level of public support for the arts and government funding of the arts. The Council will be sending this report to all the political parties and their campaign managers so they are better informed about the real views of the Australian community towards the arts.” Of course, these kinds of statistical data are not new, and the argument of public support has been touted often enough before. So too is investment in scientific research and improved education lauded as having enormous long term benefits for the financial well-being of the nation, but it hasn’t meant that successive governments of either persuasion have made serious commitment to that investment. There’s still something in the Australian psyche that flinches at doing too much about education, the arts and research despite all the evidence of what these can do for small nations.

I’ve just been to Denmark, which with a population of 5 million people has a profound belief in the benefits of education, the arts and research, and has a prodigious output to show for it, and an acceptance of the arts as integral to the life of the nation.

The Australia Council press release concludes: “Dr Seares says the ads reinforced the Council’s recent decision for the need to take on a major national arts awareness campaign.” Australians favour the arts and government spending on them, now we need to tell them and, especially politicians, that this is the case and that they’d better not forget it. In the meantime, we’ve heard often enough the debate about whether or not sport is political, well it now appears that the arts have become indelibly political in Australia in the narrowest sense, as electoral barter, and it’s sad to reflect on the unfolding narrative of recent years that made it so.

KG
A RealTime feature report on the MAP dance season and symposium in Melbourne

Talking dance, in the context of doing it, appears to be seriously on the increase across Australia. Sydney's The Performance Space will present its second aristocratic in 1999 (curated by Rosalind Crisp, Sue-ellen Kohler and Zane Tucker) PCA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Art) will present its annual Dance are Space-eaters in the same year, and in Brisbane the Body of Work dance conference was held recently. In Melbourne the demise of Greenmill left a gap which was quickly filled by MAP.

RealTime became part of MAP (Movement and Performance), a new dance event in Melbourne featuring a season of dance works and a 2 day symposium at the Malthouse. In this edition (which first appeared online in August), a team of RealTime editors and writers (Zuzanna Soboslay, Philipa Rothfield, Suzanne Sprouner, Eleanor Brickell, Katrina Phillips Rank, Elizabeth Drake, Simon Ellis, Virginia Barton, Karen Green, and MAP symposium co-ordinator Erin Brannigan) respond to the dance works and symposium themes and debate they experienced at MAP.

MAP dance season

A QUESTION OF VISIONS


Do bodily suffering and the echoing of emotion and identity go hand-in-hand? Is the quandary of living, breathing (and how performing) concomitant with agony? Classically speaking, an agony in a traitor, concerns bodies and the gods. What humans are we? And, in performance, whose gods are being served?

1. Saints: Tony Yap, St Sebastian

St Sebastian lies bound downstairs in a white square. Four moans (are they) approach through a curtain of ice, in distilled expressions of hope and despair. The piece is a kind of apotheosis of Tony Yap's works: the best crafted, the most unified of his visions, with (thank god) the almost trademark suffering taken off the female body (or male body in a skirt) at last. I smell Renato Cincocilo and BRAA here, as I have in all of Tony's work: the slow group walk, the contained, strained emotion, the sense of a cruel extremity. But, as with much of Renato's work, I wonder what we are being called into, the purpose of the event beyond the actors' portrayals of suffering.

St Sebastian's references are Mishima and the Holocaust via Gorecki. Yet what's Mishima to

performances onstage. Watching becomes voyeurism, perhaps less so here than in Yap's earlier works because of the sweeping immediacy forced on us by the inherently internalising power of the star-jerk second movement of Gorecki's Symphonies No. 3. But, as Mishima himself warns, the "intoxication" found in the "exhibition" of spiritual impede and music can be "sinister," and the sado-masochist (not to mention homo-eroticism) of this source is, it seems to me, quite dangerously at odds with Gorecki's dedication to the Gestapo-incarcerated 18-year old (Yap unthinkingly writes "awaiting" her punishment?). One has to be careful with one's sources. Mixed metaphors indeed.

2. Sinners: James Welch, Gentry Taylor, Blindness

Blindness seems to me a work of good intentions, tackling a situation of hidden domestic violence. Its source is the "installation" (really a simple exhibition) of photographs of shattered windows by James Welch. Structurally, this piece suffers from an unwarmed rhythm, each channel-

switched episode of equal length, dulling the dance's emotional potential. This feels like student work, albeit with chilling moments, not prodding far enough in movement or concept into the violence and explicit silence it seeks to expose and in some ways understand. Like a newspaper report, it fails to make one recognise one's own violence in order to help change the given in the world.

3. Weidachmens: Sarah Neville, Hellograph

Applause for Hellograph was loaded for the highly accomplished visuals and sound track. The dance—an amorphous body in a current of urban environments—moves to one rhythm whatever the source, the face is placed throughout. We may be amused, but we are also human: to dance one and not the other denies evolution of substance and nerves, with its relentless calling, yellowing and failing. I saw the piece on video documentation (at the artist's request after i had been called away), where the camera's more intense frame helpfully rendered both intimacy and distance.

2. Tributes: Angie Ponch, Temporal

Reading Thomas Rater's account of working with Gotowksi, about creating work from personal myths. Gotowksi is punishing on Rater when he keeps trying to be huge and meaningful, Rater noting the way others slowly built long pieces from the smallest of theatricals. Ponch's piece seems to me to have such beginnings—glass candlelight, the music of glass drums round the perimeter of a water bowl. The body dancing here sometimes visible only as a fracturing, moving memory).

This is a piece which takes time with

its qualities—simple elements built into a whole via an exquisite sense of rhythm. The only unfortunate segment is the "dance hair" (like the proverbial "hair acting") where a private moment—perhaps of grief or loss—is veiled and kept introspected beneath all that luminosity for too long.

3. Traces: Margaret Trail, Hi, it's me

Hello, who's speaking? the voice, vocaliser, or echoed? trail's trumpet is as progressively disappears the body, using bands of speech like rope, disconnecting speaker from spoken and reconstructing the waves. Part One is a jibbering of paranoid and more liberal selves, enacted as a dialogue between her real time, embodied voice (as Trail alternately spears, lounges and wriggles in a chair with an almost-endearing self-consciousness) and several taped versions. We next view her, "live with headphones," seated at a mixing desk. She listens to her own recordings, wiggles her toes, occasionally calls out ed in a phantom producer, like Plato calling out for more light. The third part is a sound-and-light sequence in a darkroom wall: the edited tape and glimmers of colour like ribbons of remembered substance of the body(s) which once spoke or telephoned. Are "bodies" ever more than this? I like this last piece, finding it very fine; the first two segments for me a little trying in real time.

4. Polaroid testings: Philips Rothfield, Logic, with Elizabeth the Ladder, Keen and Jamie Dick

Philips Rothfield's Logic tests an intellectual proposition but does so in a way that engages the physical space. The body itself undergoes computations, negotiations, patterns a parallel between a body thinking and a mind teasing out its own processes. The proposition of reciting text and formula projected on overheads, the body moving in a distinct yet parallel consequence, sets the stage for the final "body solo" where the formulation, suggestions and patterns are allowed to follow their own logics, double, invert and redouble in a kind of gestural mathematics that is nourishing on many parallel planes and very finely honed. This is a thoughtfull and feeling full piece

* continued next page
Critical Combinations


Away from the pressure of subscription season tyrannies, the Australian Ballet presented a program of new Australian choreographic works. Under this title 4 experienced choreographers teamed up with designers, musicians and composers to create the "new ideas, new blood, new music and new creativity" that Ross Stretton proudly proclaims as part of his unique vision for the company's future. Collaboration by definition is the working together of various individuals to realise or sustain a shared vision. This is notoriously difficult to do, involving more than just effective communication and a desire to work with another artist.

Shorthorver though no less striking was Stephen Baynes’ El Tango, a light-hearted duet to the seductive tunes of the tango. Antonio Piazzolla’s treatment of this musical form and his creation of Baynes’ comic nuances in timing and composition and was danced by Vicki Attard and David McAllister. The choice of these two dancers was insightful. Their ability to discern the chic in both musical and choreographic scores and to then use this with a look, a pause or sly stretch showed the importance of a dancer’s interpretation. This may not be a radical piece, but I suspect it was lighting for Baynes to present a story in a subscription-free context without having to create a masterpiece. The subtle set of El Tango is evidence that this venture paid off.

Despite the Australian Ballet providing fabulous technical, administrative and artistic support for those with their necks on the blocks, there was no one work that stood out in terms of audacity. Two works initially displayed this potential. Bernadette Walong’s Slipstream unfortunately fell short with too many undeveloped ideas and an over-enthusiastic lighting design. As lights flashed and drew focus with increasing persistance, we waited in vain for concepts to develop—the sounds of stones on corrugated iron, cocomos suspended mid-air, a tractor tyre tuned with fur skins and three women draped in metres of clear, thin sheets of plastic. Slipstream alluded to meaning without providing the necessary developmental links needed for the interpretation of symbols. It was as if we had been invited to a sacred space where life flourished but, like the story of the Japanese Santa Claus nailed to a cross, signs seem to have become confused in the cultural shift. The three women in plastic became rubbish floating downstream and the rubber tyre remained ridiculous.

Adrian Burnett’s Intersect had happier results. With percussionist and Australian Ballet dancer, Roland Cox, a collaboration was established that afforded Burnett a good deal of creative freedom. Unpretentious and completely engaging, this work experimented with and responded to a variety of percussion instruments and rhythmic scores. Burnett’s work is most successful when he moves away from traditional ballet moves—which he does most of the time in this piece. His reversal of gender roles in the duet form is an example of his eagerness to go beyond tradition, crossing into contemporary and club dance genres. He seems to be at home in this context and more likely to be at his innovative best when exploring dance through 'alternative' perspectives.

Not every venture in Collaborations paid off, but with more new blood, ideas and less emphasis on elaborate stage production this event could become, with the Australian Ballet’s commitment, an exciting annual one.

Katrina Phillips Rank

Mystery Points

Dance Creation 98, hosted by the Australian Institute of Classical Dance, National Theatre, St Kilda, July 10 - 11.

The concept of judging new dance works created specifically for a choreographic competition would appear to go against the dance community’s best efforts to value process over product, and its well-founded scepticism at assessing quality. And yet on July 10 and 11 at the National Theatre in St Kilda, the Australian Institute of Classical Dance (AICD) presented such an event in the second biennial Dance Creation choreographic awards. This year’s event fell under the umbrella of MAP, Melbourne’s eclectic response to the demise of Greenmull, and both the AICD and MAP must be congratulated for taking another step towards bridging the often tedious chasm that exists between classical and contemporary dance organisations.

As is any reasonably significant junior sporting event, nervous excitement permeated the air mixed with healthy doses of cliché concerning the value of participation in such competitions. Much of the test in the program alluded to the importance of developing choreographers by giving them an opportunity to present their work. For Rosetta Cook, the winner of Dance Creation 96’s Robert Helpmann Award, winning is not paramount, whereas having a work seen is. Personally, I am not convinced that having work seen is nearly enough to help choreographers develop a thorough understanding of the subtleties and nuances of dance-making. At most, it’s a start. Without setting up some form of dialogue concerning the works (particularly between judges and competitors), the event becomes a void in which a would-be choreographer presents a collection of movements only to learn whether the work is a winner or not. There were 20 works entered in Dance Creation 98, 12 less than in 1996 which might immediately suggest that the lure of prize money alone is not enough to entice emerging and established choreographers to create work specifically for a competition. Disappointingly, the 1998 Edward Borovansky Award for student choreographers was cancelled and the handful of student works were judged as part of the non-professional Peggy Van Pragh award.

Watching the works themselves, I gained immense pleasure from seeing so many dancers moving in such extraordinarily diverse creations—from the stripped back formalism of Francis D’Alh’s Praise to the romantic theatrically of Tanja Liedtke’s Thru Time. Sadly though, in this most human of forms, the majority of works ignored the subtle intricacies, quirks and gestures.

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Paulima Quintruos' Fix, Dance Creation 98 Roy Valley
uncertainty and, inevitably, apathy.

For the record, the Peggy Van Praagh Award ($5,000) for non-professional choreographers was won by Yumi Sollicher for professional choreographers was won by 1996’s Van Praagh winner, Paulina Quinteros, for Fiecompelling Won by 1997’s Van Praagh winner, Paulina Quinteros, for a compelling performance. The program also noted the Soren Helley Lasica’s use of an operatic concerto as the basis for a welcome relief.
CURIUS INTERSTICES

Dance Works, DWB forum, July 24, Wesleyan Hall, Albert Park, July 15 - July 26

Waiting: empathetic evolution

Choreographer Sandra Parker tells us she has recently experienced a moment of unexplained images that brings her to the creative process. Composer Lawrence Harvey too, she says, brought different sounds to the studio: "the sound grew as the dance grew, a lovely experience, movement and sound filling the space at the same time." Harvey notes that in this cumulative process he would work

direction where the dance was going, "geometrically, not just gesturally."

Someone asked how WAITING came about— from the quotation for Rome: "All that's Not". "No," answers Parker, "that came later. I was experimenting with how still you can be for long periods of time, how close one asks, "How was the sound translated into stillness?". Movement always sounds like movement. A dancer responds, "When waiting you've got to be alert, you're quite still, and Lawrence picked up on that."

Strong:trust

Darin Verhagen tells us that Sue Healey was in Russia when the work finally came together in Melbourne with the dancers from Truck Theatre. "She brought detailed notes, she would find what her bank of movements, phrases, you might call it, used as musical content. In the work Jumpy there's a long dedicatory section made up entirely of repeated clicks. In another section distortion is at assault levels.

From one event to another there is a displacement.

In DWB, the composers Franz Titzas and Darin Verhagen, whose works we heard at 200 Gertrude Street, have composed music for the dancers to perform. Yet the work by Shirley Ford, in which Darin Verhagen, Here the space produced by the (absent) performer is occupied by the dancers and the audience sees a line and a large, heavily raked seating. The music is played through speakers high in the church roof. It changes level as the dancers move up and down, height and the width of this large hall.

The dancers are on the floor. I feel too high looking down on them. This feels like an unintended dislocation. A rift. A separation. I expect that the dancers are to be seen as a whole. To swing in the space with the music. To cross over into the trajectory of the music. To play in the air. The dancers are not to be seen as a block. I wish they would leave by another door, look somewhere else. We are in a clump. They have the space for the music, the universe, the other walls, and yet they turn towards us.

In the program notes for Lasica's Live Opera Simpson, the dance is perceived as "not really (opera), The Haunted Manor by Stanislav Monizovski, which has informed the choreography. It is important to note that there is no reference to this opera in the music composition, given that such quotation would be well within the genre of computer composed music. Instead a series of small fragments have been recorded on different instruments, a piano, a Fender Rhodes electric piano and various percussion instruments, and processed electronically. The dancers have not rehearsed to this music. They maintain their rhythm and tempos from the software and the composer's directions. The opera is in no attempt to mirror this musical information in the composition. We see operas and see that the uncommon becomes curious. We puzzle over these inconsistencies. "There is a sense of bodies colliding. The different elements do not always sit comfortably together. It is necessary that a slender thread of light search out other symbols, but the very finery of the symbol," (Barthes) A fissure, a narrow opening. At these moments something within me is activated. I feel a shift of perception. I feel there is an exchange. No longer a showing but an exchanging.

The space and pause of memory, surprised by what I remember. Like an involuntarily memory I have returned to these unwonted events, to issues of passing time which to begin. Memory issues strict instructions. To be true to the memory; to the recollection, less so to the action. True to the memory of the acts.

To our own desire to see ourselves, our desire for the impossible.

Elizabeth Drake

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

Company in Space, touchBureau, devised and directed by John McCormick and Hellen Sky in collaboration with sound designer/composer Gary Young, choreography by Amanda Card, Hellen Sky in collaboration with Louise Taube; computer graphics Marshall White performed live simultaneously and interactively between SIGGRAPH 98, Orlando, USA and MAB, Melbourne, Australia, Melbourne Town Hall portico, midnight July 20 - 24

Thirty-ago years I remember staying up until the small hours of a freezing winter night to watch the first worldwide live satellite broadcast. The event was watching The Beatles perform All You Need Is Love in a London studio. The great Cities of the world were fed in short live feeds. I recall Melbourne's featured the first tram of the day leaving the Kew depot.

Melbourne Town Hall: St Andrews Street at midnight, stamping my feet in 2 degrees of winter, watching touchBureau by Company in Space recalled that event in 1968, touchBureau was a realtime online performance by two dancers—Louise Taube in Melbourne and Hellen Sky in Orlando, Florida. They danced the globe, "the earth beneath their feet", the same dance together but separate, mirroring and replacing each other's movements. The reflective pool of the video camera and the computer caption. The dance duet was projected on three screens, two at street level, on the same level as the live, present performer and the third in the upper balcony level, the place (as a matter of symmetry) where The Beatles had in 1968 to wave to the assembled populace of Melbourne.

The intriguing thing about touchBureau was the way in which it gathered and placed its audience. The performance was free of charge and available to anyone who chose or happened to be there, passing by on foot or in one of the many trams whose route takes them along Swanston Street.

There were no huddled dance-goers outside McDonald's, watching the dance from the place I was told I intended viewing position on the other side of Swanston Street. Directly opposite us was a horticulture audience—couples in tulips and bulldozers, clenching bunches of helium balloons who'd just left a ball in the Town Hall where they'd been dancing.

Many of the dancers sit down on the table in front of the television and watch the performance of the dancers on the Town Hall steps watching Louise Taube's live performance in front of a projection of her own movement on two screens projecting her dancing with Hellen Sky and in the centre, in the far distance, on the other side of the street, another audience—watching them.

From time to time our view was obscured by a passing tram whose passengers, watching out of either side windows, could see the performance and their own live video projections as well as two differently dispersed and attired audiences. For the ball-goers, the whole event was framed as a Procesionary—arch—the Town Hall portico.

Meanwhile, we watched almost the whole thing. The dancer whose presence was as significant as the trams, the ball-goers and the three video screens. These various modes of spectators were all inhaled into the audience, as any imagined audience in Florida. The image in a mirror in a Van Eyck painting were all there too.

At the end of the live performance there was another show—more like a choreography for a show as a clear sign in Northlink and saw themselves talking to Hellen Sky in Orlando about what it was like to be here—freezing cold, but on time tonight, and what it was like to be there—cold in the sense of lacking an audience or space of reception. And the people over there said they wished they were back here with us. The contrast between the exponential advances in technology which make an event like this possible and the smallness, ordinariness of the desires of the participants to make face to face connection was strangely moving. Cyber space is at once so vast and so domestic, so indifferent and yet so intimate.

touchBureau was more event and spectacle than performance. In the role of initiated audience, you took on the part of our artist advocate to explain to the confused, accidental audience watching past McDonalds who wanted to know what this was. You were also constantly drawn to the other elements constituting the event: the behaviour of the other audiences; juxtapositions—walking dancers through the buildings, watching the dancers responding to the virtual and actual other on the screen; the comfort of the live, long performer who was centrally placed on the stage from any of these myriad viewpoint points but who was somehow not the focus of the event—

Suzanne Spunner

The MYAP symposium, curated by offering, measurement, verification, namings. Maps offer hope and certainty though they are inaccurate and knowing how to read them is a whole other matter. Maps can be confusing. Maps capture a moment, only a succession of maps tells a story. One map can be overlaid by another—the same terrain, same time but different story. So it was at the MYAP symposium, a gentle reading of half-formed dance maps, chance meetings, directions, losing, falling off of the edge of the known. Although only an acronym (for Movement and Performance), the MYAP title and aims in music an a church, suggestive of letting everyone on the same terrain (here the ballet presence), let's help find a way through the steady fed paths of new media and popular culture and the competing spaces for dance—the theatre, the studio, the site.

Although this was harmonised mapping, there was no more provocative way of setting out than with guides Libby Dempster and Amanda Card. Not that anyone actually got upset and pulled out of the expedition, but we were left bemused, pondering two maps, both of them labelled 'voyeuristic', revealing the 21st century ballet and subsequently of European and American modernism over Australian dance. Dempster's map was at first glance binary in form, but every inch of the terrain she revealed turned out to be occupied by ballet, ballet and ballet, its self-mythologising and its fundamental denial of the feminine—ballet's 'other' was pushed off the map, if it was ever on it, a lack rather than a counter-force or a substantial difference. Nowhere to go. Map? What map?

Amanda Card looked at the dance landscape and saw "not the hegemony of the classical but a society of bricolage" and took us on a dialectical jog on which she established first that because we don't remember a dance counter culture it doesn't mean there wasn't one: "lack of a memory of a counter-culture— not a lack of a counter-culture." We went with that and she led us back through the century to the life and imagined work of Sonia Revid in Australia to... a dead end. Revid left no legacy, no inheritors, no school... Just when we thought we were getting a footing, the map was whisked away, it had no history. Dance is not literature, words are not enough. It's about bodies and the embodiment of tradition.

But Card was kind enough to lead us a few tentative steps along a direction on a new map, one that acknowledged that the choreographers and teachers that came after Revid did leave a legacy that was, yes, European or American, with a reminder that we...
were ourselves were colonial, illegitimate, "she pronounced, "our uniqueness is our lack of it, declared us the ultimate postmodem culture. And they are a collective of as many Australian dancers have created from foreign traditions, imitation and sincere brilliance. But what kind of map was it? It deformed the romanticised Australian landscape, noting various attempts by Geamme Murphy, Jill Sykes and others along the Nullabor. No time-honoured link between the arts and the bush. We were left standing about asking what was left, who the Bush was, and what's wrong with a tradition from somewhere else, if we're still part of it? Will we go?... But our guide had gone. Both of us. And we'd only just set out. Of all the arts forms in Australia, dance is the one that seems most beglared by the weight of imperial tradition, the same weight that crushed Indigenous culture and guaranteed initiatory white arts in the colonies. The other arts don't have anything quite like the ballet as bogeyman, though the opera and symphony orchestras can be similarly at less if deviantly invoked. Whatever, the Dempster-Card mapping was mildly received. Had they heard our event before? Had they been 'hagiromised' into silence by ballet? Were they shocked at the small space they offered them on these maps and their apparent insignificance? Well, it's not always easy to read the mood of a conference in Australia. But there were some questions, issues are not pursued, chairpersons these days have become 'facilitators' instead of intermediaries when opening the meeting cosmologies (well, that's what it felt like, another kind of mapping), Christie Parrott did an interesting if illogical turn. On the one hand, motion capture technology for her is functional, a tool for choreographing dancers while in pain. On the other, the result, which Parrott described with loving lyricism, is an animated dancer (built from the performance of a real one), a very real creature with the potential for an ethereal internet life of its own, exploring various choreographies. A queer floating sensation brought on by hovering between Fairfax and Parrott's confrontation of dance technology, her claim to have inherited a portrait "inexplicable to unite body, mind and universe" in a performance about performance and change. He said he saw "performance as an important adjunct to performance" (which that Parrott was immersed in from our own presentation, we weren't really sure what she had in mind). Patrick spoke of the "experience many of us have of our own body, but people were not necessarily seeing that", nor turned to film: "dealing with the desire to how people were not necessarily seeing that" of the Melbourne forum was, to my mind, the only way of thinking, ignoring the third factor (the dialectical split-off, change, or in other words at least as long as it is current, as long as it can be quantified). MAPP had been forced to give up taxonomically, liberating, pragmatic, most of them in the performance context, the idea of making the irrational operable. Nevertheless, the poetry of the sometimesDN celebrating maps and the striking thing about them, the strangeness of their envisaging, the metaphorical, the playing between choreographer and dancer, artist and technology, the autobiographical impetus, the existential moment that took us off the map. Keith Gallach

MAPPING THE INBETWEEN


As well as giving us a meticulous and enlightening survey of footwear at the MAPP Symposium, I also wore my philosophy, even in my film, Wer and my own body, but people were not necessarily seeing that, so turned to film: "dealing with the desire to how people were not necessarily seeing that". I felt my feet touch the ground and then had rushed, the notion of dance being a dematerialisation of modern life...an ethics of dwelling", or dance", "ungrounded...". But what a range of questions the content... I mean even turn out to be mapless, the paths evaporating and reforming in a few dialectical turns—dance is a "dancing form of a dematerialisation of modern life...an ethics of dwelling", or dance", "ungrounded..."

