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OnScreen

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Cindy Sherman Retrospective, MCA Sydney
The Sir Hermann Black Gallery

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Cover photo: Untitled Film Still #7 (1978)
collection of the artist, courtesy Metro Pictures, NY

The myriad manifestations of Cindy Sherman will be on show at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art from June 4. In a comprehensive 20 year survey of this important contemporary artist's work, the exhibition lays out the evidence of Sherman's disturbing investigations into female identity. The exhibition begins with the Untitled Film Stills of the 70's through Centrefolds, Fashion, Disasters, Fairy Tales and History Portraits and includes recent collections—Civil War, Sex Pictures and her current work inspired by surrealist photography and the horror film genre (and hopefully including a screening of her movie Office Killer). This first major retrospective of Cindy Sherman's work has been jointly organised by the Museums of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and Chicago. The exhibition runs until August 30 and is accompanied by a 220-page illustrated catalogue.

Late Birthday Wishes for RealTime's 5th

For many of us in New York, RealTime is a life-line to performance activities everywhere else in the world. Straightforward, I-was-there writing, is a great plus. Congratulations!*" ~ Rose Lee Goldberg, author of Performance Art (Thames & Hudson, 1979, 1988), Performance: Live Art Since 1960 (Abrams, 1999) and a forthcoming book on Laurie Anderson

TEE OFF
with Vivienne Inch

Tewing off at Royal Hobart this week with Martin Smith from the Tasmanian Football Development Association, I was impressed by this young man's creative attitude to recruitment. Martin is currently on the lookout for rocks and he doesn't mind where he poaches them. He had just told a group of spindly youths at the Launceston Football Club they had 672 chances to play professional AFL compared to a boutique code like the NBA. At this news, apparently some boys stopped growing and sprouted hair. Martin makes the art of rudnick work like choreography. "The ruck is the big man and when the big men fly, they control the airwaves", he said, hitting across the hole. The job description is simple enough: minimum height requirement 180 cms. And, of course, as with all sports jobs these days, you need to be able to convincingly utter the "I've been naive and stupid" defence when caught out. And that's it. I made a note on my card to check Meryl Tankard's measurements. Seriously, this is the kind of mix and match approach we need to drag reluctant arts organisation into line in this sporting nation. I for one am thrilled to see Santo Claudio doing his first gig this month at Artspace (see page 6). But there's more to be done. Sure, arts organisations have gone some way with appointments to their boards of management of corporate crooks and stock and station agents but more creativity would make better use of the potential for our sporting talent to turn their brains to arts work. I made a note to speak to Cathy Lumby who should be appearing any day now on The Footy Show.

Money for notes: a musical tale

Nominations close on June 30 for Australia's richest awards for music composition: The Paul Lowin Orchestral Prize, $25,000, and The Paul Lowin Song Cycle Prize, $15,000. Lowin was born in Czechoslovakia, settled in Vienna in the 30s, fled to Australia via Egypt in 1939, became a naturalised Australian citizen in 1948, and ran the Swedish Handweaving Company, a wholesale dealership in cloth and dry goods. Lowin left Australia for Vienna others, The Paul Lowin Prize was finally established. Previous winners include Julian Yu, Georges Lentz, Brenton Broadstock, Martin Wesley-Smith and Stephen Cronin. The prizes are managed by a naturalised Australian citizen in 1948, and ran the Swedish Handweaving Company, a wholesale dealership in cloth and dry goods. Lowin left Australia for Vienna in 1959 to work as a foreign correspondent, but retained his citizenship and presumably a passion for his erstwhile homeland and especially for music—he was a great attender of Sydney Symphony Orchestra concerts, took singing lessons and loved lieder. Lowin died in 1961. His will indicated a wish to establish a competition for works by Australian composers in a "modern but not too modern" style. It took the best part of several decades to clarify the will, but thanks to the efforts of Kenneth Tribe, among others, The Paul Lowin Prize was finally established. Previous winners include Julian Yu, Georges Lentz, Brenton Broadstock, Martin Wesley-Smith and Stephen Cronin. The prizes are managed by Perpetual Trustees and the Australian Music Centre. Awards to be announced in September. Enquiries 02 9229 31 21, toll free 1800 500356 musicawards@perpetual.com.au

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email opencity@rtimarts.com.au
http://www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/

Distribution
Nationwide to museums, galleries, cinemas, performing arts venues and companies, cafés, universities, bookshops

Print Post Approved
PP 25500302078

ISSN 1321-4799

Opinions published in RealTime are not necessarily those of the Editorial Team or the Publisher.

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Open City is an association incorporated in NSW. Open City is funded by the Australia Council, the federal government's arts advisory body, the Australian Film Commission, the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts and the NSW Film and Television Office.
Editorial

Struck down by the GST?

On that fateful day, Friday May 28, 1999, a GST deal was struck between government and the Democrats. A GST on everything, even free street papers—well, on everything it costs us and the funding bodies to produce it and what it'll cost you to advertise and subscribe. But not on food. So why are we RealTime a basic food. And aren't we infuriatingly there was no information on TV about the GST agreement beyond food and tax cuts. So I rose 7am Saturday, dashed to the corner shop, got the fingers working and like an artist's hand, I worked them through the pages of the Sydney Morning Herald until I found a boxed item, "What the government and the Democrats agreed." Under arts it said "assessment to ensure adverse impacts remedied through funding support." Talk about vague. Having already given so much away, it was hard to imagine Howard and Alston saying here's a few million for the arts to get you through the rough patch. The don't-tax-knowledge-no-GST-on-books lobby might not have prevented a 10% GST being applied to book sales, but they did achieve $240 million over four years in support for publishing industry," a figure remarkable in its specificity.

The arts, once again without a coherent, broadly representative lobby. The majority have not tried to be in a single voice, but to be vague. Complementary medicine (acupuncture, herbalism and naturalism) "will be GST-free for an initial three years." How did they do it?

The arts are in for an interesting time, a desperately interesting time. It's said that the GST had to finally come to Australia. It felt really distinctive not to have it. One felt it right to work at making the case for the arts at the relative worth of things, of tax in terms of social justice, without applying a single-minded, blanket approach, without having to fear the inevitable, that GSTs, internationally, go up and up. The Australia Council will find itself in a particularly difficult position. The large performing arts companies have already anticipated big losses. If "assessment to ensure adverse impacts remedied" are not forthcoming, how will the council keep these companies afloat while maintaining funding levels to small companies and individual artists who will also be hit in numerous ways by the GST. All the more likely then that the Major Arts Organisations Review (now overdue and re-scheduled until later in the year) will be able to comfortably recommend bizarre mergers—like the still recurrent tutoring of the WA Ballet-ADT cross-species mating. ....chill out at the 2000 Adelaide and Melbourne Festivals

GST impact on arts festivals? Big. But, for an idyllic pre-GST moment let's put all that aside. Robyn Archer has done a stage 1 launch of her 2000 Adelaide Festival, and not long after (and unusually early given that Sue Nastrasi's 99 model isn't yet off the blocks) Jonathan Mills has announced his back to Bach extravaganza for Melbourne in 2000. We're in for a lot of Bach. The big box DG set includes 25 CDs of established performances, the Hanssler Classics set has 169 CDs available in bi-monthly shipments, many of them new and conducted by Helmuth Rilling. Mills promises the record reviewers' doyen, the Bach Collegium Japan as part of his program. Archer meanwhile promises an oasis of calm, "an adventure in contemporary Art", an alternative to a year of Olympian, millennium firewor.....

Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show exhibiting @ PICA May 7 - June 20

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Bombs, lies and cyberspace

Grisha Dolgopolov takes a net look at the Serbian war

Last week my white His Master's Voice TV blew up. This could have become a modern day tragedy. How would I get my infotainment fix? I used to watch the occasional dog by the loudspeaker cone, salivating to the tinkle of the news—responding to the aural mass media not exactly a vision back at the white beast. I would have to find other info stimuli. It is rare for TV to still speak with the 'Master's Voice', as a paid narrative element of the sound, but it still can. The problem with the coverage of the Balkan War is that the media can't seem to move away from an appropriate entertainment genre. The Gulf War was video sci-fi western, where the Rebel Alliance's advanced X-wing fighter flew over the Death Star of the Bad Dad of Baghdad. It wasn't a moral victory, but at least the genre was clear. The tropes were big, the ads were hyped, the action edit seamless and the narrative smooth and predictable.

The actions in Kosovo and Serbia have no clear televisual genre and no classic narrative structure. Consider Clinton's imploring the American public not to give into "refugee fatigue." Despite all the emotional potency of presenting detailed accounts of the misery and suffering of the Kosova Albanians, it does not make for entertaining or pedagogical viewing, no matter how far-fetched we are to admit this. NATO's problem is that there is nothing else for them to direct mainstream TV not to show so that they can dominate the airwaves while they use old maps to bomb and justify mistakes by repeating "War is not a business of perfection. Civilian casualties are regrettable, but inevitable." (text of a Clinton address: http://cnn. com/990430/Clinton/kosovo/index.html).

This "chat war" has no characters, no narrative, no heroes and no resolutions. It is a obscene simulation of a simulated war. The real action takes place in the televisual montage of misery cannot be packaged into lounge-room melodrama while the introduction of a new script. NATO must be desperate to drop the Danmil and Dumber pratfall routine for a new version of The Empire Strikes Back. If they don't hurry, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea's nose will outgrow Pinocchio's with his cheery stand-up routine of bombies and endless denials. The repetition is effective, but not convincing. It has normalised NATO's criminal activities by concentrating on the Footty Shore genre with logistics, video replays and scores. While ignoring the human, cultural, ecological and economic tragedy. It has indoctrinated the children, and is a war reiteration, omission and obfuscation. The explanation for the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade is a case of 12 different, conflicting versions ("The Chinese Embassy Bombing", Michael Chossudovsky. http://www.chossudovsky.com/listrian_politics.html). The earnestness was breathtaking.

TV has no short-term memory. It needs constant repetition to consolidate its myths. But the medium is not handling the pressure. It is too confusing. There is not enough visual pleasure. The story is not moving. It's the wrong medium. This is an internet war. For the first time, the US has attacked a country with developed communication strategies and McDonald's restaurants. There is no longer a reliance on television, video, ads and visual information. The most incisive critiques, rigorous debates, and gnarliest conspiracy theories are out there on the net.

In "other recent conflicts, like the Gulf War, we became used to hearing authoritative, sanitised, official impressions of what was going on," Paul Tooher of Global Beat Syndicate said. The Web allows the viewer to hook up to the Internet and look out the window and write down what's going on. It's not about laser-guided missiles. It's vivid and powerful and personal. And it's changing the dynamics of reporting. (http://www.kindl.org/CALS/1998/10/kosovo/kosovo.on.the.net).

This is a war about propaganda, information, speed and reach. It is about a new media literacy and, as B2D demand, "believe no one!" And no one does, especially not the mainstream media. This is a cyber war where electronic chat is always more real than the cool massaging simulations of the war machine. The first person descriptions of what's going on by ordinary people and detailed debate from all sides of the political spectrum make it impossible to swallow Clinton's charge, "We are in Kosovo because we care about saving lives..." "Welcome to the world of propaganda! Welcome to the world of the infowar."