Two places we were led turned out to be the ground, the concept of dance as a terrain, a map of competing forces and trajectories had marked the terrain of modern dance traditions, says the constant questioning of Bangarra about its syntheses. Some places we were led turn out to be the ground, the concept of dance as a terrain, a map of competing forces and trajectories had marked the terrain of modern dance traditions, says the constant questioning of Bangarra about its syntheses. Some places we were led turn out to be the ground, the concept of dance as a terrain, a map of competing forces and trajectories had marked the terrain of modern dance traditions, says the constant questioning of Bangarra about its syntheses.
SHADOW BOXING?

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE


Even at the initial stages of organising the MAP symposium, the apprehension, as if great care was needed if something unpleasant was not to seriously damage the fragile honesty of our nation's dance community. What was needed therefore was a good dose of comfort food, sweetness, and the warm embrace of the unknown. And so, via the unifying elements of 'space' and 'time', we thought, a safe, comfortable, yet unexpected environment might be provided in which differences of practice and tradition could be rendered harmless. In the spirit of fair play and equality, each panel had its own spread of philosophical approaches. But in panels of only a few people, such broad scope often seemed to leave gaping holes between speakers, gaps which the speakers themselves sometimes attempted to cross.

"Binary" was a term I heard used often to describe the state of an argument, and in my ignorance, it seemed that it meant something bad, not wholesome, dead-end. There were histories, known and unknown; ballet and the 'other'; the embodied and the out-of-body; subjective and objective bodies; public and private spaces; pop and elite culture; the 'railway tracks' trajectory of choreographic choice versus that of 'moment' of losing touch with the 'binary' to describe a way of thinking which forced an impasse, precluded creative development, maintained the dependence of one 'idea' on the other; the trouble is that they are not written and, critically, have no inheritance.

From Binary to Palindrome

Binary was a term I heard used often to describe the state of an argument, and in my ignorance, it seemed that it meant something bad, not wholesome, dead-end. There were histories, known and unknown; ballet and the 'other'; the embodied and the out-of-body; subjective and objective bodies; public and private spaces; pop and elite culture; the 'railway tracks' trajectory of choreographic choice versus that of 'moment' of losing touch with the 'binary' to describe a way of thinking which forced an impasse, precluded creative development, maintained the dependence of one 'idea' on the other; the trouble is that they are not written and, critically, have no inheritance.

From Binary to Palindrome

If the "binary" approach was indeed, perhaps the 'idea' might disappear and things would be less constricting and much more pleasant for everyone.

Sally Gardner brought to my attention a brief comment—I can't remember from whom—which suggested that perhaps, speaking of ballet, one might "be more spontaneous" as if that, somehow, would be in line with contemporary dance. A private rejoinder suddenly opened, for me, a crack in the niceties which threatened to describe all of us this idea of ' spontaneity' lies at the heart of the matter. 'Being more spontaneous' is a glint of description of what a different dance tradition might encompass. Because there are not just competing practices, but competing traditions and all that they imply: learning to look different, cross, work differently, to feel differently, to occupy a different intellectual and psychic space, to develop work along different narratives. Culture is always a phenomenon of change from one tradition to another.

In the quiet hours in several of the forums (for instance, 'Ballet and its Other'; "Next Steps: In Search of the Body"); "Performative Differences from some of the artists in Matthew Bergan’s video interviews, Arrival and Departure") that a level of frustration was evident among proponents of philosophical stances other than the balletic tradition. One problem seemed to be that often speakers were too often too much actual conscious practices, but the traces left in behaviour, the hard wiring of the nervous system is also inalterable and off what is not simply a movement technique, but a way of thinking, a set of assumptions about the body, about being. Libby Dempster was not only discussing conscious practices or beliefs, but a kind of cultural program for thinking about dance. Dance is not just a set of practices defined as fact, values not normally available to scrutiny without profound changes in perception.
Trevor Patrick talks about the interconnectedness of our different practices and continue to hear the words repeated as if they are understood, and the weight of the phrase is not their own, but without actual experience of the differences, the words are empty.

It seems that there is this lack of full understanding, to be so contained by the need for 'unity' and common ground, that those very meanings, the depth and values that we are trying so hard to elucidate are in danger of being swallowed in the effort to render them acceptable, tolerable and benign.

Eleanor Birchill

FEET. We are seated in a semicircle, as if we are the audience. Six pairs of feet askew, leathered. The softness of meditating what we've seen, the trying to prod further questions open. Still, as in any of the performances, we are enjoined (I hear them) to keep our knees together. ANKLES. I go weak at the ankles with my daughter in the room. She is three months old. I'm thinking what that means to our vision, our capacity to absorb. At the moment, without her my eyes are nothing, my tongue is dry.

Dubt. William McClure's upended moment is as the umbramell'd dan ir of a child. Literally to have a place? The multiple, beautiful, the body of another being. I peak up the valley, our capacity to absorb. At the moment, without her my eyes are nothing, my tongue is dry. A W NG IN THE BODY MAP.

Keith Gasch

The Australian Ballet's Collaborations panel discussed Dance, the Malthouse, July 7; Mixed Metaphor forum, Dancehouse, July 5

The Australian Ballet's Collaborations panel discussed with dancing. As well as their associated forums were my first experiences of MAP as an event. The first had me aghast and the second, with Strothon, they represented the very different approaches to "movement and performance" and accompanied by the notion that MAP was expected to expanded.

The Australian Ballet (AB) forum was ultimately about how to get your work in front of William Griffin from Radio National, chosen by Ross Stretton the artistic director of the AB. His lack of knowledge about the process and the lack of voice consequently the discussion—at an alarming disadvantage, which left me questioning Stretton's role. Griffin's subsequent, engaged dance commentators in the audience, their ideas, unnecessary interventions.

With Stretton by Griffin's side, the conversation hinged around the AB's "new" directions in inviting four "new" choreographers, Bernadette Waliog, Stephen Bayes, Natalie Web and Adrian Burnett, to create work for and for the AB dance collab. AB Dance forum, for example the Australian Ballet that is no longer looks like Butoh. Waliog's work with Butoh, a new sojourner, her new." What I mean from here?

Keith Gasch

The point of view of the body within this context as "vulnerable" and the difficulty of controlling the expression of the body particularly when you are creator and performer—how the body "leaks" meanings.

The idea of the "organicism" creative process that his group underwent seemed to challenge the more methodological approach that Anthony suggested and Philip Rothfield introduced Christos Linous' active, invulnerable body to the discussion. Methodologies, processes, practices that replaced the design, music and space of the AB forum and the discussion flowed without interruption or clashing ideas in direction. At first, the line between audience and panelists became indiscernible, with choreographers, practitioners and theorists all in the same room as a wall of words had been an uncomfortable divide at the Malthouse.

Erl Brandian

Ways of Speaking

Collaborations forum, The Australian Ballet, The Malthouse, July 7; Mixed Metaphor forum, Dancehouse, July 5

Rosalind Crips I find the practical moments. I'm working in the studio and somewhere in between I try to keep working while I'm talking and suddenly I realize I'm doing something more interesting, more connected. I think it's a dialogue between pathways that are established in this dark cloud and a path that isn't anything pre-coded. If I direct myself to see a part of my body so I'm more aware of it, it might make me do something (HER ARMS, SHOOTS UPWARDS) within a certain sort of parameter. It doesn't feel like nothing. But there has to be a space.

William McClure What I'm saying is that the shadow play, the words, the embodiment of the ambivalent, it's equivocal, it doesn't give itself away. So whatever representation you lay on top of it, the shadow play or nothingness is then endless possibilities.

Peter Eckersall

Virginia Baxter There is but Suzuki and its influence on Australia in which the Japanese form has been so deeply absorbed into the practice that it no longer looks like but has become a part of the practice. The Japanese influence in her work is not obvious, it's not worn on the surface. It's been absorbed through a series of processes. If you're going to engage in an exploration of another culture the trick is then to locate it in the context of your own...

Yumi Umashere [Classical ballet is probably still inside my body. It's a centrality or a distortion. It's a cultural representation. I had to get rid of certain kinds of rhythm, certain kinds, that I had to cut out though. But the movement which I hold by Butch teachers, you're useless because you keep you go. You are good at movement. But in Butch, movement is not a ballet you learn the technique to achieve more quick movement. You have to slow down in Butch.

Peter Eckersall

The idea of an Asian body needs to be dismissed very quickly. Does something work in the rice fields in the way it's performed in Japan? The Balinese shamanic trance dance for example? Where this gets very technical in Japan there's a debate within about a Japanese body, with some Butch artists who have achieved semi-guru status saying, this is the

continued next page
Attitude to peace; pop culture. There's an
mainly crucial distinctions and countering
contemporary danse, gaining in all its form
implication is that dance may have lost its way
baller; the impact of technology; the indelible
more crucial question than the place of
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Aesthetic positionings

Marketing, audiences and reviewing in dance rich Perth trouble Sarah Miller

Every cloud has a silver lining as the saying goes and the sad demise of the Chrisie Parrott Dance Company in early 1997 has meant that Perth has benefited enormously from the flowering of a range of independent dance practitioners. There, of course the usual problems: the small audience base, the lack of profile for such practitioners and the rather more intangible sense of luck—we don't have a real dance company. Yet aside from the obvious financial problems suffered by the Chrisie Parrott Dance Company, there has been little or no discussion of the ramifications of one company playing to the same tiny company. Yet aside from the obvious difficulties, there have been opportunities to do so without the constant development, should there be, of a broader dance at the best of times. Yet one of the major problems confronting local dance artists—as is no doubt the case in other states—is the lack of a reliable, regular and affordable vehicle through which to publicise work widely. The West Australian, for example, carries no daily or even weekly listing. They apparently believe that a daily performance listing would mean losing income from display advertising so they prefer to exclude smaller companies and individuals altogether. On top of which, the standard of reviewing in The West is awful—dull, badly written, not interested and ill-informed. This is justified— as it so happens—that favourable newspaper response: their reviewers represent the views of the broader community. Oh really?

The West Australian have an experience of a respected company like Danceworks from Melbourne performing in absentia recently and the best the reviewer can come up with is that it's one line short of a narrative. The lighting, by national and international award winning designer Margie Medlin, is dismissed as "too bright", or "too dark" (the lighting and projections were fabulously). That this particular reviewer clearly knows nothing about dance or its histories, that she is clearly incapable of distinguishing between what is polished and what is not, that the line performances by all the dancers are completely ignored, that she has no ability to address the sound composition by young composers Amelia Baroni etc etc, just has to be endured. There is no choice. I don't give a flying f**k whether a reviewer likes a work or not. There are differing views, different tastes and many aesthetic positions. As someone who is paid to reflect on work in public, I expect a certain degree of responsibility, consideration and information. I expect a reviewer to have the nous to admit when they're out of their depth or it's not to their taste or they've had a bad day and look beyond to what is happening in the work.

Perhaps skadada had the right idea when they screened their first short narrative video at PICA. It was free. I didn't see any review at all. They had a full house and people loved it. Auto Auto is a bright piece of urban pop featuring Claudia Alessi, her big red cadillac and a car wash, on her way— endlessly repetitious. Paul O'Sullivan's Hanging in There was an equally charming piece of work that explored such questions as why aliens never kidnap intelligent people; the relationship between yoga and classical ballet; lapsed Catholicism and the effects of sleep deprivation (a new baby) on the independent practitioner. There's a kind of paradox for me in this friendly piece of work which addresses life's endless frustrations with such patience and admirable good humour, but then maybe that's because I'm the grumpy type. Paul, on the other hand, uses the simplest means to create a modest but engaging performance that should have had broad audience appeal but, sadly, only attracted very small houses.

Danielle Michich and Natasha Rolfe are two of the brighter young dancers currently 'emerging' as choreographers. Danielle (or Dank as she's known) presented the outcome of a recent creative development period at the Blue Room Theatre in collaboration with Natasha. On Contact was an exploration of—you've guessed it—contact inspired movement. It was both skillful and engaging but, for me, didn't have quite the edge that their respective performance works for PICA's Putting on an Act had earlier in the year. Their works for that season were far more streetwise and witty, but then they were 'performances' as opposed to an exploration in movement.

I've only mentioned a few of the projects that have taken place over the past 3 months. Maybe Spring has sprung, but I for one find the fact that there is so much going on great cause for pleasure. Given the opportunity, these artists will continue to develop in both range and maturity. If, however, the level and calibre of movement-based activities continues to go unacknowledged by local media and audiences, we'll be left to wonder, yet again, where all the birds flew off to.

Explore me for staring but...

Maryanne Lynch wonders Which Way's Up

Excuse me for staring but...Have you ever had sex? Do people in your country have washing machines? Do you have a swimming pool problem? Want to go walkabout? Excuse me for asking but...Do you cry when you're upset?

Four faces peer out from behind rose bars. Four figures enact 4 stories of 'difference.' The Indigenous woman, the migrant man, a woman with cerebral palsy, a male CP-er too. But against what or whom is this difference reclaimed? Which is precisely the point of writer-director Lowana Moshman's Which Way's Up. This is a performance work made up of composite pieces—dramatically, stylistically and in terms of the artists who've contributed to its development. Specifically, inside and outside of 'the world of the artist's arena', people thereunder because of the perception of others; but Elizabeth Navratil, Guillermo Perez Reyes, Sharman Parsons and Michael Piri emphasise in their within-ambivalent stage presence the dubious quality of 'authentic' definitions.

Two actors and 2 dancers, the 4 performers make their way through a series of vignettes depicting the world of 'difference' from either side of the divide of the artist's arena. People thereunder because of the perception of others; but Elizabeth Navratil, Guillermo Perez Reyes, Sharman Parsons and Michael Piri emphasise in their within-ambivalent stage presence the dubious quality of 'authentic' definitions.

Five people are dear. Among the five people are dear. Among the five people are dear. Among the five people are dear. Among the five people are dear. Among the five people are dear.
Three for the road

Kate Fletcher sees Murphy, Koltai and Obarzanek works in Tasdance's Vital Expression

The Hobart Theatre Royal Dance Subscription Season Made to Move has been a boon for Tasmanian dance enthusiasts and it is both exciting and appropriate that the home-grown company Tasdance has been included in the 1998 series. Vital Expression, a broad mix of contemporary styles, is an innovative, high quality, triple bill featuring leading Australian choreographers.

In The Fragile Garden the curtain rises on a haunting, gloomy set, dancers languidly reposing on chairs against a rich black velvet backdrop, the set simultaneously electrifying and chilling with its striking crimson velvet central couch and a huge slash of vibrant red cascading from the heavens. The work, created for Tasdance by Sydney choreographer Chrissie Koltai in collaboration with the dancers, is no ordinary narrative work but a fascinating “picture book of emotional landscapes” performed to a variety of music from soul-melting classical and atmospheric harmonies to the confronting discordance of Jeff Buckley. The audience is taken on an emotional journey, ultimately entrancing, jarring, sensational and aggressive. We journey through myriad responses overlain with a confusion of personal entanglements, as the dancers variously become lover, mother, father, brother, sister...

While the work was not entirely captivating, there were moments of great poignancy—the playfully provocative floor work between Jay Watson and Michael O' Donohue and a powerful “pas de trois” featuring Wendy McPhee, O'Donohue and an armchair...a dance fragment which aptly represents “love that burns”, rejection and desire rolled into one. Experience and a long, successful working relationship between O'Donohue and McPhee is evident in this segment—power in motion. One of the most striking images is of O'Donohue apparently melting into the chair (it has a personality of its own) to become a kind of mythical headless creature.

The eclectic emotional content of The Fragile Garden is in stark contrast to the “pants” dance of Graeme Murphy's Sequenza VII named after the accompanying Luciano Berio score. Created in 1977, this vintage Murphy offering was received with appreciative chuckles from the audience. Performing in the original 1977-style costumes—white sleeveless bodysuits taking full advantage of bodylines were quite revolutionary at that time—Watson, McPhee, and O'Donohue weave their way as one through an array of shapes and patterns, evoking kangaroos, horses, flautists and other instrumentalists emerging and re-configuring with split-second timing.

Leaving nothing to chance this fast-paced, exacting and tightly structured work is playful, witty, and thoroughly engaging.

The final piece, Gideon Obarzanek's 1994 work While You're Down There, with music by Joey Baron and Mel, opens with some startling, body percussion involving work boots, caterpillar movements and singing by the performers. A quirky mix of solos, duos and trios, this fast, physical and funky work further explores Tasdance's individual and collective versatilities.

The company took Vital Expressions to Canberra as part of Ausdance's 21st birthday celebrations. It is very apt that they included Sequenza VII which was created 21 years ago.

Vital Expression, Tasdance, artistic director Annie Grieg: The Fragile Garden, choreographed Chrissie Koltai; Sequenza VII, choreography Graeme Murphy; While You're Down There, choreography Gideon Obarzanek, Theatre Royal, Hobart, August 12 - 15; toured to Launceston, Queenstown, Ulverstone and Deloraine in August and The Choreographic Centre, Canberra in September.

Kate Fletcher is a Hobart-based teacher of drama and dance.
Another mapping

Zuszanna Soboslay feels the textures of Thresholds

Dance Compass packed Thresholds at Theatreworks with what seemed a loyal following and a varied, textured program of both breathless and meditative dance. Martin Krizan’s Stop Go Man is a terra firma exploration of balance, overbalance and sash. Colin Davey’s slide image shows wonderful whimsy: 20 men atop telegraph poles, a hard-hat ballet, chrysalis ready to yield out and fly. Simon Ellis’ Touch with improvised voice by jazz singer Christine Sullivan begins with his body suspended over a thumbprint block mould on the floor. Who’s what makes contact? The thumbprint-gelled hand-touch picking out body fragments, stretching shadows, is beautiful. If light touches, so too could sound. Is there little sense of voice shaping body too. Ellis’ strength in his and others’ pieces is his quirkiness, which needs to be extended and encouraged, rather than his tendency to smoothness which is lite but does not ring as true.

For Reflections X Y, Jillian Page uses some standard teaching exercises to choreograph a work on rock climbing (but one can be too knowing an audience). Alongside its literal ideas are nice realisations in movement and musculature, playing the edge between hard labour, desire, and ecstasy as these dancer-cum-climbers come close to simulating flight. Robin Plenty’s An Echo Early opens with 3 bodies like brain cells compensating the world. A delicate sense that hiatus divides, rhythm unifies. Echoes slip, memory opens. Two bodies sway together for a while; my brain turns. This work is very fine.

Dance Compass is a positive choreographic force, producing enjoyable and highly intelligent work, the eclectic background of its dancers no doubt feeding the diversity of its practices.

Thresholds, Dance Compass, Theatreworks. August 6 - 9

There’s a moment in Gideon Obarzanek’s CORRUPTED 2, the final work in Chunky Move’s latest offering, Restiform, when a solo dancer in diaphanous clothing moves in white light to a slow walking pattern beside a vast tilting screen. The scene starts with its scale and starkness. The movement is beautiful. But too soon the moment evaporates. After the sharply evocative opening, the architectural relationship between dancer and screen dissolves and what was a veriginous, ominous presence assumes a secondary role to the enactment of more predictable trio and solo, as impressively fast and lyrical as they are from the fine ensemble of performers. CORRUPTED 2 feels like a work awaiting its full realisation.

Paul Seleny-Norton’s The Rogue Fool is a revue on transformation, an engagement with objects as supports for and extensions to the body. It’s a more sustained piece that gives the audience time to decipher and enter its disturbing world. Dancers move purposefully into position and firmly, propelling each other up with poles like prosthesis. People become objects. Their stillness is total. Even through this strange landscape the fabulously dexterous Luke Smiles in routines reminiscent of vaudeville but extending way beyond the limits of time and body. Damien Cooper’s lights have their own rhythm, cutting out in the middle of a movement or coming up to full strength at the end. Fred Frith’s unusually lyrical guitar is sublime, recorded with perfect clarity and played as it should be—loud and clear.

No doubt about it, CORRUPTED 2 is virtuosic. While sections of the audience revel in Obarzanek’s hyper-animated parody of soap opera, for others it’s strangely old-fashioned with none of the moral urgencies of contemporary soap. It’s classic farce—accelerated action, comic personas; simple suspense, clever detailing of body movement especially Fiona Cameron in a fabulous dress that seems to have a mind of its own. Like some entr’acte from burlesque, the piece is performed on the forestage in front of the curtin. The sexual politics are as—miserably—expressed with discordant spectacles and boredom in the modern eroticism of TV rep, The myth that sex can be liberating is vice versa. The myth of virtuous and dramaturgical invincibility, in substance doesn’t connect beyond cliché. Chunky Move has power and precision, and now in evidence a sense of delicacy, but the pleasures of the company’s work still appear to rest on the surface, something more. A more thoughtful waiting just below, unseen.

VB KG

Flashmeat, Chunky Move, choreographers Gideon Obarzanek; Paul Seleny Norton; performers Fiona Cameron, Brett Daffy, Lisa Griffiths, Kistle McCracken, Byron Perry, Luke Smiles, David Tyndall; Seymour Theatre Centre, Sydney, September 12 - 26; Melbourne Festival, C U M, Malthouse, Melbourne, October 21 - 31

In an unusual combination of talents for dance, or rather dance-theatre, the usual role of choreographer as director becomes two roles. Janet Robertson directing and Sue Healey choreography. They’re collaborating with designers Eamonn O’Arty (space), Damien Cooper (light) and Julia Christie (costume) in One Extra’s Territory, a dance-theatre work devised by Robertson. Jed Macadam designs the sound environment, Sarah Hopkins has created a series of evocative compositions for cello and voice. Performed by One Extra affiliate artist Lisa Frech and newcomer Angelina Lai with a guest appearance by Marilyn Miller (Bangarra Dance Theatre). Territory traces time lines and patterns of migration. At its centre are the journeys of an English bride of the 1890s and an Asian bride of the 1970s both travelling through an unfamiliar landscape. As their ground is mapped and divided they cross paths with an Aboriginal woman whose land lies locked behind cattle gates. Explore Territory at the York Theatre, the Seymour Theatre Centre, Sydney October 8 -9, 14 -25; Tel 02 9964 9400

Eamon D’Arcy (space), Damien Cooper (light) and Ux Harada, Andrew Ashley, Solon Ulbrich and Gill O'Connell, Bodies Andrew Fisher

Produced and presented by Mark Clear, director of the Newtown Theatre, with artistic director Norman Hall, the annual Bodies season showcases a range of contemporary dance from independent choreographers around Australia. The event has become a firm part of the Sydney dance calendar offering the opportunity to see the work of some of the most active contemporary dance-theatre practitioners. This year’s Bodies include Paula Quinteros (winner of an Australian Institute of Classical Dance (ACCD) Dance Critics’ Choice choreography award this year in Melbourne), James Taylor, Jan Pinkerton, Virginia Ferri, Solon Ulbrich, Ichiro Harada, Deborah Prest, Cathy Maguire, James Ricketson, Jamie Jeev, Norman Hall, Veronica Gillmore, Derek Porter, Sydney Satter, Kate Denborough, Kenny feather, Elizabeth Lea and Peter Cook. The supplementary Youthworks program features student choreographers and dance works every Saturday during the Bodies season.

Bodies, Newtown Theatre, Wed - Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm, October 21 - November 9 tel 029195801

Melina Kelly and Louisa Dunnette, Thresholds

Ian Dunn
Story spaces

Dean Kiley's critical guide to the shapes of hyperfiction

The pneumatic conjunction of hypertext and fiction should have by now sprawled a whole happy brood of buzzwords. Apart from the inevitable ecologism (hyperfiction), however, there's not been much hybridisation in the addicted multimedia extravaganzas, yes, a few shrink-wrapped join-the-dots novels, loss of traction re static and some word-processing (put text on template, add pictures, upload, watch users scroll-bar-ism) and much more loop text into ungraceful and/or illogical small chunks, string a few links or loops between them, add color and etch out plots with lighty with animations and text; but not stir; do not cook; do not improvise.