It is not like the Serbian regime hasn't cranked up its own propaganda machine. It has ruthlessly destroyed and silenced virtually all opposition with its information war. In a way, the Western "communication guerrillas" couldn't even have dared to think about (roya'Lakoby, 1999, www.nettime.org, April 2). Opposition is considered as treason.

In cyberspace the final solution is to laugh in the face of death—the most effective antidote against brutality. The media mix between bombs as the missionaries of commerce is not lost on the Balkan netizens:

"Today we're bombing. Tomorrow we are selling. War is always unfortunate. But so is not being able to sell all your products. Right now, we'reournemouth. Serbia destroying the infrastructure. In a year or two, they will start rebuilding their country. They will need roads, bridges, telecommunications and electric power. And they will probably buy it from leading European manufacturers."

"Will it be your company? You can't start advertising too soon. That's why we at SERBAD have struck a deal with the US Airforce. Along with the bombs we will drop your print advertisements for your construction or telecommunications company. At SERBAD we target the audience specifically. If it's a bridge being hit, we'll only drop advertisements from bridge builders and if it's a town hall we'll drop advertisements for everything that goes into rebuilding it: concrete, carpets, toilets and tables."

We offer you unbeatable access to the Serbian market. Our competition is minimal and there's a chance to get televised ads into the TV in Serbia. With SERBAD they just drop from the sky. You'll own that market soon! [http://www.zmag.org/] ZNETTOPoanimation.html

If we are to believe that the US is motivated to wage war out of humanitarian concerns (and not strategic and economic) it should be waging war to counter a crime against humanity with a crime against civilisation. As Albert Einstein said, "Peace is not kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding." Serbians bombed the beautiful city of Dubrovnik 7 years ago. NATO is now bombing Serbs indiscriminately. Military targets should have been destroyed with the 600 sorties a day for 2 months. So now medieval churches and mosques, museums, television towers and hospitals have become legitimate "infrastructure" targets because even though, as Tony Blair said, "we have no quarrel with the Yugoslav people", NATO wants to "demolise and degrade" Serbia into capitulation.

Simon Jenkins provides a chilling account of the degree of destruction wreaked by NATO in its declared fight to uphold Western values against a brutal barbarism. He argues that the destruction of cultural artefacts of World Heritage List importance is itself barbaric. "People may be more important than buildings, but that does not justify the needless destruction of cultural heritage. There cannot be any moral equivalence between NATO's conduct of this war and that of Milosevic. The damage by bombing now being inflicted on Yugoslavia's historic monuments, according to Jenkins, is worse than Milosevic, only with the recklessness of war." (Simon Jenkins, The Times, May 7) Here he echoes Slavoj Zizek's argument against getting stuck in the bind of the Double Blackmail: if you are against NATO strikes, you are for Milosevic's proto-Fascist regime of ethnic cleansing, and if you are against Milosevic, you support the global capitalist New World Order (Slavoj Zizek, "Against the Double Blackmail", www.nettime.org, April 7).

As we scroll through such emails, it is the absence of a clear moral structure that awakens us from the irresponsible and deferential toil stilled by the war reiteration, omission and obfuscation. The explanation for the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade is a case of 12 different, conflicting versions ("The Chinese Embassy Bombing", Michael Chossudovsky. http://www.chossudovsky.com/listrian_politics.html). The earnestness was breathtaking.

Although it may be monitored by the authorities. But the US government Loral Ocean company shut down its satellite feeds for internet customers in Yugoslavia in mid May in a flagrant violation of commercial contracts with Yugoslav ISPs, as well as an attack on freedom of the internet. The paradox is that the 2 closest ISPs to the regime will continue operating because of their terrestrial lines, but satellite providers—who try to maintain some image of independence—will be closed down.

This war has reached new levels of barbarism. But it has also signalled the need and the possibility for new transnational communities that are empowered by information, speed and access. The electronic barricades are up and this could change the parameters of conflict. Here the propaganda of all sides suffers a natural engagement. The Internet has done untold harm to NATO's credibility http://www.zmag.org/ /ZMag/kosovo.htm. It has provided Kosova Albanians with a voice http://www.all- net.com/ and has supported countless vigorously engaged discussion zones http://www.nettime.org.

However, it has also ignited a netique war with hate speech missiles, crude racist jibes and inhumane calls to hostility. Ultimately, despite the coarse language and crude ideas, these written forums allow prejudices and misconceptions to be worked through in an engaged dialogue rather than repressed. The result is often surprising turnarounds.

Transglobal cyberspace is jammed full of national identities all posting, cross posting and debating. Baudrillard once claimed that excess information leads to an implosion of meaning. There is too much information, because it guards against repetition. The constant blunders by NATO, whether true or not, have undermined its credibility with their regularity. It simply does not have enough new information to maintain the fascination of simulation. This war is a return to the Real with all the accompanying excesses and mess and madness and misery. But at least we no longer sit there like Pavlov's dog listening for His Master's Voice.

All elements are in place. Please answer this question: This cannot be allowed. The civilised world needs to know about this before the catastrophe occurs. Please, whoever reads this, do something to prevent this apocalypse.
Oh Lord, won’t you buy me...

Kathryn Millard tries for Metaphysical Mastery at the Sydney Entertainment Centre

Green and purple lights begin sweeping the stage. The top cirular choir goes up a notch or two. Ladies and gentlemen, the Queen of Affirmations, Louise Hay! A grandmotherly woman in movement, a rock star's welcome. The author of eight titles (

The Ka thryn Millard tries for Metaphysical Mastery at the ydn y ntertainment entre

I king out at the audience who give her, pan ui Louise; takes the sr . he . tands the stage. Th raped ce1 rrial choir g up a lot of hugging going on.

though that simple word does keep cropping up. "I am a very simple lady with a very simple message. Love yourself." Louise Hay has a testimonial to share with the audience. She grew up poor. Or, according to her newfound philosophy, she created poverty for most of her life. Until she learnt about affirmations. And created according

one for herself: "My income is constantly increasing and I prosper wherever I turn." I can't remember if we all had to say this after Louise. We might have; there was a lot of this audience participation stuff. The women next to me are in tears by the end of Louise's testimony and there's a hell of a lot of hugging going on.

though that simple word does keep cropping up. "I am a very simple lady with a very simple message. Love yourself." Louise Hay has a testimonial to share with the audience. She grew up poor. Or, according to her newfound philosophy, she created poverty for most of her life. Until she learnt about affirmations. And created poverty for most of her life. Until she learnt about affirmations. And created according

... Hotel and riding in the back of limousines while on book tours. True to his label as "The Man With The Plan", Deepak had charts and graphs and overhead projections about how we might come to know reality. I had trouble writing it all down quickly enough and was relieved to hear that there was no homework planned.

Michael Rowland, ex-television soap director, author of Absolute Happiness and the only Australian speaker in the line-up, took us through some of the finer points on relationships. This time we had to reach for the pink cards in our sample bags. Finally, superstar author of Celeste Prophecy and Celestial Vision, James Redfield, took the stage with his wife, Sally. James told us that we were the people who would change the world, that we were part of a new wave of spiritual energy. That there was a lot of cynicism about, but we should resist it. Sally acted as a kind of cheerleader for James and his philosophies, enthusiastically leading the audience through visual meditations and limbering up exercises while we massaged the universe. The fuJ people on tap were all open to know reality. It

"Simon Says." There was a sense that the audience longed to simply be told how to live their lives. The successful people on stage demonstrated and the audience obediently followed. Armed with the day's teachings, we were then to go out into the world and put them into action. This was also the approach of Disney screenwriting guru Christopher Vogler on a visit to Sydney several years ago to promote his step-by-step screenwriting bible The Hero's Journey. This may seem simple but it works, Christopher said; take this template and see the changes it will make in your life. The Hero's Journey promised scripts that would lead to contracts and fame, whereas the Metaphysical Mastery speakers implied that we could soon all have our own Rolls Royces in the garage. (My shoed's still empty, material wealth is yet to drive in; but I'll keep you posted.)
Minding our own business

Kirsten Krauth joins the public at Artspace's Disappearing Publics forum

George Michael walks into a bar. (No, this isn't the beginning of a level joke.) He orders a drink. He situatedly works the room, huddles in corners with friends, sashays onto the dance floor, has a boogie, stands on the stairs with glass of designer beer in hand, ponders. What's weird about this scene? In a triumph for the rock star ego, the bar is full of George Michaels. Hundreds of Hills dressed identically in swish suits, populate this place. The camera moves around the nightclub fluidly, from one George to another. George the Celebrity no longer has to mix with mere mortals, he can dance, shimmy, order from, party with, himself. (Even the DJ is a George.) Can you imagine the potential. Soon we will have film strips where all characters are played by Jim Carrey, whole worlds where only celebrities exist...

So we gravitate to a panel starring The Panel's Santo Cilauro, Head On's Ana Kokkinos, curator of Contemporary Aboriginal Art at AGNSW Helen Perkins, and Emeritus Professor Bill Gottenby; a forum trying to address changes that are taking place in public space, where "there are more pressures to measure the value of work and service according to commercial criteria" (Nikos Papastergiadis, chair). In his opening address, Papastergiadis states that Papastergiadis speaks of watching TV in Thameside London, the repetitive responses by politicians to questions about cuts to education and museums ("but there is no alternative"); "competitive in a global market"; "eliminate waste, duplication") and the current climate where productivity is measured in efficiency gains only, where students have become clients. Papastergiadis initiated the Disappearing Publics forum to create an open dialogue between people on different fronts, to oppose and transform the current model of economic rationalism, and to explore its impact on the arts, media technologies, universities and architecture.

We are here

Hetti Perkins negotiates the tensions and contradictions in Aboriginal art and its relation to the public(s). Rather than disappearing, she sees Aboriginal (and the people themselves) as becoming public, a part of the Australian consciousness. She traces a personal line from her father's (Charles Perkins) experience of apartheid in Walgett, to the freedom buses in Moree, to equal pay for the pastoral industry, to a legal system which has taken 100 years to acknowledge "we are here", to the Tent Embassy on the lawns of Old Parliament House.

The flying of the Aboriginal flag and emerging Aboriginal arts mean a shift in position in the public sphere. In the early 80s, the Papunya "dot paintings" and a new (white) appreciation of Aboriginal culture had many effects on the Australian landscape, extending to changes in language; Aboriginals became "our Indigenous people" and "Dreaming" a marketer's buzzword. But still, there remains an inherent racism in the response to Aboriginal art by a public who devour their paintings "(Fake) splashed over the cover of a recent Good Weekend)" with strange and unfair expectations that Aboriginal painters should be true to their spirituality, that urban based artists don't quite fit the mould, that once money enters it means the inevitable corruption of Aboriginal people. (The recent Four Corners on fakes in the art marketplace shows this is a more whiteless issue, based on secrecy and shady dealers.)