Tristram Shandy did it all better, faster, funnier, 200 years ago.

Having got that small rant out of the way, let's look at some of the modes, genre and shapes of hyperfiction currently, starting with the most compact and least scary. Stand-alone hypertexts (which aren't owned and often aren't hered to anyone remember HyperCard!), despite their generally precarious positioning as intermediate technology, are still produced at a steady Big Mac rate.

In America especially, programs such as Stanford's Storyspaces, which allows students not only to create self-contained stories specifically because they don't rely on the extras to go online, Storyspace has also gained ground in schools and universities here (eg RMiT) as an authoring environment, a concept-mapping or storyboarding medium, or a pre-structuring device for websites, but in general is absurdly unsuccessful in Composition classes and for hypertext novels (see http://www.arts.edu.au/GRAPHITO, the fiction samples and program details). This hermetically sealed version of hyperfiction runs on scaled-down ground in schools and universities everywhere, and remarkably, you now releasing novels on CD-ROM can be domesticated and authorised, processed back into the paper-pulp mainstream. Witness the Newcastle anthologies. Or the New academic journal (sponsored by Eastgate), Modern Fiction Studies, devoted entirely to the Storyspace-styled hyperfiction. No.

Meanwhile, the web venues you'd expect to be most amenable to hyperfiction—web journals or ezines—largely perpetuate the inertia caused by still thinking of The Page as the basic design unit, and print analogues as default settings. The seductive properties (and opportunities) of hyperfiction thus get truncated or overstructured, bad-metaphor-stretched or literalised. The sense of a projective imagination responsive immersed in a fictional environment (with all its gaming potential), the experience of being a semi-free agent inhabiting a narrative sequence, the 3D solicitation to co-construct the story, then all lose out to the illegimation of either The Anthology, The Short Story Collection or The Literary Magazine, each nearly mean cut-up n-pasted n-mounted Text + Graphics = Ourspace hyperfiction.

Read Janet Murray's Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberpace (New York: The Free Press, 1992), bypassed the critical hoopla and you get a feel for what's being passed up when hyperfiction becomes hyperfiction (inert at one extreme and overly dizzying when whirled at the other). Have a look at the Textbase site (http://www.xrayt.com.au/textbase.htm) to see what can be done when the word 'hypertextual' can be unembarrassed applied to all dimensions of the writing.

There is no reason, given that hypertext allows a synthesis and simultaneous keyboard text and graphics, for traditional genre borders to remain unimpeachable either. "House '97, for instance (http://www.curtin.edu.au), based at Curtin University, had elements it called 'comics' that were nonetheless effective narratives looping through other live-radio and webcast events, stage performance being reworked for the web, and 'ordinary' short-story-type fiction. Haiku theatre and other forms of dramaturgy (like soap operas) become merged or framed or reworked by hyperfiction in the Venue site (http://www.afrf.edu.au/venou5 GRAFFITO, a political satire journal, manages to be hypertextual despite being in the form of plain-text emailing list: though it's posted without graphics or formatting, the poems and rants and stories build on each other, sequel each other, reallusive and hilariously to each other and current events, and reflect the juxtapositional, jumpy logic of hypertext in the reading experience.

More fundamentally the text versus graphics 'illustriative' relationship so beloved of almost-print designers is satisfyingly sent- up and subverted (as per Gertrude Umile's influence) in the Parallel sites (http://www.sa.com.au/parallels/index.htm) with their artificial and unsustainable separation between 'gallery' and 'journal'. while engaging multidisciplinary and multimedia artists to produce pieces that intersect or correlate beyond And Here's A Gift Of That Too.

Moreover, I think we're seeing a slow generic version of continental shift, as fiction writers become their own designers of elements usually relegated to the practice of poetry (line-length, scansion, extended rhyming patterns etc) and graphic artists (typeface, colour, texture, framing, pictures, etc.) All of this, of course, is irrelevant where the venue for the hypertext is either a web journal with a standardised "house style" or a kind of onscreen/onphone brochure appendage to the 'real' version.

At the level of the narrative, the text-vs-graphics relationship between plot and story, and between structure and genre, can be inventively played with rather than imported wholesale from print. So the 'narrative logics' of hyperfictions can productively be experienced (to reduce them to metaphors for the sake of categorising): as a series of nested tunnels; where branching sequences of choices and nodes; as counterpoint or fugue; as mirrored or paralleled characters and/or stories; as spliced montages or sound-object films; as multiple layers or collages; a bricolage, with your active involvement in 3D construction; as Tinkerballs (from the old Disney story-reading records where Tinkerbell would tell you when it was time to turn the page) read-left-top-bottom with your hand to read further; maps or cycles; as boardgames (sets of steps or 'moves', some chance rolls of the dice, then back to some starting point again); as an automated public-transport ticket dispenser (lotsa buttons taking you nowhere); as braided river-deltas (Kirsten Krauth noted this in an earlier piece); as concordances (with lots and other material working like references); as weeds or 'hiraeth', spreading across surfaces without clear beginnings or ends or structures.

And when more than one author is involved, or more than one version of a given piece of writing, or enough overlap among pieces to function as an cumulative hyperfiction, then it becomes even more interesting and complex, with all kinds of interlinking, turn-taking, switchboards, chorus, and other narratorial or narrating possibilities. Dits for multiple or competing timeframes or characters' versions of events. Dits of multiple collaging of hypertextual reading orientation (whose voice is this? is that a site-map? will this button do the same thing each time?), pacing (the sequencing of lines of narrative, hypertextual designed, movie, html, movies, sounds) and resolution (The End? no ending? several options? ambiguity levels).

Expectations of this 'new' medium and mode for storytelling are perhaps unfairly high, resulting in exaggerated irrationality if the message isn't massaged for the media, but it means many of the old rules of conventional and convention-driven narrative can be bent, broken, ignored, rewritten or reversed.

Even better, since there are no set conventions for onscreen rendering of fiction, every design can be extrapolated or modelled from the story itself (I'd say 'organically' but that'd be too romantic and optimistic). As genre look at the ways a story can be enacted (rather than literally), a piece about an increasingly psychotic wife who (in place of her husband's love for his grandfather's house) dismantles the house while pretending to renovate it, in the new Extra! journal: http://members.xom.com/danide/callahan2/index.html (temporary site).

Why do we have to wait till someone starts up a competition like the now-annual staff-art contest run by Tripe J, ABC Online and the Australian Film Commission before onscreen and online writing appears that exploits the medium, mode and emergent genres? Why are so many print and magazine conventions being hauled over hyperfictions like an alien diagnostic apparatus? Why are the very design and material components of paper publishing still being translated, literally and often crudely, to the monitor? Why aren't there more Oz web journals with a dedicated international commission and house hyperfiction that earns and enacts its perf? And if it's out there, or you've been doing it, why aren't you writing about it for this series on hyperfiction in RealTime?

For Dean Kiley's guide to examples of hypertext types, visit the links page of the RealTime website http://www.tracetm.com/opensite/
The truth of our past

Greg Gardiner and Peter Eckersall report on the Reconciliation & The Performance Arts forum

The forum discussed issues central to the debates on Reconciliation in the context of the performing arts. This unique event gave arts practitioners, performing artists and members of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities the opportunity to discuss these matters for the first time in such a forum. The Reverend Tim Costello chaired the afternoon event attended by over 150 people.

Joy Murphy, an elder of the Wiradjuri community, traditional owners of the lands of Melbourne, opened the forum. She was followed by Helen Caron-Sugars, former Director of the Koorie Health Research Centre, who gave an intense and emotional account of the various meanings the term reconciliation held for her as an Indigenous person, combining reflection and memory, body language, and political. Her message was essentially about the need for honesty, truth and integrity in dealings between all black and white Australians, and the importance of dealing with the past.

In a survey of the moments in our history when reconciliation seemed possible, Professor Henry Reynolds noted how in the 1990s such an opportunity had once again been let slip by the pastoral industry. As he pointed out, the pastoral industry simply would not have been sustainable were it not for the historical involvement of Indigenous people. But Reynolds also was at pains to point out that reconciliation was taking place, regardless of what conservative governments did, and he was particularly upbeat about the way young people understood the necessity and the meaning of reconciliation.

The second half of the program, active Glenia Shaa spoke about the importance of achieving some reality in the representation of Indigenous people. As a white director working with Indigenous texts, writers and performers she was now aware of the importance of negotiation through the creative process; of the need to take the process step by step, and not make assumptions beforehand. As a white director working with Indigenous texts, writers and performers she was now aware of the importance of negotiation through the creative process; of the need to take the process step by step, and not make assumptions beforehand. As a white director working with Indigenous texts, writers and performers she was now aware of the importance of negotiation through the creative process; of the need to take the process step by step, and not make assumptions beforehand. As a white director working with Indigenous texts, writers and performers she was now aware of the importance of negotiation through the creative process; of the need to take the process step by step, and not make assumptions beforehand.

The session was also considered a good starting point for future discussion and creative activity. Publication of the forum’s proceedings will be undertaken with support from the Koorie Research Centre, Monash University. The Forum: Reconciliation & The Performance Arts, organised Paul Monaghan, Greg Gardiner; an initiative of NITF performance group, co-hosted by Teatrów or the Koorie Research Centre, Monash University, August 16

Write sites

Kirsten Krauth looks at words on the net

http://www.wollongong.tar.sway.net.au/-mezadwild/

A chaotic landscape of new language. Words crossed out become strong enough to exploit. Challenge, this dramatic form like Shakespeare, inventive and striking. Fleshbits, a erotic mojel, a roll of the code. I am getting overtaken by square breeders. The question at the bottom of the scroll bar r in carle.Jou? and yes, I am, in a hurry to control and master these strokes, these unpronouncements. Some of the links won’t work. Is this part of the design r in paranoid?

I want to break her coded terms and become unjumbled. B eing real, warped, twisted, pain and seduction, SHOT, a pulsing target of pumped-started action jampacked with worldjiks to explore. A diagrammed book of wizjdzels is, like a diagnosis found with blood and anger where women become ”tricking corpses that will leave plastic fragments in the ground”, volupitous words of spit and pleasure:

If I am lucky I will be empty, void; and get a job - from 9 to 5, get pretend, screened, harmed and abuse my children like everyone.

http://www.feline/toi/

Feline. Click on her animal eyes, exotically tattooed in leopard markings and enter the grrrls own zone, signposted by primitive drawings and spiritual messages and z’s instead of s’s. Words and wit (mmm...) with some nice tchoc stuff, as you pass your mouse over the poet, the name appears, hovering, insubstantial. Poetry includes Holly Day’s fragile, words over chalices light through fractured window, streams into stereotype, and Susan Jenny’s On The Shortest Day, realusdo and sound effects about pain and isolation. There’s not much text online yet; only 3 prose pieces, 2 by writer Karen Bouslay. Too Late, her affectionate hymn to the analytically repressive, has an effective blocked rhythm, the splash of routine. My mouse starts to get twichy around any section called Mind, Body and Spirit. That new-psy, chakra-healing, re-birth, go-wi, meaning means content as dull as a hippie kid’s lunchbox. And believe me, I know.

http://www.thetherapist.com/index.html

The Company Therapist. Welcome to Dr Charles Balin’s cozy couch. If you can’t wait the week to visit Dr Katz, or if your own therapist charges a hundred bucks an hour, check yourself in for a daily dose of psychobabble. (Not suitable for hypochondriacs or avoidance personality disorders.) Daily transcribed conversations of cabinet contents, patient files—that delicious feeling you are spying, ranging, childlike, two fingers, over the keyboard, evidence, even medication. Will Alex continue to be stalled by Regina? Will Katherine play her cards right? Will Herb ever get over his drug addiction?

Will the identity of The Anonymous Faker finally be revealed?

If you’ve come across any websites featuring interesting hyperfiction/ experimental writing, let Kirsten openup@timearts.com

500 words

The Jason Sweeney feedback to Doppio-Parallelo’s On Contested Ground

At an intersection of ideas, theories, words, predictions. I’m in observation of, like surveillance of, a public conversation, travelling, onloop (circular), On Contested Ground, a site of unfinished sentences. Researching/questioning my own personal histories, digging into memory, physical disability, confronting racism. Doppio-Parallelo, in “an open cross-cultural platfo:m”, gathers 6 voices on a panel, facilitated by Teresa Cee, live online via a bulletin board discussion, I must respond in 500 (English) words. There’s a clash of signposts, a flow of language.

01: Unbroken hands. Wales Enoch shows photographs, trails of recollection, stories to be told, as yet unotied, memory shelfed, packed in a language created by physical space, lines upon lines, finding a context in which to say things.

02: Making noise, unfurling, unsettling the ‘normalisation’ desired by mainstream, confronting the ‘other’ when the ‘other’ is always already written, made, curated, into the realm of possible erasure. Sally Chance, embracing difference with her

Restless Dance

Company collaborators, in an intersection with language, bodies with which to speak, driven by a culture of disability, layers of diversity, moving in parallel.

(03: Shocked noises, frightened by the lists of John Howard’s insidious and subversive killing off/dismantling of ‘multicultural industry.’)

It’s there. Surfacing. I know. Prof. Mary Kalantzis guided us through the overhear projections, the horrid facts. She tells us she’s miserable.

Erasing, courting erosion, transference. Methods of (new) understandings. Origins of hip hop, global/local interchange, sonic forms traversing borders and nations, a rap discourse. Tony Mitchell investigates networks of musical forms such as turntablism, Mcing, Djing as transcending geographical constraint, maintaining its memory, its roots.

05: Massimo Ranieri, speaking of an “anthropology of theatre”, explorations of the (individual) body of the actor, about stories forgotten, a knowledge of acceptance, back and forth, coursing episodic propriations.


06: And then I’m humming the words to a Serendipolab song: “You go in this team, I go on that team, divide everything, a flag or a number.” I’ve written it down so it must be important. Ramesh Rangarajan (Operations Manager, Motorola Australia Software Centre, Adelaide) introduces the concept of “managing a culturally diverse workforce.” Team work. A workforce built from a “global resource pool”, skilled professionals providing “transnational mobility.” A globalised business. Product designed and developed by these teams, individuals making up a (whole, striving for Motorola’s aspirations of “basic commonality.” I’m seeing double. Business/Industry/Art product. With an emphasis on speed, technology, a high 6-month turn-over, built to last. Motorola ‘attuned’ to the needs and value systems of individuals. Critical thinking, critical culture, ‘a machine operating on its self-devised dynamic working environment. What of the erasure of the self in order to achieve the goals of a high-powered industry?” Calming the noise. Who said that?

And at 495 words, what more can I say?


Jason Sweeney is a writer and sound artist/musician. He is currently working on a research project examining family histories, technology and memory.

If you’ve come across any websites featuring interesting hyperfiction/experimental writing, let Kirsten openup@timearts.com
Taylor passes into Christopher Walken, and disconcerting succession of tableaux vivants narrative structure more akin to the stations a guy walking out of his suburban front door cinema: either his characters turn networks of money, bone, blood and underworld that renders them transparent distinct incarnations. character will even cryptically split into 2 (Dangerous Game, impulse behind everyday people, facades (King of New York, themselves upon such metamorphoses and vice versa. Eventually, Kathleen as a her victims—tell me to go away and say it quickening of the film mid-way, she look, her voice, her postural manner alter radically in the course of her descent into her ferocious embrace of ‘the hunger.’ At some moments, Taylor appears to be playing a 3 dimensional, naturalistic, psychological character enrolled in a philosophy course at NYU. At other moments, she is more like a ghost or apparition, whispering frantically, staring off in a trance while others attempt to read her. For a stretch—judging from the dark shades and vocal drawl—she may well be mimicking Ferrara himself (‘a film is everything I am’), he has said). In a superb quickening of the film mid-way, she approaches a man on the street who immediately says what she says to each of her victims—‘tell me to go away and say it like you mean it’—and in that moment Lili Taylor passes into Christopher Walken, and vice versa. Eventually, Kathleen as a character will even cryptically split into 2 distinct incarnations. The films of Abel Ferrara always build themselves upon such metamorphoses and exchanges of character, whatever the genre or pretext, whether it’s a horror movie like Body snatchers (1994) or a street drama like Bad Lieutenant (1992). His is an X-ray cinema: either his characters turn themselves inside out, plunging into a fiery underworld that renders them transparent (King of New York, 1990), or we come to see, by the end of the lesson, the complex networks of money, bone, blood and impulse behind everyday people, facades and gestures—like the banal opening shot of a guy walking out of his suburban front door (Dangerous Game, 1993). There is a religious-didactic element to many Ferrara films (especially those scripted by Nicholas St. John, “the bottom line is, he’s a believer,” says Ferrara), a narrative structure more akin to the stations of the cross than Hollywood’s generic templates. His films are a jerky, disconcerting succession of tableau vivants (“cooly sustained, dilated and de-dramatised), as Edward Colless describes Ferrara’s style in the September Australian Book Review—pockets of story or pieces of worlds, cast adrift as islands between large lakes of plot ellipsis (a practice taken to an extreme in The Funeral, 1996). His characters cross these black holes only with the greatest and most violent difficulty, as if tearing themselves on glass with each fraught step—and each mutilation comes to mark a mutation of their internal being and external frame. At least thrice in The Addiction Lili Taylor, alone in the shot, is allowed to produce her performing ‘self’ in a way that reaches beyond the conventional language of gesture and psychological character. Early in the film, she sees for the first time (we have to deduce this) her non-reflection in her apartment mirror. She steps back and suddenly flings her arms up as if to inaugurate a barcarollian dance; then a cut, rather than taking us closer into the action or continuing it, whisks the apparition away—but it picks up the energy of her movement, its current, and hurls it into the next scene. In another tableau, Kathleen is experiencing the first pain of her vampiric metamorphosis: Taylor lies on her back, emitting sounds, waving her bent legs lazily—in some indistinct realm mingling birth, orgasm and terminal illness. In another astonishing interlude (preceding the cathartic vampire orgy during post-graduation drinks), Kathleen retires to a small room and struggles with herself—literally, gripping and clawing at her own body as if to subdue a demon or extract a preferred, more civilised double. The same dame Ferrara is among the most sophisticated of contemporary American directors—his films become more experimental with every outing—but he is also one of the least self-conscious, at least in that hip, playfully knowing, postmodern way enshrined in movies since the 80s. The Addiction (unlike Michael Almereyda’s contemporary Nadja) is a genuine throwback to such stylish, minimal, black and white horror movies of the early 60s as Carnival of Souls (1962). Like that memorable film, The Addiction assumes its fantastique premise (vampires prowl the streets); almost as an everyday mundanity—all the better to immerse itself in the mysterious, fluctuating moods and intensities of an uncannily ‘post trauma’ state. Many Ferrara films begin soon after a ‘big bang’ has occurred—some apocalyptic, breakdown or stealthy contamination of the normal world by its all-purpose ‘others’ (body snatchers, vampires, gangsters). His fictions record the fall-out of these traumas—and the doomed attempts of anti-heroes to scramble back to imagined, gothic moments of origin. The Blackout (1997)—one of the director’s richest and most remarkable films—is an all-out excavation of one man’s post-trauma crisis. Again, seeming hip and original is scarcely Ferrara’s concern: the story places one of his typically shambling, angst-ridden, obsessive-addictive dudes (here played by Matthew Modine) inside a bizarre art-movie conceit. Dennis Hopper incarnates a grandiose ‘conceptualist’, a man with a video camera, an empty, labyrinthine club and an endless supply of willing real-life victims. He is nominally embarking on an adaptation of Zola’s Nana, but his project instantly fragments into a decadent ‘happening.’ And inside this 60s style, trippy psychodrama is where Modine will experience and eventually try to recover his very own black hole—his original sin. The film is fairly drenched in masculine guilt. In a monumentally scrambled montage—whose rhythms, surges and undertows are expertly hooked up to a superb soundtrack collage—Modine hangs, lost and deluded, between 2 women who represent the divided parts of his life. With Beatrice Dalle, he ‘threw it all away’ in a haze of booze, drugs and frazzled recriminations—and she is now mysteriously absent, maybe dead. With Claudia Schiffer, he lives a nurturing, healing, settled family life. It’s the famous John Cassavetes crucible: night life and day life in a dizzy, unreconcilable interchange, neither life securing rest or pleasure once and for all. When Modine eventually encounters an ‘Annie 2’—the voice of Dalle spookily emitting from the mouth of a girl in a diner, a la Lost Highway or Naked Lunch—we enter an uncanny vortex of phantasmic duplications and repetitions, with all preceding plot suppositions becoming even more scrambled. Something terrible has happened in the blackout—and, in true Ferrara style, the hero can only piece that darkness by dropping off the wagon and recreating the psychic conditions of his last and worst binge. And so the whole hurdy-gurdy of film and video images, hellish superimpositions, and Hopper’s never-to-be-completed magnum opus starts grinding through again—except, this time, with a stunning, out-of-body-pay-off, a sublime and disconcerting ending on par with that of Rossellini’s Paisa (1946). Cinepheles will be having their own uncanny flashbacks throughout The Blackout—mainly to all those films in the wake of Hitchcock’s Vertigo (including L’Immortelle, The Legend of Lynah Clare, Blackout—mainly to all those films in the wake of Hitchcock’s Vertigo (including L’Immortelle, The Legend of Lynah Clare and Lost Highway) which play out the tortuous drama of one woman ‘reincarnated’ by another for the sake of (usually) sick, driven man in the grip of his own lethally projected narcissism. This peculiar and haunting tradition has its prize comedy, too: Preston Sturges’ The Lady Eve (1941), in which the savvy, cardsharp heroine (Barbara Stanwyck) plays precisely on her ex-lover’s distracted, easily deluded mindset by recreating herself as someone else. Sturges’ profound tale of revenge and comeuppance between the sexes anticipates many of the themes and undercurrents of Hitchcockian cinema (such as the slyly unforgiving man of Notorious), as well as the daisy games of identity and misrecognition that stalk The Blackout. Only a secondary character actor in The Lady Eve—William Demarest spying through windows and skulking through doors—sees the obscene truth of these double dealings, muttering to himself wherever he goes: “It’s positively the same dame.” The Blackout has recently been released locally on video by Roadshow: The Addiction is available from shops that import Fair titles from the UK.
Technologies of memory

Adrian Miles traces the movement and presence of Chris Marker

Chris Marker may have been born Christian François Boisieux-Villeneuve on July 29, 1921 to an American father and Russian mother. He may have fought during the Second World War, he may have been a US Paratrooper during this war, he may have been a member of the French Resistance. He is, or has been, a close friend of all those people he has filmed, recorded, or assisted for instance Alexander Medvedkin, Alain Resnais, Agnes Varda, Yves Montand, Simone Signoret, Joris Ivens and Akira Kurosawa. Indeed with Marker one of the few things that we can be sure of is who his friends are—that we are less sure of who he is (a rather odd situation if you think about yourself for a moment) is because the only Marker that we know, that we get, is from his work.

There are perhaps 3 extant images of Marker (the most recent a shop window reflection in Wender's Tokyo-Go 1985), the few interviews available playful and elliptical, so the only documentary evidence available that there is someone called Chris Marker is the testimony of peers and the objects bearing his name. That we may only 'know' Marker through his work is a banal truism in our poststructural age, but it remains equally true that it is a rarity to meet a figure so unshyly intent on not "being" known so that their work provides the only trace of their movement and presence (though Maurice Blanchot and J.D. Salinger come to mind). This means that we must turn to the texts to describe Marker's enigmatic and singular contribution to cinema, though this would be to misread his oeuvre. Marker is not a cineaste. At various times a poet, essayist, photographer, filmmaker, video maker, video artist, installation artist, and most recently a multimedia designer, Marker's work is marked less by his record as a filmmaker than a willingness to adopt and adapt technologies of record to his poetic and essayist ends.