Cultural fringe

Santo Cilauro opens with something along the lines of "this is the first cultural thing I've done" which is kind of bizarre considering his involvement in Australian classics such as the Ranger's serial and Frontline (who can forget his smirky, pathetic, easily influenced weatherman). He too for the personal trajectory (there's a theme becoming evident here), tracing what most of the audience already knows: where he started from and where he's at. He speaks of the difficulty in the mid 80s of working in a changed environment at the ABC: where less money meant a defensiveness and "strange bureaucracy" negotiations. Moving to commercial networks, the team were left alone (as long as they achieved good ratings of course). He then outlined how the production company Working Dog controls all stages of production, how they take on all roles themselves, how the money they earn goes straight into the next production. I know all this—I've seen the making of Frontline docos—but how does this control of production translate to both critical and commercial success? How, as a group, do they seem to instil a know what will appeal to the public? His reasoning that they just make what they enjoy, that it is impossible to make films for a market, it doesn't fit right. The diversity of their product-Frontline, The Panel, The Late Show, the Triple M breakfast show, A River Somewhere—points to media makers who have a cunning understanding of what public(s) are out there, and who can market cleverly to a fragmented audience.

No market interest

Ana Kokkinos, director of Only the Brave and Head On, speaks of the reductions in public funding for filmmakers since 1992 when she graduated from VCA. A range of options were available then—Film Victoria, AFC—to make a film about 2 Greek-Australian girls growing up in the Western suburbs, a film focused on class, ethnicity, sexuality, ideas seen as "marginal" within the Australian community. For new filmmaking graduates, the funds are virtually non-existent. She noted the difficulty of script assessments for Head On where it was judged to be of "no market interest" (in hindsight, blatantly wrong). The tragedy and irony of Australian scripts having to conform to commercial conventions (be market driven and developed), the difficulty of making films for the 'global market' like Paperback Hero and Dear Claudia,safe romantic comedies which are both critical failures and commercial flops.

Where personal spheres collide

The striking thing about all 3 panels was their use of the personal narrative; (particularly an audience member) relying on their own stories to infer wider issues and flesh out a definition of public(s). I'd agree with Ana Kokkinos that all actions are political and that, after all, a community is made of individual voices forming and merging; a public sphere is about personal spheres colliding. Where personal spheres collide in the postmodern world, the idea of the public has been reimagined to such an extent that even within the margins differences are recognized and celebrated. It is unlikely that as women have entered the workforce and become independent, they have changed the terms of 'personal spheres', but rather have created new personal domains to create the public sphere. "It's not some special essence of 'woman' that women bring to public life, but particular capacities to speak about women's stories from their everyday lives." (Wark, Celebrities, Culture and Cyberpace, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1999). Papastergiadis states that "art makes its own audience" so perhaps we should be talking about diversification rather than disappearance. Yet, all panels had the same story, in the sense that without initial government support they would not have emerged. What is disappearing are the stepping stones to public awareness, to finding a voice (even) on the margins.

Homing down the sidewalks

Bill Gottenby (who unfortunately had prepared a paper but only had time to present a few delicious tidbits) closed the session with new ideas that perhaps would have been better as openers. Broadening out the discussion, he spoke of the need to discuss Australia in terms of how people are living together now, as a successful multicultural nation (in practice), rather than what conservative politicians say about the "multicultural" on the (Sly). She spoke of the sociological impact of increasing globalisation and economic rationalism, the Anglos fixation on individualism in the States, which has resulted in competence being used as criteria for everything: unemployed people on the streets seen as losers (by birth/sectoral basis), booted off the sidewalks, not belonging even in the gutter. In an Australia where "your own business" is becoming the dominant mindset/accounting software, Gottenby sees the need for government and the public(s) to guarantee that we will mind each other's as well. Ana Kokkinos believes that with the concept of public comes the notion of responsibility and we need to find strategies to fight consumerism as being the only angle. Hopefully, the next 2 forums will do more to address these issues and come up with some answers.

Disappearing Publics Forum, chaired by Nikos Papastergiadis, Ana Kokkinos, "Dean" Santo Cilauro, Hetti Perkins, Emeritus Professor Bill Gottenby, Artspace, Sydney, April 27

There are 2 further forums, May 25: Dr Scott McQuire, Professor Len Ang, John Hughes, Inder Info; June 29: Juan Davila, Professor Leon Van Schalk, Peter Emmott, Professor Paul Patton. Enquiries, Artspace, tel 02 9368 1899.
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The City in performance: development of new works for Next Wave 2000

Alex Hutchinson and Clare Stewart follow the development of several new projects.

Geoffrey Dunstan, Kate Fryer & Rudolf Mineur in Rosalind
Angela Bailey

the audience an option to voice an opinion before the work is done and being a wider opinion just the maker into the making. Anti-auteur i guess you could say.

Where Productions of Fear is at is a few weeks later. The preparation for Productions of Fear has been cut into 3 parts. The first involved Michael Gow and Dunstan sitting in cafes for a week, generally working on paper what was in Dunstan's head. It was Gow's role to build a narrative from Dunstan's chunks of story. The second stage was Dunstan, Kate Fryer and Rudolf Mineur working at the real-life event, figuring out what they could and couldn't do together physically. The last period was spent selecting the best aspects of each.

Part of an email from Broinowski the morning of the presentation. "[Hotel Obiho] is still about poverty and fear in Australia, and the issue between the classes—you could still say Alice in Deroland but less overly 'magical'. It's another perspective on Melbourne, on life. One that is authentic, though translated through the writer's eyes. You could say the project has become less about humour, although I have concentrated on keeping it in there, and more about fear, more than I initially expected. And when I think about it I'm not surprised. We'll see what you get. See you tonight.