Much of this work is about what could be described as the technologies of memory, of record, of the processes and activities of joining or reclaiming memory with the quintessential to find how the individual or singular is lost within the general (this is precisely the case in Marker's most quoted—and misunderstood—example of documentary 'style', the three buses of Letter From Siberia 1956). The distance we think exists between anthropology, in its most general sense, and politics is erased by Marker as he produces specific mappings around very particular events, for example Medvedkin's cows in The Last Bolshevik (1993), or the time traveller of La Jetée (1962/4) who haunts a museum of anthropology. This produces a universe that is populated by images and events that are the meeting of the everyday and its remembering, eventually maturing into an essayist style that combines an anthropologist's gaze with an idiosyncratic political humanism, and it is this style that Marker translates across technologies. But even this would be to misread his oeuvre. Marker is not an adopter and adapter of technologies of record or memory, rather he has been adopted and adapted by the 20th century's principal technologies of record (perhaps this is why Alain Resnais suspects he might be from another planet). They have inhabited him, and it is this quality in his work that actually produces its most impressive complexities. A Marker object is not just a performance of lyrical writing, shifting narrative voice and address, with sometimes violent, associated with often explicit montage, but always becomes a fascination with particular memories (some might call this history) and its institutional apparatuses. Marker's use of words and pictures is to prise these open, making them flat and implosively dense, all at the same time. This is a method that uses direct testimony, found footage, historical record, personal anecdote, fiction, and appropriated media, combining them into a concrete meditation and poetry where the objects used (ideas are always objects for Marker) have an equivalence that is separated from their valency. These idea-objects have their own histories, their own memories, and Marker traces where and how they may intersect ours.

Thus it is the recognition of the flux of the world that informs Marker's mode of address, and while it eludes description, it also appears increasingly relevant that Marker offers an ethics of memory where to remember is always cast into the future. This is a particular hermeneutics where the meanings that are prised from the already-having-been are never placed at the service of a revised history but inform an ongoing engagement. Indeed, if analog cinema does turn out to be a transitional medium on the way to something else, then Marker is the only figure who has identified, and possibly understood, this trajectory (indeed it is the works' openness to the future that also accounts for a healthier use of new technologies). He is a figure whose first memory of films is situated in a genuinely silent cinema and who understood the first interactive multimedia CD-ROM (Immyrom 1997) at 75 years of age.

Marker's relevance is not a result of a pragmatic sliding across this century's technologies of reproduction. His is a manner that is easily misunderstood for being only 'style', when in fact it is a methodology of performance that combines documentation, argument and an intellectual elan that contemporary theories of discourse describe, but generally can't demonstrate. Marker has not only invented a genre, he is also trying to invent a language adequate to it.

Film and video work from the peripatetic journals of Chris Marker, AFI and the Australian Film Commission is situated in a genuinely silent cinema and who understood the first interactive multimedia CD-ROM (Immyrom 1997) at 75 years of age.

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Film and video work from the peripatetic journals of Chris Marker, AFI and the National Cinematheque, Chatou, Sydney, September 12 - 14; State Film Theatre, Melbourne, September 16 - 23, Metway Theatre, Brisbane, September 21 - 25, Palace, Adelaide, September 27 - 30; Cinema Paradiso, Perth, October 3; AFI State, Hobart, October 12

Adrian Miles lectures in cinema and new media at RMIT University. He first published the Chris Marker WWV site (http://cs.aart.rmit.edu.au/marker) in 1993, and is currently researching the relationship between cinema and hypergetText.
Voicing documentaries

Ann Penhallurick talks with Gillian Leahy and Belinda Mason about their new films

I'm not sorry to see the filmmaker's voice return in a way that is not totally spurious—that's why we make films, to change things.

Gillian Leahy

In the end it is Anne's story and she told it so well...it's not my story

Belinda Mason

I've long had a fascination with voice in film. In other contexts I've queried that its power is immense, the more so for being largely unacknowledged. While sound (music) tracks have recently become fashionable, and we have deconstructed the image until it's like Lego on the living room floor, it is still all too readily assumed that voices and the positions they occupy in film are unmediated, both overtly and covertly natural.

The voice track in documentary, particularly in its reliance on non-ipsynched voice—the voiceover—has generally been less naturalistic than narrative film (which apart from the odd arthouse/political/New Wave exception is still characterised by voices firmly attached to bodies). Unlike narrative film where the camera seems to tell the story, the voiceover in documentary often doubles as the narrator, observing, explaining and even seeming to control the image. That the voiceover—usually male, melodious and disembodied—is rarely part of the 'action' fits with the scientific project of early documentary, acting as a sort of vocal stand-in for the scientist (the voice of objectivity), or even for God (the omniscient voice). In the attempt to break away from this untruthful objectivity, New Wave, direct cinema and more recent work which engages with the construction of individual and cultural subjectivity, have usually preferred a personalised voiceover—where the narrational voice engages with the subject, often is the subject.

In this context Belinda Mason's Little Brother, Little Sister seems—at a first listening—to owe its allegiances to the observational tradition (there's a voiceover which gives us information but whose body is never seen), while Gillian Leahy's Our Park appears to be more radical in its use of voiceover—brusquely speaking in the 'I' narration favoured by 'post verite' cinema.

Our Park shows a year in the life of a park and the small community which lives around it; a community which includes Leahy, the filmmaker. There is conflict—human and environmental—there's some historical track an authenticity that it may well have had, had the narrator not spoken it. This goes against the conventional wisdom that the first person narrator, like the literary fiction equivalent, does not have the all-knowing, truth-telling status, and is instead open to question as a single and therefore unreliable point of view. Yet, in a society where the individual is privileged over the community, a society in which—as Hugh MacKay has pointed out (in one of his better articles)—any opinion is as valuable as any other (hence the rise of Hansomism); the first person narrator is suddenly an authoritative position.

As Leahy herself put it: 'I've always assumed [first person narration] makes it apparent that it is one point of view, but I suspect it's a bit like...I'm a real life interviewee, I was there, this is the truth.' I think when I made [Our Park] this is what I wanted to be told.

Little Brother, Little Sister has very different concerns from Our Park. It is the story of the Lows, a middle class Sydney family who adopt an orphaned Ethiopian brother and sister. There is a genetic disorder in the family and this has motivated Anne and Steve to adopt after they had their first child. Their second child, Japhet, is from Papua New Guinea; they have contact with his biological family and, we are given to believe, to some extent with his cultural heritage. The film traces the arrival of Sissy and Elieni into this family and the ensuing 2 years.

Although the final film doesn't let on Mason is a long term friend of the Lows and the initial script had Mason telling the story in the first person, admitting her involvement. This script, which she describes as 'soppy', was scrapped in favour of a layered structure of voice: an occasionally present voiceover (the producer's) which relates facts that link the pictured events, voiceover from the protagonists Anne and Steve over non-synched image, direct voice in interview and the voices of all the family in the filmed events. This tight structure of voice was, according to Mason, part of an engineering that allowed Anne Low to be the pivot of the film: "...in the end it's Anne's story and she told it so well..." The tone of the voiceover is without emotion. "...we made a decision that we would not, at any point in the voiceover, say how people felt...we didn't want to impose on them.

The question I would raise is whether Mason's choice to not put her own voice in the film and to use the 'I' narration has, in fact, allowed the separation of filmmaker opinion and film that the exponents of objective documentary would claim does occur. And has this separation allowed the audience to make up their own minds? My answer to the first question is 'yes'; the narrational voice(s) enables the audience to hear the voice of the subject (Anne Low) rather than that of the filmmaker. To the second question I answer 'probably'. The film enables identification with the subject—I feel Anne Low's emotions—but I'm not sure much of the tight voice structure of the film permits me—or anyone else—to make up my own mind about her story. In order to make up yours, perhaps you should sit and hear this film—and Our Park—you yourself.

Our Park, director/writer Gillian Leahy, cinematography Erika Addis; Sydney Film Festival, Valhalla, Sydney. SBS television release late this year. Little Brother, Little Sister, director/writer/cinematographer Belinda Mason; screened on ABC's Inside Story, finalist in ATOM and Dendy awards, available through Film Australia.

Ann Penhallurick is a Sydney based consultant, researcher and producer with a background and interest in voice and language.

Cinemedia presents an Experimenta Media Arts Event

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19 - 31 October 1998

An associated event of the 1998 Melbourne Festival Visual Arts program

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AGM EXPERIMENTA INC.
A wealth of masculine hells

Caroline Farmer at the inaugural South Australian Screen Showcase

After a number of years of running New Adelaide Films and Videos, the Media Resource Centre this year presented the inaugural South Australian Screen Showcase (SASS). Born out of a desire to recognise and celebrate excellence in contemporary short film, video and new media works produced in South Australia, it is also intended to provide an event through which the wider industry can reward the cream of the local talent. Ten finalist films were selected from 40 entries and 6 prizes for a mixture of genre and craft categories were awarded.

The overwhelming success of Andrew Porter’s film Nobody I Know on the international festival circuit, where it has been enthusiastically embraced by the Gay and Lesbian communities, speaks for itself, and it deservedly won the awards for most outstanding film and best drama. The film deals with the plight of a Filipino bride at the mercy of her brutal Australian husband. Porter’s film Hell would indeed appear to be the Australian Film Commission’s special Jury Award for Johnny Dady’s Production Design. And Hugh Freytag’s evocative photography in The Rocket, was rewarded with an award for best cinematography. Freytag, who was also the cinematographer for Nobody I Know, produced some memorably poetic images for Barry Mitchell’s surrealistic tale of a man in search of his destiny.

I Was a Teenage Child Bride, Kanesan Nathan’s B-grade horror about an Indian arranged marriage was awarded the Special Jury Award for Johnny Dady’s Production Design. And Hugh Freytag’s evocative photography in The Jetty was rewarded with an award for best cinematography. Freytag, who was also the cinematographer for Nobody I Know, produced some memorably poetic images for Barry Mitchell’s surrealistic tale of a man in search of his destiny.

There were 4 other films selected as finalists: Sue Brown’s Doctor By Day, which the wider industry can reward the character’s paranoid dream encounter with a group of vengeful white-goods. Two years ago, Shane McNeil described what he saw as a preoccupation amongst South Australian short filmmakers with “the horrors, existential and otherwise, of the suburban experience”, where “Hell [was] indeed other people” (RealTime 12, 1996). For South Australian filmmakers in 1998, however, Hell would indeed appear to be inherent in being male. For if I was to identify any connection shared amongst the films it would be a concern with masculinity—the good, the bad and the ugly of the late 20th century male.


Caroline Farmer is a video artist, writer and sometimes lecturer in media studies.

Australian Film Commission

INTERACTIVE MEDIA PROGRAM

Launch of new AFC initiatives and guidelines and presentation of AFC funded interactive multimedia work.

An opportunity to meet AFC staff to discuss funding options and how the AFC can assist you.

Peth, Film and Television Institute: Adelaide, Media Resource Centre Monday, 16 November Wednesday, 18 November Melbourne, Open Channel Thursday, 19 November Sydney, Metro Screen Thursday, 24 November Brisbane, QPIX To be confirmed

To assure your place at the seminar contact Kate Hickey at 61 3 2265151 or the venue in your state.

http://wwwafc.gov.au
The AWC's <stuff-art> program compels Kevin Murray to consider the future of art on the net.

"We no longer have galleries, we have art portals." Murray, if it is not clear, is thinking of McKenzie Wark's aphorism "we no longer have roots, we have aerials," but it does point to a future for art in the era of the internet.

The term 'portal' is used to today refer to information nodes—such as Yahoo, Netscape, and Wired—which provide 'on-ramps' to the internet. On a less grand scale, the art world has begun to accommodate itself to within this new architecture. A number of these art portals have opened in Australia, such as Screemarts [http://www.screemarts.net.au], Screen Network [http://www.sna.net.au] and the Australian Film Commission's 'exhibition of net art, stuff art' [http://www.stuffart.net.au]. Criticism is new to this medium, so we need to do some groundwork.

These domain names provide the online equivalent of traditional physical spaces such as galleries. Where does the gallery model stop? Curators, catalogues, openings, reviews, sales, even exhibitions—how many of these fit through a modern? While it is more efficient to minimise infrastructure, do we forgo aesthetics in the process? Do we end with just a 'bunch of stuff'?

There are obstacles in casting a critical eye over net art. First, the fixed medium of print is by its very nature alien to the fluidity of the internet. Today, the liveliest response to net art comes not from magazines, but from mailing lists, as net-time, rhizome or locally recircled. In these lists we find an abundance of artist interviews and theoretical arguments in the new mode of 'net criticism', which is political rather than aesthetic in concern.

If email, though, is to limit criticism to a live event—without durable record. Without the inertia of print, there is less opportunity for the medium to acquire a history. Without a history, there is little chance for the evolution of an argument, and greater stress on work of immediate sensation.

The second obstacle to criticism is more pervasive. In a 'post-critical' environment, it is difficult to locate oneself in the neutral position required by conventional criticism. Today, most of what passes for criticism is merely exuberant. Artists and their friends form the core voice for promoting sites and articulating their meaning. This arrangement suits the political edge, though it often falls to locate itself within a broader field of practice. Newspapers with their indurated critics provide some guarantee of independence, though the specialised role of the critic is increasingly challenged by client-friendly editors.

Let's see what can be done. One reasonably natural act of criticism is classification. Provisionally, we can identify three genres of net art: boxes, windows and hives. Boxes offer stand-alone electronic versions of readily made art forms, with combinations of image, text and sound. Though the classic WaxWeb, [http://Jefferson.village.ymail.com/wax/1.wax] was partly developed in moo-space, its final version is readily packaged as a stand-alone CD-ROM. Window-sites attempt to work within the medium that is specific to the internet. Sites by Heath Bunting [http://www.heathbunting.com/realtime.html] and John [http://www.jxj.org] champion transparency as a means of undermining the commodification of information. And finally, hive-sites offer art from contributions by visitors—artists are the beekeepers and visitors are their bees. Persistent Data Interface [http://www-ec.rcca.wustl.edu/~pdi/] demonstrates what a rich mixture can be creamed off visitor confessions.

These 3 genres represent different horizons for web art. Box-sites rely on the web as a means of delivering ready-made material. The critical strategy of window-sites is to expose the medium by which the information is conveyed. And hive-sites attempt to dissolve the role of individual artist-creator for the collective consciousness of web users. With this provisional classification, we have the basis for some kind of critical judgment. How well do these genres realise the possibilities of net art?

The B works for stuff-art are mostly box-sites. Like watercolour for painting, web for CD-ROM enforces limits on multimedia and rewards elegant economies. How does this reduction affect content? The 6 stand-alone pieces in stuff-art range from comic to epic. John and Mark Lyttuce's Illustrated Alphabet is a line-drawing animation of alphabetical narrative. A more complex interactive is Leisl Hilshe and Simon Klaese's Harrowing Hell, which takes visitors on several predefined journeys to hell. In content, it could be compared to Cosmology of Kyo, but leans towards chaos in characteristic. Mindful's enigmatically named CD,"What does firefly's leg can be twisted to scroll randomly through testimonia of paranoia. Wordstuffs by Hazel Smith, Greg White and Roger Dean contains abstract hypertests with 'boody and 'city', but also includes a java-based cluster of works that can be jerked and rattled. And a tromp f'owl window-site is provided by Alex Davies' Subcutaneous: one element invites registration for a chat session that turns out to be pre-scripted, regardless of visitor input. This devousness makes up for the otherwise pertinent content. Though mostly deft uses of Shockwave, these sites seem slight in content.

Against the comic trend is Andrew Garton's Auslander Micro, which tells an epic tale of a refugee who finds himself as much without sanctuary in the afterlife as he did in war-time Europe. The depth of this tale stretches the bandwidth of stuff-art, though Garton develops some clever tricks for keeping our attention. Auslander Micro graphics in the top frame offer opportunities for manipulation and roll-over icons move text focus between libretto and story.

Though Auslander Micro deserves praise for effort, the small screen seems too slight a medium for its operatic themes of war and death. Unlike the prosenium arch that frames stage and big screen, the monitor is an austere space, and the drama is more convincing developed through a mundane path, such as one of the many mortality indexes online [http://www.austunity.com.au/cgi-bin/morcalc.cgi].

The 2 remaining sites draw outside themselves for content. For the screen for Gary Zebington's Repossessed is crowded with quasi-scientific graphics that suggest "deep programming." The visitor submits a word for 'sacrifice', which is then recast into a mirror. For example, 'Bone' becomes 'What does bone-ly' Under antiquity.' External sites can be drawn into this information feed. The coding skills used in this construction are quite impressive, but the results suggest a clumsy machine intelligence, rather than the omnipotent digital consciousness promised by the opening graphics.

Finally, Mark Simpson's Ephemeris Engine provides a window of search terms, web cars and real audio graphs from unnamed locations. Transmission is occasionally interrupted by questions such as 'Do you sometimes feel you are somewhere else?' As suggested by its title, the Ephemeris Engine dissolves eventually into a kind of mindless traffic-watching.

The works in stuff-art demonstrate technical creativity, but struggle to find a content that is both meaningful and appropriate to the online environment. What can be done? From the artists, opportunities for genuine visitor participation might be helpful. From the Australian Film Commission, it's worth considering to what extent its most popular stuff-art helped form the kinds of works it harvested. Though perhaps prompted by the Stuff Mac program used to compress files, broader connotations of the title have a bearing on how the site is approached. At first glance, the use of the word 'stuff' seems to cater for the neo-Neanderthal consumer—the kind appealed to by companies like iomega ('Because it's your stuff') and Pepsi ('Get stuff'). This reduction of the world to mere substance seems hardly a promising framework for a new artform.

Yet there may be a more serious aesthetic embedded in this vernacular term. Implicit in 'stuff' is a modernist attitude to meaning as material, in the way that Jackson Pollock used paint not as a language but as mud. This accords with the modernist quest to strip the world of its pre-existing forms and confront things in their raw state—'get stuff.' Is modernism a good starting point for new art? Yes, the modernist quest is a useful rite of initiation for any new art form, helping to define it separately from others. But then it needs to move to expressive possibilities which extend beyond self-referential means of content; the ability of hive-sites to tap collective experience provides one way ahead.

Like so much Australian net art, stuff-art shows great promise, but we might hope that something with more conceptual bite evolves out of the primordial stuff online. The emerging hybrid artist-curator-ajranit may eventually lead the way. Get honey!


NEW ISSUE...

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No 29, 1998

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CANTRILLS FILMNOTES is assisted by THE AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION
Cutting the new media umbilicus

Melbourne Film Festival’s Mousetrap prompts Darren Tofts to revise the language of the new media arts

Why do we still talk of “new media”? Are we in the grip of a persistent cultural logic of digital neoteny? In a refreshing riposte to this desire to keep new media forever young, Mousetrap-curators Martine Corompt and Ian Haig inform us that “in 1998 digital media is no longer a big deal.” While not overtly polemical, Mousetrap was as much an exhibition of digital screen culture, to be remembered for cutting the new media umbilicus. Any new medium is quickly absorbed into a culture (this is straight McLuhan 101), tarnishes with ubiquity, and ossifies into style. The laws of media are unforgiving. At a recent forum on visual design at Swinburne University, Christopher Waller (21C, Diagram) noted how the style of glossy, hyperreal-power-imaging we associate with the 90s has already dated, and that nostalgia will eventually mentor its revival. Mousetrap demonstrated that mode retro is a creative force to be reckoned with in contemporary screen culture, though not for anything of so recent a vintage. The diverse range of local and international work garnered for this exhibition declared a “longing for potentially obsolete analogue materials, such as overexposed film-stock, yellowed paper and photographic grain.” Forget the future, digitally-created art looks like it has re-emerged from the past, “secondhand, tatty, ‘laid eye and disorders.” Pace Bruce Sterling, there’s no such thing as a dead medium. The experimental arts will always be a use for such things.

That out of the way we have another problem. Despite the diacritical impetus behind this exhibition, Mousetrap would not avoid falling foul of the regulation pigeon-holing as “multimedia” any artistic practice that way uses computer applications. Festival organisers may have been trying to signify textures into a screen space, and the ability to recompose them in surprising, even unprecedented ways. As Ian Haig noted of the Mousetrap screening program, many of the works explored their digital tools to fuse together cell animation, live action, comics, stop motion animation and found imagery, often producing new hybrid forms of animation, which would not have been possible previously.

This exhibition offered a range of work that displayed the changing architectures of interface design and principles of interactivity. Presided over by one of the acknowledged masterpieces of intermediality, The Residents: Bad Day on the Midway, it suggested a sharpened understanding of intermedia as being concerned with spatial relationships and immersive environments, rather than game-playing or puzzle-solving. This poetic was persuasively supported by Jim Ludtmann, who emphasised in his artist’s talk, the continued importance of exploration and narrative in intermedia.

That out of the way we have another problem. While the screening program was really the nodal point for Mousetrap’s intimations of intermedia. In bringing together national and international work to indiscriminately explore the politics of hybridity, Corompt and Haig have charted more than trends and developments. Their astute sense of what is happening with the screen arts scene suggests that such a thing as a digital body politic, it is being mutated from within by the recumbent force of bricolage. This process can be seen in the collagic, appropriationist style of Rodney Ascher’s punkish grapel with ultra-fundamentalism, Somebody Good (1997), which cleverly fuses 2D computer animation and print hybrid forms (comics, kids’ books, album covers) into a highly distinctive, estranging allegory of betrayal. It is also evident in Laurens Arcadias’ Donor Party (1993), a colourised steel-point etching twitched to grotesque life, which exploits the suggestive potential of VRML walkthrough to document the pitfalls of a pre-electric surgical scene from the 19th century. As well, Adam Gravois’ atmospheric and decidedly low-fi Golden Shon (1996) captured the dual intermedia aesthetic of reconstruction (it looks like a film, but it isn’t) and bricolage, the fine art of making do with whatever is at hand (such as low cost computers and software).

Mousetrap demonstrated that multimedia practice is more concerned with a type of sensibility or attitude preoccupied with all available media, than with the ephemeral of digital technologies per se. Indeed, as Haig advances, the “works shown in Mousetrap expose the possibilities of what can happen when you fuse computer hardware and software, together with... an attitude which embraces the culture of unformatted, free, open-source, free, contemporary anime, and weirdo cartoons.” New media is dead, long live the re-animators.

Mousetrap, curated by Martine Corompt and Ian Haig, Melbourne International Film Festival; screenings State Film Theatre, The Midway, Interactive Melbourne Town Hall, July 23-August 9.

Darren Tofts is the author (with artist Murray McLauch) of Memory Trade, A Prehistory of Cyberculture, 21C/Interface, 1998.

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Cinema and the Senses

visual culture and spectatorship

November 13–15 1998
University of New South Wales

An international conference organised by the School of Theatre, Film and Dance, University of New South Wales, and the Department of Art History and Theory, University of Sydney.

Cinema and the Senses will examine the intersections between different modes of spectatorship and the historically shifting forms of cinema as a cultural technology. International keynote speakers are Patrice Petro (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and Ashish Rajadhyaksha. The Indian film director Kumar Shahani will be an international guest at the conference. There will also be a screening of his most recent work: Local speakers include Meaghan Morris, Adrian Martin, Helen Grace, Ross Gibson, Kathryn Vasseleu, Simon During, Therese Davis, Lisa Trahair, Helen Macallan, Alan Cholodenko and Laleen Jayamanne.

Registration: $120, concession $60. Daily rates available. Contact: 02 9385 5615 or 9351 4213 Email: jbrooks@unsw.edu.au or g.l.kouvaros@unsw.edu.au

Cinema and the Senses has been assisted by the Australian Film Commission; the India Council of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Power Institute, University of Sydney; and the University of New South Wales.
Blimey!