A Biography of Geoffrey Dunstan. As a performer Broinowski has worked for many companies, including a small and free newborn Royal Womb and Playbox (Thieving Boy/Like Stars in My Hands) which received the 1997 Green Room Award for best lead actor. Work as a devising writer includes Gherkin and Bucket of Blood Hotel.

An initial impression of Adam Broinowski. He sits with his legs crossed on the armchair at Bar Open, his fringe rising up from his forehead like sea grass. He talks fast and uses his hands a lot. He seems like the kind of guy you could take home to meet your mother; although you probably wouldn't want to take her to play. More on that later.

What is Hotel Obiho? Hotel Obiho is a play based on the real-life Hotel Horban which squatted in the heart of the city on the corner of Flinders and Spencer below a lane train track beside the Yarra at its most efficient opposite Crowed double and active train station. The Kennett government wants to demolish it. Broinowski wants to write a play about it.

Where Hotel Obiho is about a month before the work-in-progress presentation at the North Melbourne Town Hall which takes place about a year before the final production in May 2000 at the next Wave Festival. Actually that last part is a lie. Broinowski has already written a play about it. Most of a play, anyway. He describes it as a portrait of an inverse Dante's Inferno. A hotel populated by retired alcoholics on the ground floor, rising through middle-aged ex-cons to peak at young addicts. He says it's about another time, another dimension, a sanctuary from Kennett's dynamic Victoria.

A Biography of Geoffrey Dunstan & Kate Fryer. Dunstan and Fryer have performed for various circus theatre companies in Australia including, between them, Circus Oz and Rock'n'Roll Circus. They have formed a new company, Dislocate, to create "quality narrative driven productions that combine acrobatic and aerial work simultaneously with text."

An initial impression of Geoffrey Dunstan. Geoffrey Dunstan isn't certain why he's talking to me at all. He says, "and the article will come out after the presentation. What is this publicly actually doing? I tell him all about my queries, about giving people a voice to look at how a project goes from almost nothing to something. That seems to placate him. One of the first things he tells me is that he's currently working as a body double in a circus themed Neighbours spin-off. I find the idea vaguely terrifying.

What is Productions of Fear? For a start, it might not be called Productions of Fear at all, but could in actual fact be titled Hug Your Monster or Risk Reduction. It's a performance piece which combines writing with circus acrobatics in an effort to take a different look at the world around us. Dunstan talks about interviewing psychologists and the distance between traditional
The way the City-concept functions; a place of transformations and appropriations, the object of various kinds of interference but also a subject that is constantly enriched by new attributes, it is simultaneously the machine and the hero of modernity.


Let me get this perpendicular: I am a grid girl. I choose a cartesian lifestyle because it satisfies certain fundamental requirements: it keeps me centered. At any point in time I can say "I know where I am," which substitutes for "I know who I am." Questions of identity have always disturbed me. A reference point—like map 1A, coordinates—will all people really need to think they know me. Leaving Melbourne’s CBD, I experience an immediate sense of vertigo. Take the St Georges St to North Melbourne Town Hall for this series of works in progress makes me nervous, disoriented.

The city (in true name) is the topography of my imagination. I live in its everydayness and love it as ideal. In my lawnsy people dream, fuck, piss, die. People sleep and shoot-up in doorways. People watch each other watch TV. People design lofty visions for future cities. People give birth and bring up children. In my lawnsy buildings transform, house, leak and crumble. Buildings give surface on which the sounds of occupation and pleasure compete. Buildings block and reveal light. Buildings define the space I name ‘my laneway’.

In this city of people and buildings I am a pedestrian, a resident, a worker; a player—I move in the city and the city moves me. I am part of its machinery and it is my hero. I am part of its process and it is the result.

Viviana Sacchero and Carl Priesty share this sense of citizenship. It is manifest in Inmate and City Blood, their respective works for inVISIBLE energies, the city in performance development. Sacchero’s movement work and Priesty’s soundscape take ‘the City’ as material. They understand it as a physical space and an intellectual concept, they transform it into an object of study and a subject of representation. The city is not backdoor, it is not locale—it is the fabric of the work. Sacchero’s collaborative vision and Priesty’s individual noise do not mess with ideas of utopic or dystopic cities: they put forth clear, valid, interpretations of the city it is experienced.

Viviana Sacchero’s Inmate

“in approaching the curatorial brief of ‘the city’, I wanted to address the pervading sense of ending—violently, atomically. City Blood, its raw material. Viviana is working with 10 movers aged 15-24. We are concerned and aware of the fact that at any point in time I can say “I know where I am,” which substitutes for “I know who I am.” Questions of identity have always disturbed me. A reference point—like map 1A, coordinates—will all people really need to think they know me. Leaving Melbourne’s CBD, I experience an immediate sense of vertigo. Take the St Georges St to North Melbourne Town Hall for this series of works in progress makes me nervous, disoriented.

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Viviana Sacchero’s Inmate

“In approaching the curatorial brief of ‘the city’, I wanted to address the pervading sense of ending—violently, atomically, philosophically...” Sacchero tells me. She is working with 10 movers aged 15 - 24. We are meeting while the work-in-progress is in its first stage of development. I ask her about the group’s perception of the city and she says: “I do not identify with this postmodern notion of ending—violently, atomically. City Blood, its raw material. Viviana is working with 10 movers aged 15-24. We are concerned and aware of the fact that at any point in time I can say “I know where I am,” which substitutes for “I know who I am.” Questions of identity have always disturbed me. A reference point—like map 1A, coordinates—will all people really need to think they know me. Leaving Melbourne’s CBD, I experience an immediate sense of vertigo. Take the St Georges St to North Melbourne Town Hall for this series of works in progress makes me nervous, disoriented.