Steven Ball negotiates the rules of the game in British Bulldogs

British Bulldogs screened as part of the Game Theory series of events presented by Experiments Media Arts. The program title however is misleading, perhaps deliberately so.

On the whole Game Theory had an incipient relationship with the usual Pavlovian stimulus-response-reward scenario clichés that dog many forms of interactive gameplay. The Click Click: You're Dead component addressed these scenarios fairly exhaustively via mainly commercially produced games: the Game Play exhibition featured playful game related local artists work and the speaking program discussed related topics.

Any behavioural analysis of the artist-viewer relationship would consider the shifting parameters of the 'rules' of the game. Crucial to modernism, such considerations also can apply to a viewer's approach to post-postmodernist exhibition: one does not have to decode so much as negotiate the packaging of curatorial conceit.

Through its title (a traditional British playground game) and vague allusions to "playing games" in the program notes, British Bulldogs strategically forged an oblique relationship to the theme, but the videos bore little relationship to games or an oblique relationship to the theme, but the films are an exploration of mechanically transformed photography and a deeper, geological time recession at each repeat of the sequence.

Click Click, You're Dead by Anthony Atanasio is a far more conventionally stylish montage of associational image consciousness with advertising/music video aesthetics, images of extreme close-up faces, religious gesticulations, crucifix lamps in constant flash-back faux noir collision.

While these works explored the technological transformation of psycho- corporeality, their cross-genre quotation is a reminder that much of the mental work being commissioned for broadcast funded by a combination of arts council and television. In spite of the predictable constancy of the works to the arts-end of programming this has meant that broadcast television has consistently been an important exhibition site and perhaps facilitated a certain degree of hybridisation. It also means that television isn't necessarily perceived as some sort of low-cultural form ripe only for political intervention or ironic appropriation.

Other works in this program reflected on the relationship between 'human' time and perception and a deeper, geological time span. John Smith's Flight consists of a montage of largely static "still life" images of a community of houses in the East End of London being demolished to make way for a new motorway. Smith selected fragments of former residents' reminiscences about the houses and their lives there, "don't really remember...don't really remember much..." Set to music by Jocelyn Pook, it is elegantly edited to construct a sort of documentary song from a patchwork of voices, a contemporary folklore protest piece.

Withdrawn by George Barber presents a family walking across a field with a backdrop of hills, mountains and clouds, digitally manipulated so that 'memories' of family members disappear and landscape features recede at each repeat of the sequence. Fragments of dialogue about death and
Two cultures divided

Ned Rossiter queries the Tissue Culture & Art Project, Stage One

With the advent of new biomedical technologies and cultural reconfigurations of human and non-human forms and practices, interdisciplinary endeavours by cultural producers have consistently questioned the often mutually antagonistic spheres of 'art' and 'science.' Stage One of the Tissue Culture & Art Project contributes to such endeavours by lancing 'artistic expression' to tissue-engineering experiments in cell and molecular biology.

Catts and Zurr have taken care to avoid the viewer's dilemma that often comes with pictures hanging on a wall, choosing instead a variety of display techniques for their microscopically enlarged images of fetal skin. Light boxes protruding from walls, displays on canvas, images behind perspex alongside miniature glass figurines, and even candy coloured solutions, and an image fastened to the surface of a makeshift table, are some of the novel arrangements in this display.

One of Catts and Zurr's strategies to make art available is this abstract science, to render its strangeness familiar, occurs in the 'Monster' series of images. Akin to a high-tech experiment of Rorschach inks, we can recognise such things as digitally enhanced, accentuated teeth, a hint of lipstick, flared nostrils, a mouth reaching out to our own deftly adorned webfeel.

Elsewhere, a slide-show installation accommodated by a trip-hop, techno-pop soundtrack ensures a certain appeal for the Graduate Diploma in Communication, a lame refrain—"What about the future?"—accompanied by a trip-hop, techno-pop distended webfeel.

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Elsewhere, a slide-show installation accommodated by a trip-hop, techno-pop soundtrack ensures a certain appeal for 'youth' audiences. The soundtrack includes a lame refrain—"What about the future?"—as the exhibition's single ambivalent gesture toward the oustacement of biomaterial digitisation. A pile of laboratory paraphernalia is placed invisibly as debris at the base of projected images; a faint indication of concept formation on the run can be seen in one of the perspex boxes; behind a tissue culture image of a taxidermied rabbit—the sort you can hire for a couple of hours from the Wit Museum—and crammed inside its mangy ears are 2 pipettes. This works, I guess, as a crude juxtaposition of the late 19th century scientific art of taxidermy and a late 20th century obsession with gene cloning (remember 'Dolly'?). In different ways, both refer to a cultural refusal of the expiry date of life. In the corners of this same exhibition space are arrangements of basketball-sized sponge spheres, also spliced full of pipettes.

Exception to this kind of haste can be found in what I consider the most developed component of the exhibition—the non-interactive website. Along with clicking through an image gallery, we read excerpts from the catalogue, an interesting dialogue between Catts and a typically candid Stelarc, an interview with the taxidermist Fiona Wood, and, most engagingly, Catts and Zurr's Honours theses.

In addition to attracting an exceptionally large contingent of sponsors from public and corporate sectors, Catts and Zurr have gone to some effort in acquiring the necessary laboratory skills in cultivating skin tissue and cells onto non-organic materials (glass and plastic figurines) in preparation for microscopically enlarged and digital manipulation. Coupled with their previous studies in eco-design, digital imaging and photomedia, these artists have a disciplinary versatility that in future might result in artworks that move between these borders and conventions distinguishing art from science, as well as the traversability between and beyond these 2 zones of inquiry and expression.

Indeed, Catts and Zurr would seem to concur, writing in their rather confused catalogue introduction on the cultural and social urgency for art to engage critically with its arbitrary other—"an art that, even when advocating an "art that can be seen as the optimal medium to generate a discussion were art and science, and society's values which are still based on old traditional views on art from large sections of the media..." In an exhibition of wildly abstract and hyperbolic work, it's reassuring to find that this statement is the suggestion that worldly and progressive 'knowledge' is synonymous with science, which is fettered by reactionary social values manifest in established modes of perception vis-a-vis art. The technopop logic here is that with new technologies of perception comes a potential equivalence between knowledge and society.

The thing is, art and science in this exhibition are overwhelmingly fixed in their respective modern traditions: art deals in and dares not transgress aesthetics, while science concerns itself with the identification and analysis of verifiable data for utilitarian and commercial purposes. Surprisingly, then, the exhibition operates as an exemplar of artistically and critically overdetermined paradigms whereby the 'artistic documentation' of tissue engineering is somehow justification in itself of the 'artistic merits' of the artworks. The very notion of 'artistic merit' is never problematised, its particulars never identified; in catalogue statements by 2

Re: Tissue Culture & Art Project, Stage One

Ned Rossiter teaches photomedia at Edith Cowan University. He is co-editor (with Allen Chau and Brian Shosmith) of Pop Music in Asia: Cultural Values and Cultural Capital. Contact: nedro@edithcwa.edu.au

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Tissue Culture & Art Project, Stage One, Core Series
Catts and Zurr, Peribah Press. 1999

Review
Riding the Hurricane

Needaya Islam catches No Wave Cinema

If hair can be considered a gauge of the progressiveness or otherwise of cinema audiences these days, as much of the criticism levelled at the Sydney Film Festival would suggest (eg "oh the audience was a sea of grey hair"), then I was intrigued. If not exactly pleased, to find my view of Lydia Lunch on stage at the Chauvel Cinema obscured by a head of carefully arranged spikes. What did this augur for the No Wave Cinema screenings? Judging by the relative youth of the owner, his hair would probably have been a reference to 1986 (Sid G Nanci, Alex Cox) rather than 1976 (Sid himself). As such, this moment seemed to somehow encapsulate the particular preoccupations of this event: nostalgia mixed with artful inauthenticity.

Advertised as a visual performance event, the opening session was an introduction of sorts to No Wave Cinema, with the performance aspect being left entirely to the phenomenon that is Lydia Lunch. Matthew Yakobosky, who researched and curated No Wave Cinema for the Whitney Museum, offered a somewhat monotonous reading of the historical context of these disparate moments of DIY cinema, as Lunch interjected. Her anecdotes were not only entertaining reflections on a time for which there seems to be continuing fascination, but they provided some crucial insight into the point of it all. That is, the particular kinds of political and social urgency felt by these artists and filmmakers, as well as its local context. Unfortunately and perhaps inevitably, the clips that were screened, while a tidy and accessible introduction, didn't quite capture what one assumes is the very reason such a retrospective should exist; namely the extreme and groundbreaking nature of No Wave Cinema. The clips seemed strangely unrepresentative of what Lunch had to say about the shock that films such as_Fingered_ (Richard Kern 1986) created and the battle against censorship which motivated much of this cinema. Nevertheless, the very retrospectivity and historical placement of this formerly underground cinema raised some interesting points. If a cinema engaging with and representing taboos becomes legitimate and is now found in art museums, what takes its place?

Extreme Visions, the selection of short films, was effective in representing the diversity of work under the No Wave rubric. While sex and violence were thematically prevalent, the treatment ranged from Franco Martin's Super 8 Blue Pleasure (1981), featuring porn clips and peep shows, to Kathryn Bigelow's 16mm set-up (1978), an austere, theoretical study of violence, complete with voiceovers by Sylvère Lotringer and Marshall Biansky. This early work of the director of such mainstream Hollywood films as Blue Steel and Strange Days offered a particularly interesting context from which to read the spectacular violence apparent in her Hollywood films, and revealed a certain continuity of or progression in her engagement with this subject. Of the more successful filmmakers to emerge from the period (along with Abel Ferrara and Jim Jarmusch), Bigelow was also the only one to make a notable shift in form, from experimental to conventional narrative film.

Tom Rubinstein's Mads for TV (1984) evinced the playful/real relation to popular forms that characterised the period, by using Ann Magnuson's comic performance to highlight the stupidity and pleasures of television. It seemed to underscore the way in which, in a general sense, the No Wave movement was informed by satire. For various reasons, each of these short films offered some sort of commentary on the relation of marginal forms to the mainstream, by operating as historical antecedents to mainstream work, or as experimental critiques of mass media (as in the case of the customisation of porn clips).

Jim Jarmusch's Stranger Than Paradise (1984) was the highlight of the retrospective. Unavailable on video in Australia and rarely screened, it marked for many a cinematic event. In the very crowded foyer, people spoke enthusiastically about their reasons for being there: to either see it again over 10 years after its release, or to see it for the first time having missed it more than a decade ago. Personally, my general nostalgia for the period was compounded by a specific nostalgia for a film I last saw on my final day of high school. Interestingly then for a film that was so of its time, little about it seemed dated or tired, the black and white cinematography was starkly evocative, while the understated performances were as witty and nuanced as I remembered them. And though it was easy the film that illustrated most strongly the deadpan humour that was integral to the movement, Bette Gordon's otherwise sombre, Han Goldin-influenced Variety (1983) provided perhaps the retrospective's funniest line: "He's the kind of guy that would take his grandmother to Coney Island and leave her on the Hurricane for three days."

Given the putative general pessimism about the state of cinema today, No Wave's acknowledgment of a diversity of film cultures, histories and audiences, and its revival and reconstruction of the cinematic past (in turn generating debate about current cinema) made the program a significant and timely event.


Sandy MacLeod in Bette Gordon's _Lament_
Sounding cinema's depths

Anna Dzenis experiences the heady mix of Cinesonic, the 1st International conference on film scores + sound design.

As the deep oceans of the planet remain unexplored, so does the World of Sound in Film exist as a deep, moist terrain, submerged by the weight of literary and visual discourse. And just as film theory shudders in crisis as to what to say about the acceleration of cinematic effects over the past 20 years, the soundtrack lies quivering—quoting our critical exploration of its neglected depths.

Philip Brophy

For 3 heady days the Media Arts course area at RMIT hosted the first international conference on film scores and sound design. Philip Brophy, the director of this visionary conference, set his sights high. He sought out a number of the world’s most creative experimental practitioners and internationally respected academics who had written major books or key articles on aspects of sound in film. This conjunction of theorists and practitioners enabled a dialogue which illuminated the field of audiovisual analysis, as well as building upon the historical investigation of the role of sound in the cinema.

From the very beginning it was evident that this was not going to be just another conference of voices and theories, but accompanied with an awesome event—Howard Shore conducting a live performance of the score to Crash. The film was not screened; instead we were surrounded by the soundtrack, as an aesthetic entity and experience in itself. While the edgy harmonies and the soaring electric guitars evoked memories of Cronenberg’s masterpiece, here it was Howard Shore and his musicians who held everyone entranced. Shore also proved to be a remarkable storyteller with countless anecdotes and insights into his collaboration with Cronenberg, as well as his other creative and eclectic works. When questioned about Ed Wood, Shore recounted a memorable story about his global search for a theremin, and its truly unique electric brocker and virtuoso performer.

There were many richly overlapping layers and threads to this conference. During the day academics presented their latest research in lengthy papers with questions after each presentation time. Each evening, practitioners showcased spectacular audiovisual presentations of their work. The discussion then continued late into the evening at various city locations with the accompaniment of live musical performances. Each day offered its own theoretical focus and the inspired blending of practice and scholarship.

On the first day the presentations examined the relationship between voice and dialogue. Philip Brophy’s paper “I Scream in Silence: Cinema, Sex and the Sound of Women Dying” provocatively investigated the paradoxes and the ambiguities of the sound of the woman’s scream in a number of films, with particular attention to the currently banned “Spit On Your Grave”. The scream of the woman in the cinema, Brophy suggests is the “aural nexus between sex and violence, delight and terror, variety of voices in cinema, and on the way words are spoken, produced, recorded and mixed.” He included 3 case studies—on dialogue, on modern thrillers, and on voiceovers and sound mixing. In an impressive and detailed analysis of the boat animated and energised the works of the new German cinema, Brophy imparted us with attention to Fassbinder. Royal S Brown focused on “Sound Music in the Films of Alain Robbe-Grillet” and brought a wealth of textual examples revealed how Robbe-Grillet’s films “have more in common with the blending, in music, of serial and tonal techniques that one finds in composers such as Alban Berg than with classical narrative structures.”

That evening the quietly spoken and surprisingly modest Carter Burwell spoke about his work as a composer and the impossibly perfect collaboration he has with Joel and Ethan Coen—“their first film was my first film.” Describing his induction into the world of film scores, he related a wonderful story about studying Hitchcock’s The Birds. Its score was constructed on tape entirely from synthesised bird sounds, by a couple of music concrete artists under Bernard Hermann’s supervision. It served as a perfect introduction to the possibilities of film music for him because there was no music at all. Burwell discussed most of the Coen Brothers’ films, focusing on the way intellect, intuition and the desire to experiment guided him through the maze of scenes and characters and their possible interpretations. Using a scene from Fargo he illustrated how different sonic choices can lead to significantly different readings. Referring to an interactive score including folk models, Burwell discussed the Scandinavian music, instruments and forms for Fargo, his focus of composing a lush orchestral Hollywood score for Miller’s Crossing. The way the Dude scores his own life in The Big Lebowski was evoked as an experience of working on a large commercial film like Picture Perfect. The papers of the final day addressed specific historical assumptions about ‘the coming of sound.’ Will Straw’s “Ornament, Environment and the Theme Song” dove back everyone to the late 1950s and early 1960s with a sensational sample of Hollywood’s soundtracks. Singers focused on the different illustrative strategies and the ways in which these works were marked as popular art. Alan Williams “The Raw and the Censored: Sound Conventions and the Transition of the Talkies” spoke about the films he calls the “part-talkies”—from that transitional period to the need to recognise the significant variety and difference in these works. Rick Altman’s “The Living Nickelodeon” was a joyous audiovisual presentation which successfully converted RMT’s pristine Storey Hall into a noisy, argumentative, raucous and joyful nickelodeon, complete with original slides, Altman as the piano player, vocal accompaniment and projected short films. Conference participants were invited to sing along with the illustrated slides, converse and dispute with others and generally engage in outrageous behaviour. Altman’s aim was both historical, in his recreation of an early picture palace, and also contemporary in his desire to focus attention on film music and fixed-form songs. As in the previous sessions, the desire was for this to continue into the following day.

Cinesonic was a truly remarkable event. In celebrating the critical exploration of the soundtrack, in bringing together students and scholars together, its distinguished guests inspired and enthralled fortunate participants, and it comprehensively transcended traditional conference boundaries. Be sure to look out for the next ‘not to be missed’ Cinesonic experience coming to a venue near you.

Cinesonic, 1st International Conference on film scores + sound design, curated by Philip Brophy, RMIT Storey Hall Melbourne, July 29 - August 1 (2006)

Composer/conductor Howard Shore

Anne-Sophie Barrat

Composer/conductor Howard Shore

Anne-Sophie Barrat

life and death”—an uncertain, unpersisting sound which resists any simple reductive reading. In her paper “Narrative Functions of the Eccoder” Elizabeth Weis developed a taxonomy of the ‘eavesdropper’ in cinema, ranging from the character who overhears narrative information to the ‘acoumophiles’ who derive perverse pleasure from listening—the aural twin of the ‘voyeur’. Sarah Rozloz’s “Genre Talk” proposed a taxonomy of character speech and speech acts in the genres of the Western, the Screwball Comedy, the Melodrama and the Gangster film. She illustrated her argument with classic film clips, supporting her claim that dialogue is one of the central defining elements of these genres. Adrian Martin’s paper, “Calling Rosa Moline: Threads of Voice”, focused on “the scene in Lady from Shanghai, Martin highlighted the “multiple, rapid-fire voices”, the overlapping between voices and “the spatial ping-ponging of voices back and forth across extreme points of the set”, thereby illuminating the sonic/aural complexity of the Welles’ ouvre, and adding to the sonic lexis in ways reminiscent of Michel Chion. In the evening, Yasunori Honda, a major Japanese animation sound designer for 32 years, screened 3 of his works—Macross, Ninja Scroll and Tenchi Mujo in Love—and discussed the changing conceptions of sound design in his own work, particularly in the transition of Japanese anime from analogue to digital sound processing. The audience was immersed in the most amazing 3D surround sound effects; a soundscape darting from behind, floating from above, swirling and flowing magically through the space. Even through an interpreter, the oceanic experience of Honda’s conceptions were brilliantly presented.

On the second day the presentations focused on the multiple musical elements of the soundtrack. Dave Sanjek’s paper, “Reeling in the Years: American Vernacular Music & Documentary Film”, examined gospel, blues and bluegrass documentaries, arguing that historical narratives constructed by films frequently idealised originary heroes and places, while failing to intuit and interpret the music and its individual, emotional effects—a situation redressed in the documentaries by Les Blank. Caryl Flinn’s ‘The Legacy of Modernism: Film Music, Fassbinder, Kluge and Political (After) Shock’ took the observations of composer (and Fassbinder collaborator) Peer Raben that “film music should function as a series of shocks” and showed how this
Telediction

Susan Best on the lawyer phenomenon in Sea Change, This Life and Ally McBeal

Why are there so many television programs about doctors and lawyers? Is it that they have healthier bank balances than the rest of us, or do their lives make particular complications? Doctors, after all, have the ready drama of life and death to call upon, but lawyers? Are lawyers really so aromatic a dramaturgical supply? Is the visible interest of crime and punishment, as indeed the latest batch of lawyer-themed programs—Ally McBeal, Britain’s This Life, and the latest American offering Ally McBeal—what remains of the legal that is worth watching?

It could be that this new twist of the legal tale, the ‘female lawyer’ angle, is the motor behind the latest vogue. But a closer look, I think, may reveal, to go in a kitchen (a destination that perhaps his name always prefixed), and Walker’s beam of dousing, particularly unfortunate encounter in a public: two men falling in love. Two boys chase rainforest looks into the camera.

Much is evident. It is to the women, then, that our object—has male lawyers
tale. the ‘female lawyer’ angle, Is the motor

Philip Brophy blasts into Armageddon

Think globally...A child in a Nepalese village looks up to the sky. A mother holds
tellevision. Brass glasses, rainforest looks into the camera. A wide angle shot tracks by 500 Moslem devotees bowing to Mecca. A family on a farm in Southern Italy laugh as they prepare lunch. Two boys chase each other down a thin, cobble-stoned street somewhere in the world. A boy rides his bicycle up at his grandfather as they sit at front huge whisky barrels in Tennessee. Think slow motion...Think bald-headed act. Locally...Those images could be the

Cinesonic

Brooke Shields and Isabella Rossellini

This Life and Ally McBeal—what remains of the legal that is worth watching?

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The ICMA is located in the heart of South Australia.
Cherub with a cattle prod

Barbara Karpinski and photographer Heidrun Lohr meet the legendary Lydia Lunch

Lydia Lunch is the person your mother used to warn you about. With pitch-black spiky hair, tattoos, a hard body and fuc...
Captivated by kidnapping

Aleks Sierz on recent London performance by Blast Theory, Improtable Theatre and Station House Opera

On the television, a handuffed and hooded woman is held by a snap for mercy. No, it's not a film, it's an official police reconstruction of a real event. As the British media debates the ethics of using dramatised life stories as entertainment, one community group has investigated its fascination with random acts of terror by staging a consensual kidnapping. Judging by the standing ovation at the presentation, Blast Theory has been one of the most talked about performance events of the year. During the summer, the group used a short cinema film and newspaper and newspaper ads to promote their project. Volunteers were invited to fill in a form to qualify for abduction.

Along with legal immunity and questions about allergies and next of kin, people were asked to specify what kind of kidnap they desired: "leftist revolutionärkynded by secret services"; "kept in underwear"; "verbal abuse"; plus more cadastr options such as "bedtime story" and "sick dougnish." To be on the hitlist, about 200 people paid the £10 registration fee, or June 12, 10 were selected at random and put under surveillance. At this point, says Blast Theory's Matt Adams, things got spooky. "The stress of trying on people means we hardly slept. It was very weird. I found the whole experience very affecting and emotionally draining." Those under surveillance were unaware of baseline photographs they received a photograph of themselves. Next, 2 names were picked at random from the shortlist. On July 15/16, Debra Burgess, 27, and Russell Ward, 19, were seized and bundled off "to a completely secret location." "To this day," says Adams, "they don't know where they were held. The next three days were a slightly psychotic episode in which we had to play this double act on the one hand, we had to fulfil a fantasy image of firm and harsh kidnappers, on the other, we were incredibly careful about their well-being.

Both cruel and caring, Blast Theory kept Burgess and Ward under constant video surveillance. "We had a psychologist on hand and warned them all the time about how they were coping." The Kidnap Project website kept the wider public informed about the event. After 72 hours, the two dazed but healthy hostages were released at London's ICA. What was it like? Debra Burgess, who lived in Melbourne before coming to temp in London, says: "It was very emotional. The room was really small and I paced up and down a lot. Much nervous energy. I was alone for the first day and had so much time to think about my life. When I was allowed to see the kidnappers at the end it was bizarre—they were the only people I could share this experience with. At the end, the press conference was nerve-racking.

After hours alone or imprisoned with her fellow hostage, she suddenly found herself "in a room full of journalists who completely misunderstood the event—they were looking for psycho-sexual motives and missed the element of audience participation. It felt so surreal—then when I was free and walked down the road I just wanted to tell people: You have no idea what sort of experience I have just had."

For Blast Theory, Kidnap "evolved from a conventional theatre piece called Sassafras, which explored the impulse to give up control to other people," says Adams. A heavy emotional content has always been part of the group's activity. In Gunnell Kill Three, their first show in 1991, audience members were given the chance to fire a gun point blank at nude cast members. "The audience is a key figure," says Adams. "Kidnap is a daily presence in our society—but it's always experienced at a distance. In the project, we tried to break down that distance." Publicity was easy because "it was a very media-friendly idea—in fact both Burgess and Ward heard about it through the press. They were ordinary punters—not arty types.