Viviana Sacchero’s Inmate
antistatic 99
The more than visual
It's in the bones...
A feature report on the second antistatic dance event in Sydney

antistatic 99...on the bone put on substantial flesh (the programs were labelled Femur, Clavicle, Atlas, and interestingly for the contemporary performance component, Spur) over its 3 weeks with performances, installations, talks and workshops, bringing a welcome intensity and added interest to the Sydney dance scene. Guests from the USA and Melbourne added bodies and dance cultures in perspective. As you'd read, a few observers and participants thought antistatic's focus somewhat narrow, 'homogenous', lacking in ethnic and aesthetic diversity. In the case of Ishmael Houston-Jones' query and breakdown of the event, he applies the word festival, which in fact might not fit the event model of antistatic with its very particular dance issues, forms, and inherent independence and their innovations (as opposed to, say, MAP's deliberate covert approach in Melbourne in 1998). For all of its probing, essentialist hearings, antistatic nonetheless displayed some remarkable hybrids, artist and reviewer awe over text spoken in performance was much less in evidence than a couple of years ago, and collaborations with composers and lighting designers had clearly made considerable progress with greater integration and distinct dance and music components of roles. antistatic might not have been a festival in the conventional sense, but it certainly was a feast. Appropriately, one of its highlights was an on-the-fly visual and soundicemail created by performers and audience on the penultimate evening of an intimate and open dance event.

The more than visual
Femur: Jennifer Monson, Kepthy Ishmael Houston-Jones, in The Dark, Rougher, Without Hope; Trotman and Morrish, Avalanche: The Convolutions of Catastrophe and Calling, the Creeping Spectre of Chaos and Collapse, The Performance Space, March 25 - 27

Comparing each artist's response to the theme, I saw the tiny envelopes of ideas unfold in those first few seconds. Jennifer Monson made her racket climbing down a ladder in the dark, a hand-held light bouncing off chunky bare legs, strong form, but also a feeling of precariously, a rattling loneliness, of missing her step. Ishmael Houston-Jones did not want us to see him at all, yelled to make his lights go out, similar in gesture to which he called a moth, "Here, moth-my, moth-ty." He calls our focus to his voice. Trotman and Morrish, entered with all the subtlety that epitomises the art. At times it was clear, kismed, drunk from, dropped. He seems to lie over as, supplicant or persist we're not sure.

Other no-win, no-choice stories: a New York law-if someone is dying, then doctors may declare a death, but it cectainly was a reality if someone is dying, then doctors may declare as death, but it cectainly was a reality. In my view one shouldn't begrudge Professor Foster her training and in any case, the variety of issues involved (and perhaps even a matter of pure formalism, eg. moving through an audience and taking pens, bags and personal objects (even spectators themselves) creating them throughout the space. Neither was the text purely descriptive. Often language was used in an explicitly performative sense. In the TPS lecture the whole room was used to run on the spot, stand close to someone, stumble, stretch, duck, balance, pose, run stealthily and touch, gesture, gesture. It was not possible to ignore the generous spirit with which she engaged with the varying audience reactions to her work, reactions which sometimes verged on the bodily minded not to say bizarre.

In her 2 performed pieces in Sydney, she presented the performance of knowledge as something more than a banalistic paradigm of facts or a bewildering display of concepts as an embodied array of learned and unravelled being, a statement of existences, and knowledge as more than they constrain. In this model spectators can choose elements of the mise en scene to focus upon, and elements of the art to focus on, triggering a sense of lightness in the learning situation, rather than the weighty, door and humourless lecturing styles which we have all been exposed to and wish to forget. In short it is a knowledge performance which expresses a desire to animate debates, a crucial pedagogic task in the age of the info-byte.

Edward Scheer
Choreographer, dancer, writer, Susan Foster is Professor of Dance at the University of California campuses at Davis and Riverside. She is author of Reading Dancing: Bodies and Spectacles, 1969-1989, and Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire. She is also editor of Choreographing History and Corporacies.

HYBRID YIELD
Clairecide Ros Warby, Shona Jones, Graeme Leek, original home (returning to it); Helen Herberton, Ben Cohbam, morphic series - Stroke; Lisa Jel Nelson, Memo to Dodo; Ronaldised Cup, Jon Purcell, preciosity, sections 4 and 5; Jude Walton, Ros Warby, Jackie Dunn, Silent (silent mass), The Performance Space, April 1 - 3

These dancers seem to be moving away from those pleasantly concordant relationships particularly with sound and light design, of simple support and elaboration. In Clairecide,
antastic 99

rhetoric of images, providing articulate

and arch which fractured the projected images

and arch which fractured the projected images

there's a real hybrid growth in the fusion of

is not designed for immediate. Now I don't recall the words.

and yellow flaming, black hair

and contrast: black -out, yellow flaming, black hair

English/French vocal mix; it seems not designed

sound to sustain an audience's interest without

and more pronounced than difficult to undo.

something in the light; small registers of

scented stillness and fast-forward flickering effects.

the 2 installations presented at

un reckon the Origins of Cinderella to Contemporar y

The Performance Space Gallery and surrounds,

to a harmonious truce.

edge of instruments,

The performance work. The notion comes from his

concerns with TBS (Total Body Speed) as the centre of actions which determine his

rigorously reworks

and elasticity corn up against each other

and Medlin' s film, Medlin created

Medlin' s film, Medlin created encounters with oversized body

architectural structures and space which

and architectural spaces which

one of the dancing body. The dancer in this case is

extended past the flickering laser beam guarding their resting place and into the audience.

resemble an anticipated moment in Evett's

kicking; a different emphasis

a counterpoint to

impression of the work onto the

the human rest and into the audience. Yumi's

it before

in all these cases, the dancers are submerged into a choreography of images, providing articulate body

by a miracle and writhing an arm that beckons, appearing on a dark

The Performance Space, April 4

and Everitt' s films were

To this as in other of Stewart's works the sounds and images of words are collapsed back on themselves and we have the

and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to

as she moved

another, finally with a kind of inevitability until

A Simultaneous Retracing.

preparatory work, in this section, staccato, piecing.