Blast Theory attracted some adverse publicity from victim-support groups, who criticised the "light-hearted approach", but stress that "there are many different kinds of kidnap: people kidnap each other for their birthdays, even 101 Dalmatians is a kidnap story." While the group learned a lot about the logistics of kidnapping, they also gained a lot from the event being playful. In September, the video of the Kidnap Project is showing at Manchester's Green Room.

If Blast Theory have moved away from venues, Improtable Theatre have found that people are more important than locations. The group—which was formed in 1996 by Phil Mc Dermott, Lee Simpson and Julian Crouch—toured Litigame, in which different invited guests are interviewed about their life and scenes from it are recreated on stage. While some guests were big names—actress Joanna Lumley and West Yorkshire Playhouse director Jade Kelly—others were not. When I saw Litigame at London's Purcell Room, the guest was Phil Clarke, who works in the media. At the start, he summed up his experience: "Life is unfair." By the end of the evening, the truth that emerged was that "life is fair enough." Based on an idea by impresario Keith Johnstone, Litigame is a memory:est: ambushments at school, teenage love, and parental conflicts all emerge despite the cosy talkshow format. Simpson says: "We decided to do a totally spontaneous show where what happens is completely in the hands of the guests—it's a leap of faith.

Watching Improtable Theatre's mix of naif impiro and highly emotional recall—when Clarke's life suddenly reminded you of your own—feels like group therapy. But live theatre has its surprises. At one point, an audience member ran out, vomited profusely at the exit, and left. As the rest of us edged away from the stink, the actors kept a grip on the situation, enacting an emotional scene from Clarke's life and proving that every person's story is special.

Sie specific work can also turn the humdrum into magic. Using the balconies of Bow's Old Fire Station in East London, Station House Opera performed Snakes and Ladders, a "three-dimensional sculpture with performers, lights, video images and ladders." Formed in 1980, the group produce highly visual and evocative work in locations such as Brooklyn Bridge, Dresden's Frauenkirche and Salisbury Cathedral.

In Snakes and Ladders, the everyday acts of individuals are played out, parodied, repeated on video. Incidents become increasingly intensified as doubles of the actors mimic their every action. But while the doppelgangers can easily transport themselves around the building, even moving into space, the actors are impeded by gravity and vertigo. As director Julian Maynard says: "This is a celebration of a building (which has just been converted into artists' studios). It is also about the way we identify with particular spaces—any place can be both deeply personal and full of ghosts. How many people have lived in your house, woken up in your bedroom and washed in your bathroom?"

In different ways, all 3 productions illustrate the sheer diversity of groups in Britain (especially those set up in the 1990s). But problems remain. Blast Theory found that the Arts Council rejected its bid for Kidnap funding. Instead, Firetrap, a hip clothing company, gave them £12,000 for the project. With sponsors, who says that crime doesn't pay?

The Monkey Trap is a quirky foray into adult sibling rivalry, family rituals, and obsessive eccentric grandmother. Place them in a confined urban topography, under unbearable stress, and adding a tense and终端 and a crane...

Part performance, part installation, CUSTOMS is a new work that will undoubtedly revisit the aesthetic and intellectual controversy of its 1997: The Berlioz - our vampires ourselves. The Terror of Tosca is a work for a new century - set in 1900, first performed in 1900, and now, in the hands of The Opera Project, suggesting dangerous new directions for music theatre on the eve of the 21st Century.

The Pacific Sisters in Tribe Vibe
Tuesday 17 - Saturday 21 November at 8pm
Bookings 02 9690 7285 120/112 concession

A concert opportunity not to be missed. Accompanied by David Bridie (My Friend the Chocolate Cake), Ben Halls and Yutsu Yindo, and other friends, George Telek will 'sing sing up a storm over three nights. Telek's songs and his hauntingly beautiful voice traverse many musical styles capturing the spirit of both the traditional and modern sounds of his homeland of Rabaul in the New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea - where he has been at the forefront of the burgeoning PNG music scene for over 15 years. Telek has also won many fans in Australia after performances for WOMADelaide & the Sing Sing concerts, plus his work with Not Drowning Waving on their acclaimed Tabaran album.

In association with the performance space: CUSTOMS
by Josephine Vade
presented by Theatre of Desire
5 Sidetrak Studio 142 Addison Rd, Marrickville
9 Oct - 1 Nov, Wed - Sat 8.00pm, Sun 5pm
Preview Thursday 9 October
120 full, 156 concession
BOOKINGS: 02 9690 7225

Theatre of Desire's work is inspired by popular performance forms derived from circus, vaudeville and "B Grade" movies. CUSTOMS is three bodies in transit, wit: CUSTOMS is about departing & arriving, about getting lost on the way - CUSTOMS - the lure of new worlds and the burden of old. Must every voyage have a destination? Some things must be jetisonned. Abandoned. What, or who, would you leave behind?

The Paciﬁc Sisters fuse traditional culture with contemporary attitudes. Their events are not just fashion parades, they are dynamic multimedia performances combining street fashion, live music, DJ's, rapping and video graphics. Frock on!

Welcome to the here and now...
The Performance Space is proud to present some of the most interesting, challenging and risky performance and visual art in Australia. The August to December program brochure is available now - call 02 9698 7235 to request a free copy.

Highlights of the program in October/November include:

The Terror of Tosca
Friday 16 to Saturday 21 October at 8pm
Preview - Thursday 15 October at 8pm
Tickets $10/$5 - Bookings (02) 9690 7285

The oPera Project singing Tosca.
Four collaborators, three video projections, one performance text, image, sound, a container terminal and a crane...

Part performance, part installation, <contain her> is a work in progress by four of Australia's most innovative artists working at the cutting edge of new media art to explore the relationship between virtual, real, commercial and cultural concepts of identity. Collaborators: Sarah Waterson, Anna Sabel, Brad Miller and Heather Grace-Jones.

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The benchmark for accessibility

Anne Thompson interviews Ollie Black about Indigenous art developments at Port Youth

This interview is my response to attending the March meeting of the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council, as a peer advisor. In that meeting the new funding program Ollie described, was mentioned and I became acutely aware of the very real challenge to funding organisations to address their relationship to Indigenous artists. Port Youth Theatre Workshop was established in 1985, International Youth Year, under the direction of Susan Ditter. It was originally set up for young unemployed people in the Port area of Adelaide, a multicultural community. The company has always been committed to access, equity and culturally appropriate processes. It now runs programs to include 5 to 26 year olds across the western suburbs of Adelaide in all areas of the performing arts. It was selected to assist with the administration of the new fund because of the relationship it has established with the Adelaide Nunga community. Ollie Black is now artistic director of the company.

AT I am interested in how you work with the Nunga community.

OB Firstly, the model of work we have developed has come from discussions with the community. Next, we employ Aboriginal workers and we believe it is important that the workers come to understand the community. We find if you employ Aboriginal workers, other Aboriginal people feel more comfortable coming in. They drop in to visit those workers but while they’re here they’ll hear what projects are happening at Port Youth. The spread of information happens in a different way in the Nunga community. We find we need to be open to the social networking which is a crucial part of life in that community. What we might call gossip works as a survival strategy. This networking and their kinship system are the traditional things that are extraordinarily strong, even in an urban Aboriginal community which may not have had much traditional experience. Auntie Josie (Josie Agius), our Aboriginal Community Networker, works here three afternoons a week, but a vital part of her job is going for a walk in the mall at lunch time so she can hear what’s happening.

We also want to develop the skills of young Aboriginal people so they can have ownership of their work, so we are employing a young Aboriginal Community Networker to work alongside Auntie Josie who can also draw in the young kids. This worker can do more of the stuff and hopefully access the 15-20 age group. Last year Rebekah Ken was our trainee. She ran the Just Us Plus group (the Aboriginal workshop group), and did a lot of the networking. She worked on an event during the Takeover Festival with another trainee from Carlekew, Nikki Ashby. They organised Blak Nite, an Indigenous night, at Blink, the Takeover Festival nightclub, which was a huge success. From that came the Sing It Up Big Choir and a dance group, Urban Sista. I can see that in the future Port Youth will have an Aboriginal stream and I would like to train an artistic director who could take over the direction of that program.

AT How do you see your role then? Are you a facilitator?

OB I see Port Youth as being able to provide support, resources and opportunities for participation. We’ve just been approached by the Theatre Fund of the Australia Council to help administer a fund of about $50,000. This fund is to be made available for Aboriginal artists’ skills development. This was the recommendation of a national panel of Indigenous theatre workers who met recently. It is to be an Indigenous community driven project but it will be based here. We’re talking with an Aboriginal woman who will co-ordinate the grant round. We’ll help her set up an advisory group and then they’ll select a panel who will select the projects and we’ll distribute the money and manage it financially. She’ll also create a database to assist the trafficking of information and communication between Indigenous artists.

AT Talking about ownership, do only Aboriginal tutors teach the Nunga kids?

OB The non-Aboriginal and the Aboriginal groups do come together for our show-and-tell sessions and in the Port Parade but they haven’t worked together. We are now looking to have projects which combine groups. We want each to have a sense of their own identity but we also don’t want individuals to be intimidated when in mixed cultural social situations. We do think exchanging tutors is a good way to start this process. For example, with the 5-10 Aboriginal group, a non-Aboriginal puppet maker runs the workshop with 5 Aboriginal back-up workers. It’s the second time we’ve run the workshop which deals with conflict resolution. It’s called Warratt which is a Kaurna word for ‘Stop’. The Aboriginal back-up workers are counsellors and role models for the kids. They come from Nankawarin Yunti, the Aboriginal medical centre in the city and have all done Family Well being training, a style of counselling which uses storytelling and has been developed with the Aboriginal community.

AT Who came up with the theme?

OB We have an Aboriginal advisory group of approximately 8. They are the mothers and grandmothers of some of the participants. Auntie Josie is also on that committee. They wanted the workshop to deal with domestic violence, kids who are in a situation of family violence, and provide them with some conflict resolution skills.

This workshop has been run twice. In the first workshop we separated the children into gender groups and produced a series of books which looked at different emotions. This year we brought the broths and girls together. They are making masks and then the puppets will explore relating in different situations. The advisory group felt that boys and girls had to now learn to get on with each other in the family, whereas at first they wanted the girls to be separate and safe. I always take my direction from that advisory group.

It’s also important to say that we provide transport to and from workshops as many members of that community don’t have cars and coming to drama is not necessarily the priority of the day. We pick the kids up from school. We also work closely with the Aboriginal Education Workers who wait with the kids. Sometimes these workers come to the workshops. They talk to the kids’ parents and get permission for them to come. This is very important, though most parents now know and trust the organisation. We also drop the kids home after the workshops. Auntie Josie goes on the bus when we do this because she will have found out during the day where the kids will be sleeping that night. It must be said that Port Youth now sees our work with the Aboriginal community as our central role for accessibility, rather than being “the exception.”

AT So back to “art”? Is that community interested in any art form or aesthetic as long as there is Aboriginal involvement in the ways you’ve outlined?

OB They want to see themselves out there more in every field... in film, in TV... using what they know they do well.

Anne Thompson is a freelance director, choreographer and writer.

PICA
Director: Lachlan Miller

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by Kate McMillan

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AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS THEATRE INITIATIVE

The Theatre Fund of the Australia Council, in collaboration with Indigenous artists and Port Youth Theatre Workshop (PY), has established a pilot professional development program for experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theatre workers in any State or Territory. A limited number of proposals will be supported up to $5,000 with PY to provide additional funding for professional development. Proposals will be considered on a rolling basis.

For guidelines contact:
Topic Phoneline, Initiative Coordinator, Port Youth Theatre Workshop:
(08) 9311-0221 or fax (08) 9310-0400.

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A chamber of mourning

Linda Marie Walker at Vitalitasstix's recent work, My VICIOUS Angel

Once, when I was young, I yearned to fly, to take my body to its limits (or to imagine what I'd never, ever, know to stretch it into strange shapes. Especially to make it other than it was, or how I thought it was. Then it crashed, invaded by multiple forces, of which language was the worst, the first, then remembering, or what came to be both the possibility and the impossibility of memory. Then came obligations, and so...delivers of sorts. And as these bundles of unresolved events landed—like sleeping, dreaming, waking, and as if one actually wasn't there—life became their playground.

This is the time, in abeyance, through (or maybe 'as', if an occasion, rather than a place) which one enters the space of the play My VICIOUS Angel. An angel that won't, can't, let up, and which comes out in (projects) both characters, Pearl and Merle, as the past pervades (projects) them. Each scene, then, is isolated, an unconnected, evocative and destroying.

Over a drink, I ask a friend the dumb question: "do we have a soul?" and she says, "I know the mother." And then she goes on about our mothers. It's herontalk

And earlier:

Pearl: There's a catch...
Merle: I'll catch you—cross my heart and hope to die.

And this is the point (at which these two possibilities stand: "cross my heart I hope to die"), or the internal momentum, of the play: the dying, the death, the sparring. The being-left of the living—and the dying that goes on in the living—as one starts to mourn one's own death. This mourning, as it's played out in My VICIOUS Angel, must take over, must focus close, all the words—answers, demands, warnings, lies—of those who have shaped one's life. This, this angel, is the vicious one, the one who sticks her claws in. And herohen's a scaffolding that those one might have grown to hate—is within constructed. It's the arch-church of a world, or in individual texture, ambience (hard, cold) with which one lives out the everyday.

The body to its limit (or to imagine its death), and voices, of our passage through worlds and memories, and provoked a sense of imminent falling, that is, my heart/ hope co expose itself. My VICIOUS Angel is the Private Eye of the nuclear family? But that says we are all completely conditioned by our behaviour and the more unconscious that says the repressed will come to the surface.

Caroline Mignone, Lia Meastonta, My VICIOUS Angel

summarised as silence, or silencing. And which sooner or later becomes a type of echo-chamber. An inner place where sounds, in the shape of words, phrases, sentences, conversations, riscs, whispering, shouting, passing, caressing, and spending through the unaid. This is a chamber of mourning. My VICIOUS Angel is a mourning work. Mourning with, and about, language.

Now I am flying, in a plane. A bumpy journey. Blue sky, white clouds. Way up above the ground. If I felt now I'd smash to smithereens, again. It's always a long way down. There are 2 characters, Merle and Pearl. One of them is dead, the other has fallen, and broken. They are twins. Pearl was a trapeze artist, Merle was a 'fire-bird'. (Now, you have to see, the play—to know about Ojadi, the bird, and the fire, and why Merle died, or how she died, how she let the dam bird out, to find the father etc.)

The dead one is fiercer than the live one, which suggests the power of reckoning, and the musicality of the past. Here, in the space of this play, 'remains' fill the air. An acoustic work, shaped like music, composed as a single relentless sound-work (although I imagine a 'song', or a'choral event. There were two musicians, a saxophonist and an accordionist, instruments of 'air'. Perhaps it's all about 'the air'; about how we are made of voices, of our passages through worlds (constellating as private 'chambers', as space which is literally small [the body] and imaginary space, where the body and small and vast is indicated by the way in which Merle and Pearl speak. One stops, the other

Merle: A hard way back...

Pearl: Back up there soon. No big deal. I'm on the mend. Mind over matter. Fall off a horse, you get straight back on. After it's bolted. If it could just move everything would...

Merle & Pearl: ...fall in place

From stage to cage

Novelist Glenda Adams talks to Keri Glastonbury about the process of writing The Monkey Trap for Griffin Theatre Company

The Monkey Trap takes its name from a saxophone experiment from technical canon of behavioral psychology, the famed school of psychologists who give electric shocks to little kids who wet the bed and expose rats to heavy metal music then measure their adrenal glands. In the monkey trap experiment, food is placed in front of a monkey though when the monkey reaches for the food the bars are not wide enough to allow its clenched fist back through. The monkey stays going for the food until it dies of starvation.

Teddy: Why do they let things like that happen?
Bill: That's the finding of the experiment. The monkey's hold on to its behaviour, even when it's not in its interest to do so. Even when it isn't to be destroyed.

The Monkey Trap is a story of an average dysfunctional family on a 'journey' to suburban Sydney. The increasing world-chill builds up, as in Ang Lee's film of Rick Moody's novel The Storm, through Glenda Adams' play offers much more of a light-hearted and comedic exposition of family secrets.

KG: The title, The Monkey Trap, is that a metaphor for the nuclear family?
GA: It's a metaphor for how we all get trapped in behaviour that is lethal to us and we can't let go. It's a play about people who are trapped in the way they behave with one another and, perhaps for a moment, this night they let go. The living room is the cage itself. Each door bell ringing is like a Pavlovian bell which was the earliest conditioning experiment. The door bell ringing heralds the entry of a new person—one once they are in the cage and there is no escape.

KG: That is there a tension between the scientific behaviourist school in psychology that says we are all completely conditioned by our behaviour and the more unconscious school that says the repressed will come to the surface.

GA: Certainly there is a tension in psychology between those two areas but this play is not anti-behaviourist at all because behaviourists do do some very interesting work. I have seized upon experiments that excite my imagination and I feel I can use. A lot of their work is a metaphor for human behaviour.

KG: The play also looks at this tension in writing. The characters are engaged in writing memoirs, mapping, academic studies...

GA: Each character is trying to pin things down or control their lives or how they perceive their lives. This night, with this family together it comes apart. It's about memory, trying to fix memories.

KG: That's what I meant about the uncanny—a repository of all those memories that will return. You've come to play-writing from writing fiction and managed to write an incredibly pared back dramatic structure where the dialogue all takes place in a single room. I imagine you are used to working with much more scope in time and space.

GA: The night gives the structure—it's a security—this is where I have to stay. It gives a unity of time and concentration of people. What happens over 2 days. The nature of the play is the dramatic structure of that night. This is the great nature of collaboration with Ros Horus as director and dramaturg. I have been able to develop the story for each character—the journey that each of them has to make that night.

Glenda Adams

Nancy Crampton

Caroline Mignone, Lia Meastonta, My VICIOUS Angel

Merle: And a hard way back...

Pearl: Back up there soon. No big deal. I'm on the mend. Mind over matter. Fall off a horse, you get straight back on. After it's bolted. If it could just move everything would...

Merle & Pearl: ...fall in place

The play started from a short-story I was writing as the beginning for the play. And there's hardly anything left of that story now. A little reference to Observatory Hill and the Cahill Expressway. The transformation for a fictional writer is in the theatricality—not so much in a sense of reduced scope, but in writing for a visual medium.

I also see it as quite brittle, I see the characters choreographed and engaged in the dance together. They cross-cut a choreography of words as they speak across one another. Making their patterns. That idea of a choreography of words was with me all the time. Plus I see the actors as being quite agile on-stage—although there's not much action I see them moving through their speeches.

KG: Acting out their neuroses.

GA: Kind of elegant and quick. The transformation to the stage is going to be amazing to see.

KG: From reading the script I felt I had a real sense of catharsis in the final scene, but then I thought, oh, no, I'd all need to go into therapy themselves now!

KG: I see the story having a life beyond this theatre, there is the sense of reconciliation. This is only the beginning and by no means the end—but there's hope. The grief and anger of others need to be experienced. This is the first time they've been able to air anything. The living room is a relic that has stayed static—they haven't touched much before this. Teddy (the 22 year old daughter) is the hope—her insistence on telling blew this night apart.

KG: In the opening of the play it is Teddy who is telling the operatic story.

GA: Yes, the opera. Those grand themes are there in Il Trovatore, a story of a groper, brothers who don't know if they are really brothers, revenge that has lasted through generations from mother to daughter, babies being mixed up. And of course opera treats these themes very grandly, doesn't it.

KG: So this is the domestic version, a suburban Sydney Il Trovatore.

GA: With a sweet little old lady dressed in blue with a little mona Lisa

The Monkey Trap, writer Glenda Adams, director Ros Horus, designer Dan Potra, lighting designer Damien Cooper, sound designer Sarah de Jong, cast Valerie Rader, Kirstie Hatton, Lynn Murphy, David Wells & Bill Young, Stables Theatre, Sydney. October 1 - November 1.
Take a walk on the queer side

Catherine Ferguson reports on issues raised at Manchester's It's Queer Up North

Dateline: May 9th. The cLUB bENT forum at the Grocholi tent in the heart of Manchester's gay and lesbian Village. The forum, club-work, club-play, brings together performers and organisers from the growing 'queer' festival and club circuit from the UK, US and Australia, a circuit going from exciting new work from dance and physical performers, writers and performance artists, to comic and variety artists. Today's line-up: Lois Weaver (ex split beats, WOW Cafe) leading the forum, along with Annie and Lucy from New York's Dance Noise, Jeremy Robbins (UK/Australian physical performer of bathub fame, directed by Gai Kelly), UK artists from club Duckie and Screamers Variety; Chris Green (aka Tino C, country and western superstar), Marisa Carey (Drag Ladies) and Ursula Martinecz (aka Rock Chick). From cLUB bENT, Australia, there's Steve Brown and George Fivel (Groundwork), Benedict Leeu (Flagging and the Red Dress) and myself (Sugar Sugar). Tanya Farnham and Gavan from It'S Queer Up North sit in as entrepreneurs.

The forum topics are left on the table: how and where does queer work come into being? Why do so many artists 'cross the seas', and where do they go? And then the notion of cLUB bENT develop? Does the sense of 'club' inform the work? Answering these trio made us a variety of sites in a number of queer centres, specifically New York, Sydney, Manchester and London. Reports were anecdotal and sometimes conceptual.

Dateline: 1990s. Queer village site: New York. Annie: "We're in the vegetable shop buying some fruit and I saw Happy Face (legendary NY drag artist) and said, 'Hey we're doing an event, will you do it?' He just said 'yes' and we were so excited, to start to be able to ask artist from all over the place, from the drag clubs, from WOW Cafe and from somewhere in a women's/lesbian performance venue) across the street as it was. Half the time we were performing in their playpen, but because there just weren't the venues. There is no funding for this sort of work in the US, we had to find any way to do it."

Lois: "In New York a lot of the time artists get worn out, burnt out just trying to create spaces to perform this sort of work, because there isn't the climate of funding, say that there is in Australia or even Edinburgh and Manchester and then new people come along and start doing exactly the same thing and don't even realize the history of what's gone before them."

Dateline: 1995. Queer Village site: Sydney. Catherine: "cLUB bENT started as an initiative from an art space, the Performance Space. Angharad Wynne Jones and Johnathon Parsons in conjunction with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Memorial Trust created an exhibition of queer, queer, queer, queer. The queer cabaret venue. The first year there were drag workshops, run by Groovio Bice and Joeys. In the 1980s there was no 'queer, queer, queer, queer' culture and no public space for queers."

Elizabethan times the site had been a genuine pleasure garden, with troubadours, bards, dancing bears. We can create a genuine pleasure garden, with drag troubadours, Marisa created a hysterical character under one of the other names, Chris Green fed from the history of the performance sites: the strip clubs, theatres/performance and drag bars, gay and lesbian dance clubs having a dare. Performers get work in other venues during the year where emerging artists, like Greg Clarke at Spicy Fridays, or Groovio and Trish Vaudeville at Club Kooki."

Ben: "People have been there for long enough now to create work specifically for that space, and collaborate with artists in ways they might not have done themselves. Social and technological cross fertilisation, a development because the site has continued for four years. When you have a site called Kooki, for instance, you know what you're going to be able to do, what the audience is like."

Dateline: 1990s. Queer village site: London. Marissa: "Clubs like Duckie have developed policies to support queer performers, so much as they can. It's a dance club, but before the DJs start the performance work comes on. The audience is respectfulBritain, from the work we get the audience to appreciate it's artists working. They've specifically created an environment where artists can work. I also brought over a group of performers from New York for an event called Smallest crossing over strip and performance art for a queer event."

"Emma Wilson created a promenade 'pleasure garden' at the Old Vauxhall Tavern in one of the London's older Tranny bars, creating a home of club Duckie. In Elizabethan times the site had been a genuine pleasure garden, with troubadours, bards, dancing bears. We can create a genuine pleasure garden, with drag troubadours, Marisa created a hysterical character under one of the other names, Chris Green fed from the history of the performance sites: the strip clubs, theatres/performance and drag bars, gay and lesbian dance clubs having a dare. Performers get work in other venues during the year where emerging artists, like Greg Clarke at Spicy Fridays, or Groovio and Trish Vaudeville at Club Kooki."

J: "We also run a queer comedy club called Screamers Variety, which has now been funded by the London Arts Board. There was no specific support for drag and lesbian comedy space. Performers from Duckie crossed over."

Jeremy Robbins. "My work is often created for corporate events and it's often about queers' culture. I use the money to fund work which I can take back into queer venues."

The key message here to the audience was that the climate of each 'site' in the global gay and lesbian village determines what work will come about; the conditions and environment of the site generating particular forms. Comparisons between New York, London and Sydney were made. The development of each site was related to the influence on particular styles of the clubs and the work. Ideas for venues were sometimes appropriated by visiting artists who would then 'take them home' (hence cLUB bENT, which emerged in Sydney, has made its way to Manchester via Tino Farnham, and Smallest crossing over New York makes its way to London via Marisa Carey).

The drive to do the work is coming strongly from these 'communities of desire'- perhaps not surprising, given the form of activism/need/result of oppression and will people will cross all sorts of roads to do it and where possible create sites, or use existing ones. The club context, while sometimes limiting the form of work (eg text and tech in some cases) was at least a starting point for emerging artists and for many a preferred site. The gay and lesbian community has tended to make its own spaces. In particular in the 1970s and 1980s life around clubs, as a place where it can explore its (the shadow in the)

The club-workshop play, forum, Grocholi Tent, Manchester's Gay Village, May 17

Catherine Ferguson is a performer, writer and activist in the lesbian and gay communities in Sydney and Brisbane since 1989. She has performed in New York Festival and has achieved a significant stage of succession in 1991. She also works as a freelance writer and editor.

Vision and pragmatism

Once upon a time, a different talent and ambition, training and maybe a streak of vision, were enough to set you on a career in the performing arts. That's what that art's education suggested by its creative freedom and the possibilities of the real came after graduation, though with even more so in recent years. University courses increasingly offer more advice and, occasionally, practice in how to create the world in which to perform rather than wait for it to come to you. Theatre National South Australia's Emerging Artist Project is an emerging project which can explore and practice, writing and the live audience.

OpenWeek, The Performance Space, Sydney, July 21 - 25

Caitlin Newton-Broad is a Sydney-based writer and director, assistant director on Belvoir Street Company B's The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and, with Nicky Eil意 and Victoria Spence, director at the FACTOR project, The Dark Room.

Exhibit—open and shut

Caitlin Newton-Broad wraps up the last Performance Space Open Week

I confess that I am an Open Week veteran—a sometime participant and rapt spectator of this humbly conceived series of weekend events. This year it was on its last stand and despite some individually great pieces this wrap-up seemed timely. Open Week held over the eight years by The Performance Space, began as a season to stimulate new contributions to the developing set of Australian performance culture. And it has also twinned as TPS membership drive for new audiences. 'Performance' was historically the opposite of 'pseudoscience'. The Modernist theatre was seen as a refuge from 'theatrical' by an emphasis on elemental interrogations into processes and approaches that extended beyond the theatre vocabulary or indeed arose from any of the cited 'natural' or 'artificial' resources. The performance site was a refinement of a previous short work by Alycia Fergusson and Simon Posford, and Kircard's D'Words in Tico Parts was developed through a residency for emerging artists at TPS earlier this year. The same time has been regarded as a year of with very different consequences. The writing was evocative and the D' Words were good, but Tapes was a refinement of a previous short work by John Gillies and Claire Grant. As an elusive performance artist, Tapes operated through dance and still the usual frames she intonated an extracted version of Schiller's text leading to the execution of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. This remarkable piece and vocal presence is finally ruptured by the live appearance of the context (acting against the audience). AJ Roche's long night of the clt balanced a torrent of words, laughter and despair. True Love and Open was an open evocation of a young woman's coming-to-independence—a kind of John Waters musical—and Symphonic Set by Alycia Fergusson and Mar Tranjde was a morose tale of a large breast-carrying woman with the First Testament for a head. In the year in which Australia was welcomed guest at this event and can always be counted on to create a genuine performance space for personal and a changed world was a home for personal and corporate sponsorship. It has been raised for various years. Theatre National's 'graduate season' Terence Crawford will direct Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Anna Volkska will direct Young Marlowe's Tamburlaine, and, as the social and psychological after-effects of the Newcastle earthquake was created by Paul Brown. A short season Projects Workers Cultural Action Committee and successfully produced, is driven by the need for the assistance of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, and then by Belvoir Street's Program it is to bring to the theatre the performances and events of the time of the earthquake and into a different set of bodies and performance strategies, and becomes a deeming part of Australian social and political history.
Driving the developing text

Dominic Hogan on recent works by Brisbane’s Backbone Youth Arts

For years Backbone Youth Arts, formerly La Bôte Youth Arts, has been providing the young people of Brisbane with a flexible creative outlet. Primarily focused on the development of group devised, multi-artform performances, Backbone aids young artists by introducing them to professional workers who help structure their ideas into viable performance while maintaining the authenticity of the young people’s vision. Having been involved with Backbone for some time, I have experienced a number of different creative processes. While group devised pieces are very satisfying to develop, they risk being too chaotic for an audience to keep up with. A helpful preventative for this is engaging a writer with the performers in the creative development of a piece. This integrates the structures of more conventional styles of performance building (ie scripting, dramaturgy and direction) with the collaborative style, bringing together a variety of ideas generated by a group creating an original piece.

Backbone has stepped off last year’s experiments with this process and launched Toxic, Trail and Blaze. Employing writer Maryante Lynch and dramaturg Louise Gough, these three multi-artform performances explore the qualities of text and its translation in performance while following three quite distinct paths. Toxic, performed and developed by Backbone’s Parameter Pilots, was probably the most verbally oriented of the three. I was greatly impressed at the development of wigs and makeup, wearing laboratory coats proclaiming that something was wrong with the plumbing inside. The walk up the narrow stairway of The Capitol brought me to the environment of Toxic, an ominous, dripping, whispering soundscape by Brett Coller, combining with an equally intrusive visual display by Prudence Cumes to complement the deep emotional journey that was the performance. The show itself concerned one character, Nancy Vandal, and her adventures through the supermarket of Desire. Nancy was played by every one of the 15 performers at various points in the piece, and so became a ghoul representing not only all of the performers, but the audience as well.

The main driving force in developing Toxic was to explore how toxicity manifests itself in young people’s lives. Rather than pull out tired ideas like drug abuse, the Parameter Pilots focused instead on aspects of our own personality that drag us into compulsive behaviour. The Supermarket of Desire became a range of products that Nancy could browse through, never forgetting the ominous message that she would never know the full implications of a purchase until the deal was done. The real beauty of Toxic lay in the evidence of group collaboration. This was the performers speaking, not just the writer. The process allowed for a writer to provide a structure for the group, but not to go through the workshop process, so that they all experienced the journey of the development of the text. Trail utilised a similar process, although this performance centred around text as physical expression and gesture rather than verbal expression. The Hereford Sisters, 10 performers comprising a young women’s physical theatre troupe, explored ideas of skin and what it hides/displays. It opened with one performer centre stage examining her face while a giant, live video projection showed the details of this examination. It was quite disorienting to see this woman facing one direction yet at the same time staring at me through the projection behind her. But this was the gaze we give our own reflection. It effectively allowed the audience to see the way these artists look at themselves while also showing how they look and feel when other people are focused on them. Words and images projected onto the set guided the audience on the Trail, ‘on my skin’, ‘inside my skin’, ‘under my skin’. While I found a lot of Trail to consist of ideas that were not so gender specific, the work definitely gave strong insight into the way young women perceive themselves and the way they perceive others perceive them.

Last, and yet to be performed at the time of writing, is Blaze, devised by 11 members of Intraventricular Cheese. It explores the last aspect of multi-artforms that Backbone has been working with, and is focused around the relationship between the text and lyrics in music by involving the Brisbane band Squelch. Blaze takes off from a piece done last year at the SCA Festival which also featured Squelch’s ‘five, cheesy electropop’, this process exploring the marketing of youth as commodity. Precisely written portions are combined with structured improvisations to represent the way in which youth culture as perceived by the marketing world contrasts with the reality.

Toxic, devised and performed by the Parameter Pilots, director Judith McLennan, dramaturg Louise Gough, written by Maryante Lynch, July 31 - August 2, Trail, devised and performed by The Hereford Sisters, director Jo Ware, August 29 -31, Blaze, devised and performed by Intraventricular Cheese, director David Megarity, September 17 - 19, The Capitol performance space, Brisbane

Dominic Hogan is an artist living in Brisbane.

Soap and not-soap

Filomena Coppola takes a Reality Check with the Salamanca Theatre Company

Salamanca Theatre Company's postmodern adult entertainment, Reality Check, offers insights into soap opera saturation, analysing the borders of fiction and reality as television cross-references itself, sitcoms reference soap operas, actors discuss their characters like friends, sitcom characters are used in advertising to promote ‘real’ products and current affair programs are spiced up with stories like who is Ally McBeal? followed by a review of the stock market crash. What is real? What is fiction?

Salamanca Theatre Company’s immediate response to this question is to herd the audience behind and around a police line, two officers behind and around a police line, two officers interview and question the audience, setting the scene for the group but not without performer peaking not just the writer. The performer, and Marisa Mastrocola, There is a collection of fragmented commercial breaks over headlin and channel structure for the group but not without performer peaking not just the writer. The performer, bur the audience as well. The audience were involved with the media as “it creates an ever-increasing, but less diverse, verbal and visual landscape.” (McRobbie, A Postmodernism and Popular Culture, Routledge, New York, 1994)

Reality Check presents its audience with accessible stenotipical soap opera which turns in on itself and analyses its own foundation. It takes advantage of the extensive influence of mass media and television by presenting an evening’s television entertainment re-presented as interactive performance.

Salamanca Theatre Company, Reality Check, director Deborah Pollard, writer Sarah Brill, dramaturg Dominic Hogan, choreographer Jerrel Recht, sound and music: Rosie Esterl, design Anja Remulda, Backspace Theatre, Hobart June 22 - August 28

Filomena Coppola is a visual artist based in Hobart.

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Whose Brecht?

Peter Wilkins at the CIA-Stopera production of The Threepenny Opera

When two innovative Canberra companies, the dynamic and acclaimed chamber opera company Stopera and the experimental and adventurous CIA (Culturally Innovative Arts), decide to combine talents, interest is immediately aroused. And when the production is The Threepenny Opera, the political charge for a Brecht revival is suddenly evident.

Paradoxically, however, this production’s greater virtue contains the seeds of its striking weakness. Director David Branson’s overt allegiance to Brecht’s theatrical techniques of “epic theatre” has generally stifled the cast’s ability to employ those techniques effectively enough in performance to engage the audience fully in the story. As Brecht said, “Everything on the ‘story’, it is the heart of the theatrical performance.”

It is left to music director Vivienne Wischer, her musicians and the fine actor/singer talents of the company to boldly thrust the story’s morality to the fore through superplendid renditions of Weill’s sophisticated and difficult songs of doctrine. From the ballad’s opening rendition of Mack the Knife, sung in this production in German by a dapper MC of the cabaret tradition (Phil Roberts), to the string strains of survival in What Keeps Man Alive, to the highly satirical patter of the final announcement of the arrival of the Queen’s Messenger, the wonderfully rendered songs make up for much of what the production’s visual elements have not.

The Threepenny Opera is no stranger to controversy. This recent treatment by CIA and Stopera lays itself open to the same attacks of “superlative” — and old stand-by philosophy, fully exploded by Marx and Engels in the middle of the last century” that literary critic John Howard Lawson heaped upon the 1936 Broadway opening. The simple and largely implausible and borrowed plot, incorporating a Faginian school for beggars, an underworld stable wedding, a corrupt and condemned jail escape, and a last minute royal reprieve, is charged with excitement. The actors observe the outward show of Brecht’s Alienation Effect by presenting the emotionally untouched attitudes of his representational characters as functional disciples of the didactic intent. However, and most notably in Branson’s work with the protagonist, the social and political satire reverberate with political protest and social satire. Here is the true tour de force of a production that faithfully strives to distil Brecht’s Marxist doctrine upon a contemporary audience.

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Wandering through Five Rooms, the faithful reproduction of rooms from Marrickville suburban homes by Sidetrack Performance Group as part of the Sea Change Coastal Festival, is an affecting and sometimes eerie experience. Arriving at a moment without the usual flow of visitors, I happened to find myself alone for a treasured little eternity in these sites of internal personal and family history. Three distinctive living rooms adjoin, and a kitchen and an artist's tiny home studio run off the third. In addition to furniture, floor coverings, curtains, porcelain, dolls, flowers, religious icons and, especially, family portraits, each room contains one or two other elements that give voice to these already eloquent spaces—slideshow projections of Islamic religious text, more portraits and snaps, newspaper cuttings of Vietnamese boat people, home videos (a casual card game offered a glimpse out of the living room onto a verandah) and sound recordings of recollections of arrival and settling. While intensifying the details of each room, some very familiar, some startlingly discrete in their sense of privacy and ethnic specificity, here and there a cultural pendum (a large vase of dried flowers, animals, and other substances); there are Casuarina Song (an overhead view of the Virgin with animals) and print-maker Michel Tuffery as well as discussions between local and international art commentaries. Gadjal Information Services presents readings by Indigenous writers from Australia and the Pacific at the NSW Writers Centre November 29. The Australian Museum has an exhibition of performances and videos from the West Papuan community of Masi Malumaseali'i-scenes of domestic life and projections (of Islamic religious text, more portraits and snaps, newspaper cuttings of Vietnamese boat people, home videos (a casual card game offers a glimpse out of the living room onto a verandah) and sound recordings of recollections of arrival and settling. While intensifying the details of each room, some very familiar, some startlingly discrete in their sense of privacy and ethnic specificity, here and there a cultural pendum (a large vase of dried flowers, animals, and other substances); there are Casuarina Song (an overhead view of the Virgin with animals) and print-maker Michel Tuffery. The visual arts program includes the Annual Members Show at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative; drawings and meagchised sea creatures by Samoan sculptor, carver, performance artist and print-maker Michel Tuffery at Hogarth Galleries. At Walkabout Gallery, Tuffery's mixed media exhibition exploring Maori design by Andy Paika, Mori Gallery hosts Five Rooms, a dialogue between traditional and contemporary Pacific art curated by Fiona MacDonald and Luke Parker; Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre explores traditional weaving techniques and their use in Weave. Tuf fery's video installation offers a journey into the unexplored where sensory experience is heightened and the viewer is invited to explore the human condition, the nature of creativity, mortality and consciousness.

Pacific culture will be vividly celebrated in Sydney from November 13 - 29 in this year's Pacific Wave Festival. At The Performance Space, 13-member Polynesian performance group Pacific Sisters mix live music, video graphics and flash street fashion ("We will never leave the track"); George Verek (PNG) performs with David Bride and Ben Hakaliti; leading New Zealand video and film artist Lisa Rehana presents video and textile pieces and Philip Jutner (Australi a) curates Omaha Moderna; a mixed media exhibition with the premise: "Modern art is Oceanic and Cenimatic." From November 14 Casula Powerhouse hosts Arini Pouto—the night of hip hop and R B & on and November 29 Ways of Seeing, a program of films from Papua New Guinea presented by Flickerfest.

Oceania and Others at The Museum of Sydney November 14 is a symposium on identity, politics, and the relationship between tradition and contemporary practice convened by Professor Nicholas Thomas from the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at ANU and features artists Lisa Rehana, Michel Tuffery and John Pule as well as discussions between local and international art commentaries. Gadjal Information Services presents readings by Indigenous writers from Australia and the Pacific at the NSW Writers Centre November 29. The Australian Museum has an exhibition of performances and videos from the West Papuan community of Masi Malumaseali'i-scenes of domestic life and projections (of Islamic religious text, more portraits and snaps, newspaper cuttings of Vietnamese boat people, home videos (a casual card game offers a glimpse out of the living room onto a verandah) and sound recordings of recollections of arrival and settling. While intensifying the details of each room, some very familiar, some startlingly discrete in their sense of privacy and ethnic specificity, here and there a cultural pendum (a large vase of dried flowers, animals, and other substances); there are Casuarina Song (an overhead view of the Virgin with animals) and print-maker Michel Tuffery. The visual arts program includes the Annual Members Show at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative; drawings and meagchised sea creatures by Samoan sculptor, carver, performance artist and print-maker Michel Tuffery at Hogarth Galleries. At Walkabout Gallery, Tuffery's mixed media exhibition exploring Maori design by Andy Paika, Mori Gallery hosts Five Rooms, a dialogue between traditional and contemporary Pacific art curated by Fiona MacDonald and Luke Parker; Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre explores traditional weaving techniques and their use in Weave. Tuf fery's video installation offers a journey into the unexplored where sensory experience is heightened and the viewer is invited to explore the human condition, the nature of creativity, mortality and consciousness.
Minimal imperatives

In Europe and Australia Jacqueline Millner notes the minimalism comeback

The wonder of it all is that what looked for all the world like a diminishing horizon—the art object—has somehow managed to disappear altogether—has, like some marvellous philosophical riddle, turned itself inside out to reveal its opposite. The question of object—object has turned out to be question of seeing and not seeing, of how it is we actually perceive or fail to perceive ‘things’ in their real contexts.

Robert Irwin, 1986

What is it about minimalism that speaks so viscerally to us in terms of imperatives? On a recent visit to Frankfurter Kunstverein, I was struck by the domination of leading contemporary art spaces by some of the first exponents of minimalism. Where I might have expected to see the videos of Pipilotti Rist or the shopping bags of Sylve Fleury, instead I saw monumental pieces by Robert Morris and diaphanous architectural light and space by Robert Irwin. It was doubly interesting, therefore, to see on my return to Australia an intense focus on minimalism in a variety of major galleries and institutions. At all the same time, we have a major new work by Sol LeWitt at the MCA in Sydney, an exhibition exploring the relationship between minimalism and feminist art in Melbourne (Infinite Space, curator Rachel Kent, Ian Potter Gallery). There was a seminar and forum on minimalism in Brisbane (Art Pared Down, Queensland Art Gallery), along with a further seminar to be organised by Dr Susan Best, Faculty of Architecture, UTS. What might this apparent resurgence of interest in minimalism signify?

Minimalism first emerged as a vortex of silence in the midst of the cacophony of protest—the loud rhetoric of liberation mixed with the strains of psychic rock—which marked the end of many ‘modernist myths’, social, political and artistic. Does this latter-day focus on minimalism indicate a need to find a quiet and indeterminate place to negotiate the pre-millennial hysteria associated with the instantaneous ubiquity of new communications technology? Are minimalism’s aesthetics of quietude a welcome respite from late 20th century image-saturation, a singular encounter with some type of tabula rasa?

When minimalism surfaced in the 60s, radiating art by Robert Irwin, a relationship between the viewer and the object, its exhibition context were vociferous, angry at the way minimalism undermined the autonomy of the art object and the compromise of industrial materials. Before long, however, minimalism had effectively displaced its very lightweight, abstract presentation, a type of the avant-garde tree, to be sanctified and canonised as the official style. By the end of the 70s, it was rejected as handleless and authoritarian. Yet despite its integration as convention, minimalism as a problem never said die. Its imperatives faded

and in out of view, but they remained, still sufficiently unresolved to provoke many a contemporary artist. As American art theorist Hal Foster notes in The Return of the Real (1996), minimalism occupies an ambivalent position vis à vis modernism; arguably it is both the last modernist style and a crucial step towards the loosening of conventions such as originality and authorship which characterise postmodernism. Minimalists’ works’ apparent banality beggared the spectator to speak; as monumental steel jutted into their stomachs or threatened to crash them from overhead; these works made viewers acutely aware of their incanted presence. Minimalism activated the viewer in such a way as to mobilise ongoing debates about the nature of perception and the (highly contingent) power of the viewer to interpret a work according to his or her own desire alone (Tom Ross writes eloquently on this legacy in ‘The trouble with spectator-centred criticism’, eyeline, Summer 1997/98). The fecundity of ideas thrown up by minimalism goes on underlining that ‘there is nothing minimal about the “art” in minimal art. If anything, in the best works, it is maximal. What is minimal is the beams, not the ends.” (John Perreault, 1968)

The current focus on minimalism is particularly interesting for its foregrounding of some original practitioners, such as Robert Irwin, Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt, whose work from the 60s is often counterposed with contemporary installations, sculptures and paintings. The intensity of their recent work is a convincing reminder that their individual projects are far from exhausted. Indeed, Robert Irwin’s Double Diamond (1997) is one of the most moving and provocative pieces of contemporary art I have experienced in some time. Double Diamond is a site specific work designed to take full advantage of the natural light which filters in through the roof of Lyon’s impressive Museum of Contemporary Art whose façade might just owe something to Ridge Riche’s minimalist paintings. Open for only 3 years in its new premises, with natural light, sandblasted glass and infinitely flexible exhibition spaces a testament to Kevin. Pioiao’s flair, the museum specialises in installation. The collection is made up principally of works executed by artists in the medium including video works by Bill Viola and Tony Oursler and installations by John Baldessari, Richard Tuttle and, of course, Robert Irwin. Throughout most of his career, Irwin’s principal subject has been the threshold of visibility of light. In his installations he has aspired to what he termed, according to his own theory of aesthetic perception, ‘a determinacy whereby the “process of recognition and understanding breaks with the conventions of abstract referencing of content, historical lineage, orders of the art, style, and the very boundaries of art vis a vis architecture, landscape, city planning, utility, importance.” (Irwin, 1986) With such determinacy, Irwin sought to render the art object “so ephemeral as to threaten to disappear altogether”, allowing the viewer to “discover and value the potential for expression in every writing.” Enter Double Diamond...

At first, I am startled by the brightness and the heat—this is filmed sunlight streaming through the ceiling. I enter a type of maze, a spatial conundrum bound by alternating black and white lines of the finest fibre, jutting over a structure of interlinking squares, creating spaces which both invite my passage and simultaneously deny it. There is an indeterminacy which my vision tells me is accessible, but my body cannot enter. What’s more fascinating is that I am aware that these walls are made of yielding fabric, nonetheless I try as I try to orientate myself while walking I appear to be confronting mirrors. The persons on the other side of the maze are doubled, closely crowded and increasingly filtered by layers of taut tulle, and yet they might also be behind me, reflections from another perspective. This is an incredibly tuned work, achingly resonant and meticulously resolved. Such reticulation through economy of means but maximal intellectual and emotional investment is rare, although Sol LeWitt’s wall paintings come close.

There is no doubt something of the temple in LeWitt’s black on black floor to ceiling wall paintings. Covering the expanse of walls in 2 large rooms, these works activate a single intense energy verging on the spiritual—the gallery is both empty and full. The juxtaposition of light and wall space creates a diaphanous subtle movement, rendering the black expanse fluttering veils which our effort to pin them down. Yet at another level, LeWitt also appears to be begging us to acknowledge that these are nothing more than gallery walls which have been painted black; to wonder moreover, whether it does our spiritual sensibilities any good. This oscillation from an insistence on materiality and the evocation of the numerous marks many of the most powerful minimalist works, and cannot but be an important factor in minimalism’s continuing appeal.

In comparison, Robert Morris’s installations from the 60s and 70s, as recreated at Lyon’s MCA, exude a cheeky humour. Passageway (1966) is a long, curved corridor which is at first imperceptible. As I walk expectantly along, it becomes narrower and narrower, finally clamping my shoulders, teasing me to edge further on, but forcing me to retreat as ramps backwards. In another work, industrial-scale wooden beams are laid out in a diamond formation, bordered at each corner by mirrors. As you climb over and around, you catch glimpses of different angles of vision, including one which gives the impresses of the beam proceeding beyond the gallery walls into infinity. Yet another installation marks Morris’ transition into his anti-arch of the late 60s, huge clumps of industrial textile waste crowding the gallery floor threatening to entangle one’s feet, strongly organic yet relentlessly manufactured.

Whether for their focus on the indeterminacy of interpretation, or the proposal of a ‘dumb’ object, or the evocation of an almost secular spiritualism, the questions asked by minimalism clearly are still compelling. It is refreshing to be reminded of the complex working through of these questions by minimalism’s first exponents, and to view this older work alongside more contemporary attempts to grapple with our own preoccupations about space, perception and the relationship of the viewer to the art object. This accent on art’s history can only enrich millennial debates.

Robert Morris, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, June 17–September 13; Museum of Contemporary Art, Geneva, June–September; Robert Irwin, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon, June–July; Sol LeWitt, Queensland Art Gallery, August 29–November 29; The Infinite Space; Women, minimalism and the sculptural object, Lever Foundation Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, September 28–December 6; Symposium October 22; Sol LeWitt, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, July 30–November 29

RealTime Online

Appearing online only:

Visual artist and educator Clare Marshall of the University of Western Sydney has been a committed RealTime intern writer over recent months.


Clare Marshall “The memory room” At an exhibition of intimate art works, Personal Ego, The 3rd Locus d’Ombre Contemporary Art Project at the Art Gallery of NSW. Clare Marshall looks at objects ranging from family histories (shoes, an old violin) and personal celebrations (Roben Archer and Eric Addis’ altar of urns and memorabilia evoking a honeymoon in Mexico) to time capsules and Lucy Ort’s political recycling/design of old clothes in Refuge Wear.

Read these articles on http://www.rtemarts.com/openpsyche/

“On the beach a nut-brown skinny bloke was building a sand sculpture. It resembled a sphinx but the face said Easter Island.”

“The face kept falling off,” he explained to anyone who cared to listen, “but it’s facing the same way as the real one.”

“故事 of the man who bought a big fishing boat up north on automatic pilot”

“/ straight into the headland. He’d everything to get it clear. Finally the man who bought a big fishing boat up north on automatic pilot.”

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Dorothea Rockburne, Locale (portfolio) Art Pared Down, Queensland Art Gallery
The craft of the curve
Diana Klaassen looks at Ecologies of Place and Memory

The Questioning the Practice program is an innovative 3 year joint venture designed to stimulate greater awareness of and interest in contemporary craft practice and to "extend the boundaries of Australian art and culture." The program is funded by the Australia Council's Contemporary Craft Curator Program in conjunction with the University of Tasmania's Schools of Art in Hobart and Launceston, along with their respective galleries. Over 3 years, the University has selected 3 guest curators—1 per year—to research and develop 2 genuinely cutting-edge exhibitions each, highlighting specific issues and contemporary craft practice and reflecting the changing boundaries between craft and fine art.

Surprisingly, the workshops are of 9 months duration and provide professional-level salary and conditions. Bridget Sullivan, a Sydney-based freelance curator and arts administrator, was the recipient of the second annual Craft Curator internship, for 1997-1998 based at the Tasmanian School of Art at Launceston's University Gallery. As the curator, she organized and presented two consecutive shows, with seasons in both Hobart and Launceston.

The first show, Ecologies of Place and Memory, is substantial and multi-faceted, with some interesting connections between the objects, concerns, styles and techniques of the participating artists, suggesting a clear curatorial rationale. The show explores the "degree to which objects mirror the environment in which they are produced and examine the relationship between humanity and the physical environment..." Tasmanian and international craft artists are featured. Lola Greeno is a member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Her textile work Radon Cave and her shell necklace My Story are informed by traditional craft practices and contemporary Aboriginal socio-cultural issues. The curved or circular forms of much of the work in Ecologies, is represented in the dozens of coils of minute shells that make up her Story. Sigrid Karl's Kabo Kabo. Belonging is an installation of small, round, woven baskets incorporating natural found materials such as seeds, shells, bones and stones. The pieces are meticulously crafted and have a definite elegance and dignity. "Craft, Lauren Berkowitz's installation of suspended loops of recycled rubber off-cuts has its own powerful, architectural physicality, it 'engages ideas of decay, regeneration, recycling, growth and preservation' and examines the craft processes of 'collecting, cultivating, manipulating and transformation of waste materials.'" Tasmanian-based Torquil Canning presents Rock Cycle, a large mixed-media diagrammatic drawing based on the design of the traditional dry stone wall, a simple but effective postmodern piece of "art about craft." Louise Weaver fashions small sculptures from thread and beads hand-crocheted over real found objects—tear branches, granite and even some macabre items such as a dead bird.

These works take a very traditional and understood craft and utilize it to produce completely original and unexpected work. Weaver transforms her objects, yet they retain their traditional craftmaking.—

However, the promise of Ecologies is not realised in the second of Bridget Sullivan's curatorial efforts in the Questioning the Practice program. A tiny show with 5 participants and 8 discrete works, Time & Tide followed Ecologies at the Flensiss Gallery and claims to investigate why, in vernacular craft practice, "certain traditions are retained and others abandoned." This show is unfortunately too small to demonstrate this or any other curatorial premise and the works—by interesting craft practitioners including Pal Rojas and Tasmania's Gay Hawkins—do not appear to complement each other particularly well. Curator Sullivan's Ecologies of Place and Memory stands as a much better example of what a program like Questioning the Practice should be able to achieve.

All quotations taken from the exhibition catalogue for Ecologies of Place and Memory.

Ecologies of Place and Memory, works by Lauren Berkowitz, Rosemary Burke, Torquil Canning, Lola Greeno, Radko Haddad, Sigrid Karl and Louise Weaver, Flensiss Gallery, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania (Hobart), May 22-June 14.

Diana Klaassen recently curated Quiet Collaborations in Hobart and is currently preparing 2 exhibitions for the new Fine Arts Gallery at the University of Tasmania.
Cutting the cloth to suit the fit

Chris Reid slips into the EAF's Procrustean Bed

An exhibition predominantly comprising work by artists associated with one art school invites scrutiny of that school's philosophy. With the exception of Christopher Chapman, the artists represented in Procrustean Bed, at the Experimental Art Foundation, are lecturers or graduates of the SA School of Art, within the University of South Australia. George Popperwell, Jim Barbour and Jim Moss are respected teachers of long experience. The show could be a hostage to them. Michael Newall, Sally-Ann Rowland and the exhibition's curator, Kristin Barford, are recent graduates. Christopher Chapman showed 2 line drawings on tracing paper of men and boys in various states of undress, the streams pointed proudly in the air, yet their faces sombre and propped up. The images are mounted as decorative pictures that might adorn the home. Chapman's second work involved a red light bulb and a green light bulb-lain on the floor adjacent to chalk lines tracing the path of light through a lens. Are these the port and starboard aspects of a conceptual frame of reference?

Rowland's work, comprising 3 blackboard-green panels about a metre by 1.7 tall, uses images of figures having traced their existence at the recently opened John Curtin Gallery. For the gallery, it was the first time it devoted the entirety of its substantial new gallery space to the work of one artist. For MacPherson, it was the first time since their production in 1977 that it has been possible to display the entire suite of 200 Filled Gestures.

Individually these figures are simply a matter of anecdotal record; taken together, they set the stage for a clear assessment of the remarkable fusion of the conceptual, material and formal registers of art-making at the core of MacPherson's practice. Patric Hickey presents them as something of an archetype to more recent works on exhibition. As their title suggests, they are works which consist of a genuine printed black on paper (a piece of cardboard) which is filled (in varying degrees of speed relative to the original gesture) resulting in scum bulb, grey, black and white biomorphic shapes. Like many of his works of the 1970s it is a hilariously literal interpretation of Greenbergian prescriptions of formlessness and paint pausing paint all in its rolled, brushed and dripped glory. The exhibition made it possible to observe strong links in mark making and concep

Beyond black + white

Trevor Smith looks at firsts in Robert MacPherson's Marranj

...what is the ultimate source of value or quality in art? the answer appears to be skill, training, or anything else that denotes performance, but conception alone.

Clement Greenberg, 1962

Robert MacPherson's Marranj marked at least two firsts in his practice: the first to open John Curtin Gallery. For the gallery, it was the first time it devoted the entirety of its substantial new gallery space to the work of one artist. For MacPherson, it was the first time since their production in 1977 that it has been possible to display the entire suite of 200 Filled Gestures. Individually these figures are simply a matter of anecdotal record, taken together, they set the stage for a clear assessment of the remarkable fusion of the conceptual, material and formal registers of art-making at the core of MacPherson's practice. Patric Hickey presents them as something of an archetype to more recent works on exhibition. As their title suggests, they are works which consist of a genuine printed black on paper (a piece of cardboard) which is filled (in varying degrees of speed relative to the original gesture) resulting in scum bulb, white, black and white biomorphic shapes. Like many of his works of the 1970s it is a hilariously literal interpretation of Greenbergian prescriptions of formlessness and paint pausing paint all in its rolled, brushed and dripped glory. The exhibition made it possible to observe strong links in mark making and concep

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meaning characterises the work of many of his former students. Is there a Procrustean guiding contemporary art who requires that fit a formula, who employs perversity for pleasure and torment? The theatre in Procrustean Bed ranges widely and recalls important themes in recent art such as the unreliability of language, the value of art objects, the viewer as the author, and abuse as discerning a sensation, the end of art itself. It is a strong show. Procrustean Bed, curated by Kristin Barford, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, August 20 - September 13.
The Argentine/German composer, Mauricio Kagel was rather hard to get hold of. Nothing on the internet to no contemporary articles, few mentions in the books on contemporary music history—he was becoming more and more of abstract CD figure, as I tried to pin down his details. Groble trotting as he does in Die Sücke der Windrose (The Points of the Compass), all I could do in the end was shrug my shoulders and follow him—from a train ride to the Gulf of Finland, through New Zealand, Siberia, Cuba and finally America, as The Seymour Group took us on a fantastic journey in the Newtown Hall on August 9. This was a profoundly pleasurable concert. Not only for the energetic and precise interpretation of the music, and David Hewit's highly amusing and varied percussion performance, but because it was a rare opportunity to hear the 8 part work in its entirety. It is no doubt the death of material in English on the composer which makes him rather an unknown to English speaking, contemporary music audiences; and yet, The Seymour Group's performance of The Points of the Compass was almost full of people who were clearly delighted to take the opportunity to revel in Kagel's playful and considered writing. Even the ensemble here was from the points of the compass. The core "Western" group of clarinet, violins, viola, cello, double bass and piano was joined by a harmonium and a vast array of percussion 'instruments' including broken polystyrene, shaken plastic sheeting, shells, tapped stones and some kind of South American flute. For me it was also a journey back in time, to be reminded of this composer who first made me aware that music and theatre could combine in a way that was far from the excesses of opera (which Kagel calls a "relic that has placed a burden on us") instead joined as one integrated, inseparable, form. The theatricalism, internal to the very notes of the music, also made an appearance in the performance—with the players at the end of each piece looking in the compass directions of the title work—or not, as the case may be. This is theatre pardoned to the bones—aparé, minimalist, underated, Dusker Keatonesque and very successful. The filmic nature of East, which opened the concert, is no coincidence. Reminding me of the vulgar energy of Emil Kuntura's Underground, it reflects a relationship with film and theatre that dates back to Kagel's earliest days in Buenos Aires, going to the movies with his English tutor, Jorge Borges. Here is music with solid rhythms and an innate sense of humour and play, interspersed with moments, such as those experienced when looking out the train window; when we stop seeing what's in front of you and fall into a reverse. The music rolls its eyes and exaggerates its gestures in true Eastern European form, but these gestures have a profundity that is also to be found in the medium itself—are absurdity is a serious thing. North, however, is harsh and bitter. With cymbals, triangles and whips of various sorts it is almost a despair in the music that might come from Kagel's repeatedly frustrated attempts to get to the polar cap of Canada where he intended to indulge his passion for a proper winter and join an Eskimo ritual. He writes instead from a memory, a recollection of an article read 40 years before, that discussed Siberian shamans and their enchanted drums. The piece becomes an internal voyage and perhaps here we are seeing into Kagel's more serious desires—reflected here in the piece's atonalism. The Four Points of the Compass is a work that has sprung from Kagel's so called postmodern phase. Moving away from the use of noise and other less pitch-related components (although the almost abstract role of percussion maintains the connection) Kagel is sliding in and out of melody and diatonic harmony. Sure this aspect of his work could be termed nostalgic, retro-postmodernism, but the more interesting multimedia aspect of his work dates back again to Buenos Aires and his days as conductor for the Teatro Colón. Kagel always mixes his media with precision, wit and eloquence.

Musicologist Richard Toop, who visited the composer in 1997, just before his well maintained sketches were published, in Baele's Paul Sacher Foundation, says Kagel's composition sketches are full of newspaper clippings and images of the American Indians and so forth—things unrelated to music but forming the basis of his inspiration. The picture on the cover—of a child with a basket in his hands—is informed by those high modernist genres, surrealism and serialism, despite the regular superficial presence of diatonic harmony and pitch. The political is also never far away—east and west are dependent on where you position yourself.

Thanks to Richard Toop for assistance with this article.

Die Sücke der Windrose, Mauricio Kagel, The Seymour Group, Newtown Theatre, August 9.
Strange sound worlds

Elsion introduces Robert Davidson to Strange Customs

Whatever impression may be formed of Queensland following the state election, the fact remains that something is going on in Brisbane music scene. Apart from producing some of Australia's most interesting bands, the city is home to a number of outstanding and original composers and performers. And it is the home of Elsion.

Robert Davidson is bringing contemporary music a focus and discipline rarely encountered, and gives listeners the opportunity to become cognizant of, and engaged in, the remarkable sound worlds created by some of today's leading composers. The concert on July 9 was every bit as surprising as it was assuaged from intense mental and emotional absorption.

The ensemble has a particular interest in music which delights in tone colour as a fundamental expressive element. This is a feature which is relatively new to Western music, becoming prominent only in the present century, but integral to traditional Japanese music. It is not surprising, then, that Elsion gravitates toward new Japanese composers.

There were 3 major premieres in the concert, including a work by Trehenery and Akihara Nishihara, one of Japan's current leading composers. The work consists of a single long melody in which subtle modulations of tone colour are as fundamental to the melodic shape as pitch and rhythm. Rosanne Hunt's remarkable focus in performance highlighted usually hidden detail in the instrument's sound.

This was an attempt to tone down what had distinguished the most obviously Japanese music of the evening: Toshio Hosokawa's Rendu for sopranos and guitar, reflecting the close relationship of East Asian calligraphy with shomyo sacred vocal music of the Hainan and Shingon Buddhist sects. The changing vowels of the text yielded a vast array of shifting colours so that it was hard to keep a steady rhythm while listening to a voice. Guitarist Geoffrey Morris and soprano Deborah Kayser achieved an intense quietness, and succeeded in conveying a tautly connected sound between the two musical strands and their calligraphic depiction.

Keiko Harada travelled from Tokyo to Brisbane especially for the premiere of her weird work, a sound which moves abruptly between a highly imaginative range of textures. Opening with sparks of sound which bounced through space from performer to performer, the performance developed into a dizzying pointillism, with an instrumentation involving Eric Dolphy, featuring bass clarinet and double bass. Harada calls her sections "inner situations", referring to much as to the responses of the musicians to each other as to the musical textures, and several sections require improvisation based on listening. The performers' commitment to finely detailed control was maintained, so little room left for chance, may have worked against them in this work; Harada told me she suspected that the improvised sections were worked out in advance.

Australian composer Liza Lim was featured with two works: Voodoo Child (1996) and The Heart's Ear (1997), both based on culturally distant texts from ancient Greek and medieval Sufi traditions. Lim comments that she is attracted to ancient languages because their "openness and lack of fixity is extremely suggestive to me in creating imaginary sound worlds." The highly charged energetic of the Sappho text set for soprano and ensemble in Voodoo Child is reflected in the corporeal nature of the music, with (again) a strong emphasis on timbral range. The vocal part includes many gutteral and percussive rasps, rolls and clicks, which are echoed by instrumental analogues, including flutter tongues and snapped pizzicati. The effect is a single sound movement. In the final moments trombonist Ben Marks played rude low passages which were gradually transformed into delicate glides preparing for the final fragile utterances of the vocal part, the tone magically altered by singling while inhaling. Voodoo Child is impressively sophisticated for a composer of 22, and is one of the works which helped to establish Lim as a leading composer of her generation.

The distance in time between Voodoo Child and The Heart's Ear is evident in a clear stylistic contour. The nettwork is less aggressive, more fragile and delicate, and even includes sections of straightforward modal music drawn from a Sufi source. The work is inspired by Rumi's idea of a melody being "like birdsong beginning inside an egg" which takes on increasing complexity as it unfolds. Similarly, Chris Dench's music has undergone stylistic change evident in the premiere of his newest work, Ikitsandii, a song cycle based on text by Bernie M. Jasson. The lush sonorities and frank erotic sensuousness of the music, a very convincing composition, was set in a more tough, raw sound world from the manic virtuosity of some of Dench's other works. The most striking aspects for me were the inspired choice of steel drums within a richly coloured ensemble of strings, winds and guitar, and themetrically interesting sections (for a Tibetan cymbal and Deborash Kayser, surely one of this country's most musical performers of new work.

Strange Customs, Elsion, Customs House Brisbane, July 9

Robert Davidson is a composer and the director of Topology, a new music quintet. He studied with Terry Riley and is currently completing a PhD at the University of Queensland.
Girls at our best?

Vikki Riley on the near extinction of the Riot Grl

Artificial

Electro Lollipop Explosion

Angel's Trumpet

Shock distribution

Debbie Morrow

Flight of the Emu

Independent distribution

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This criticism is all on the lookout for rad sisters doing it but even the moon-faced Alchemy girl on TV can’t seem to provide any style tips at the moment. And when local galleries start appropriating female DJ culture with trite Koonsian shows called The World of DJ Ratty Ford using ‘sectional’ Asian characters, the search for angry girls reaches a dead end, or a workin’ for the man playpen now.

When Donna Haraway arrived in town a few months back ro present a paper for where cute-like - a-panda fluff over the dead end, or a workin’ for the man playpen any style tips at the moment. And when local Corporate rake em·cr and whire neu-colonial image, the patented uper pecie , when he ro e to the lectern.

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Murdock girl like Natalie "I'm a happy little bunny" Imbroglio it will be interesting if she can carry over her 'self-employed chick who can twiddle the knobs like the boys rhetoric into this exciting mass market of empowered Barbies. Her independently produced electro lollipop explosion comes with a veritable jampack of trendy modes—certainly a futurist, lounge, blaxploitation—but scores less than zero on innovation, cultural authenticity and musical complexity. Shejii er cara chair motor beats, soft puffed, spacy universes and synch pulses with invisible nylon and sidesburn Scooby-Doo cartoon poses as accessories—straight from satellites P-Funk and Motown circa late 70's with Afro spacekrafters like Mandre.

In this climate too the tyranny of the white Barbie girl in our media culture means that even media set up for other voices now gets to be run by them in the read to be the next Triple DJ jube. Melbourne University's new look Sociology 'Centre' half a dozen provincial 'Gangland' type 'insecured' about white noisy voices needing-their-own-media-space hit the floor when she roe to the lectern. A self tagged 'eco-Feminist'—droopy earrings and a birk vest she announced that a new oxymoronic marketing image, the patented super species, was now enounced in display ads in 'thinking' mags like The Utne Reader. But was it a white noise refering only to cows? The Mutant Genome and its key role in maintaining the New World Order could have also been the paradigm to read the mass commodification of another recent specie of women. The Mano that emerged at the beginning of the decade to re-agitate pop culture's gender imbalance only to find that like any teen rip-off of the Generic Grl, the cheesehead fresh face of the Corporate takeover and white neo-colonialist pushes into other people's pop culture.

In countries like Australia where the female porn icon career path starts at Nexus you get your big gig at a gig at the AFL Grand Final or a command performance to help re-elect political heavyweights, Space Power is at the helm to remind girls that the marketing of personal identity (the old ‘I can do it too’ heroism”) as a getting ahead success story for status and wealth is the only game left we’re allowed to play. So far too, guide books and telephone directories like Kathy Ball’s DIY Feminist or Catherine Lumby’s Bad Girls only seem to hammer in this message further; get to the top and worry about real autonomy later, be a Madonna in lieu of genuine cultural cache, aim for celebrity in order to crash the mainstream and claim the media space young white girls demand to dominate in order to c exiting their lead hair days that mess with esteem and the ability to speak.

When Lachlan Murdoch bought up half of Australia’s ‘indie’ talent on his birthday (Moshroom Records, Parharmacos) he made sure that clicks doing their own thing were part of the package, signing Nicole Skelt’s Artificial project for a reported $1 million. Now for a Murdoch girl like Natalie “I’m a happy little bunny” Imbroglio it will be interesting if she can carry over her ‘self-employed chick who can twiddle the knobs like the boys rhetoric into this exciting mass market of empowered Barbies. Her independently produced electro lollipop explosion comes with a veritable jampack of trendy modes—certainly a futurist, lounge, blaxploitation—but scores less than zero on innovation, cultural authenticity and musical complexity. Shejii er cara chair motor beats, soft puffed, spacy universes and synch pulses with invisible nylon and sidesburn Scooby-Doo cartoon poses as accessories—straight from satellites P-Funk and Motown circa late 70's with Afro spacekrafters like Mandre.

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Sport

Tennant with Vivienne Inch

Sport is both politics, said John Howard, in a rest from the rigours of electioneering at the AFL Grand Final last month. Waiting to see off, I contemplate the metres of film Squadroned on our leaders, chasing down, grinning like some of the female impersonators who seem now intrinsic to football—will small boys soon train as cross-dressing rugs I fall. Later at the game, the outcome of which is accurately predicted for them by McNair- Anderson, the same easy pace they use to tickle on tinnies and make like they’re not thinking about the consumer price index but about Brooke, Dog, Susan O’Connor. I am transported to the Trigger Happy Games in KL where helicopters circle the stadium and sports commentators in flakjackets turn their head to political commentary. Outside, police take the boot to rioting civilians while inside news media competes with each other by the sound of it, to win all the medals. ‘Sport brings nations together’, the Queen is about to say, as she was shown out. Sportsmen and women weep at the sight of flags. Huddling protesters weep at the sight of truncheons. Mahatir grinnnes under some goal post for the foreign press while local media wince at the powers of his Internal Security Act. ‘War cannot solve the problem, not the Malaysian way’ says Mahatir relating flight of down. Back home John Howard says he’s always less than comfortable when “the apparatus of the state has to be used to settle political scores.” But both know the diversing power of sporting spectacle I’m thinking as my drive moves the green and sails towards the trees.

TOOTH AND CLAW

with Jack Rufus

The sporting world is reeling from this month’s launch of the sale of football team Manchester United to Rupert Murdoch’s BSkyB. Given the enormous breadth of media resources we are left to wonder what it will mean for the world-famous Man U, and for sport in general!

For a start, the key player will now be extremely hard to beat. If the opposing team is putting up any resistance, Murdoch can send on one of his Fox talent to swing the game. Surely Mulder and Scully could find a way through the most resolute defences; or, with a quick change of step, a trip to the New York Blue could run on to make up the opposition. If all else fails, Bart Simpson and Krusty the Clown could always distract the goalkeeper.

The only hope for rival teams is to be bought out by another media mogul. If Ted Turner could work wonders with Newcastle United and its black and white shirts; a multi-media consortium would bewilder any opposition. But then Murdoch could wheel on his biggest asset: the Titanic. With the new ‘Glory ship’ anchored in front of the Mass U and Leonardo diCaprio as lone survivor up front, opponents would simply surrender, knowing only that the father of Kate Winslet might blow them a kiss from the ship’s majestic bow.
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