Stuart Lynch closed the night with the equally

perpetually as me

The 2 installations presented at

to sustain the entrance

architectural structures and space which

for the reopening of sixteen to thirty. Each dancer

a different emphasis

rather than through text combining with gesture.

a different emphasis

Instead there wasn't much else to experience

and Everitt' films were

The Performance Space, April 1 - 11

rather than through text combining with gesture.

or even a piece that could adequately process. In a way this piece represents the

and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to

as she moved

and Everitt' s films were

architectural structures and space which

perceptual movement and image

and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to

as she moved

and Everitt' s films were

architectural structures and space which

perceptual movement and image

and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to

as she moved

and Everitt' s films were

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and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to

as she moved
Event's work, figure and landscape hammered onto the same plane through repetition; beside this a hazy view of a room shaded from afternoon light imbues the domestic space with potential action. Collectively, these fields of motion seduce the spectator into participation—moving around the rooms, up the stairs, catching beginning/middle/end.

Doig's The Other Woman featured alone before the Claude programme. Its sculptural dimension—a staircase and an arch—produced odd details; Doig's painted lips in a close-up came to rest on the lowest step of the stairs. Close-up shots featured heavily in this 'woman'—an other woman who Doig plays in various guises. The close-up turns her face into a plastic surface whose micro movements constitute a kind of disembodied field of activity. She appears in hardly fabricated places; fake bricks and astro-turf provide a background for her heavily made-up and bewigged characters that seem caught mid-scenario. In striking contrast to Doig's appearances in this work, Hilton is a faceless body moving through an indefinite space. She 'dances' in this work in a full-bodied, rhythmic way not seen in the other collective installations and the treatment of Hilton here brings to a head issues relating to dance as logic. But Hilton's performance within here (Helson is co-editor of US magazine Contact) was an issue which developed further throughout the supper discussion (and indeed into the next day). Jennifer Monson struggled to speak—she provided a clear, straightforward voice throughout the festival for me—setting up dance as her 'language.' This reminded me of her comments at Susan Leigh Foster's lecture at UNSW where we had worked our way back to a body released from technique which was heading towards being released from habit. Monson intervened to save the dancer's own specificity—the peculiarities of physical language which make someone like Monson the remarkable performer she is.

Lisa Nelson in discussion with Rosalind Crip, spoke about what video has offered her as a dancer. Nelson picked up a camera when she stopped dancing for a while. When she returned to dance, she says that what she took with her from that experience was a new awareness of choice-making processes. From using the camera as an eye she developed an acute sense of frame and focus which informs her improvisational work—the imperative to move, to follow, to change. "Movement" has come to equal "choice" for her; she has worked her way back to this point. During the supper discussion last night that the "thoughts" involved in this "choice" became the focus as she spoke of a "mind-body-dance" and joked about the intelligence going on behind the "nuministic display" of dance performance—an intelligence that has had to be "outed."

The struggle between movement and a verbal or written account of it which Nelson signals reflected on art as doomed prophecy, classicism as a relic and the frailty of the body, knowledge and history. Could performance be an intense, agitated that passes all too quickly? This was a rich offering.

In Helen Herbertson and Ben Cobham's work, morphia series —Stroke 1, light patterned the dance, almost illuminating her and at other times framing her. Watching this dance was like that stumble from sleep when the house seems strange and part of a dream. Herbertson, like a wind-up doll, moved and stopped, changed rhythm and her stiff gestures, and was intriguingly, beguilingly flesh and mechanical at the same time. "She moves in the large space and brought to life this picture show on the distant stage. I was drawn into some sort of relationship with my own childlike wonder. Again, a specific cultural heritage was invoked; this time, German expressionism and its troubled relationship to fascism. I also recalled Gordon Craig's vision—the performer as alter mannequin.

In contrast, works by Ljhamul Houston-Jones and Tromman and Merrih in the opening programme have the impulse to yield 'an effect,' in particular for the speech of the performer to direct the audience's experience. In this kind of improvised performance I feel drawn into a social relationship with the performer. I feel obliged to laugh, be entertained or empathise. Interestingly, Eleanor Brickhill deliberately invoked a specific social context, the cocktail party, to speak about the act of performing. I enjoyed the juxtaposition and confabulation of social spaces and interaction. I was reminded of the pleasures and discomforts of both settings and of how difficult it was to 'simply be' in either. I was aware of the text and dancing were arranged in such a way as to allow my relationship to the event to keep shifting. I was glad never to that 'pinned against the backdrop's' party feeling.

In KunstWer, Alan Schacher searched as if having feeling his way, fitting in, moving on to an industrial soundscape by Rik Rie. This image of a body mapping a place which offered no rest, an alien place, resonated with me. It came close to an image of my current experience of watching performance.

I like dancing to be framed. I like dancing to conjure up a field of references and associations, to provoke reflection. I don't like to too specifically positioned by me, or the performer's, personal history. I don't like to use 'empathy.' I want instead that shock of having a feeling I didn't expect. In a world where I am asked to empathise continually I want something more from live performance. I fear I have, as Philip Adams describes it, compassion fatigue.

SHOWING THE WORKSHOPPING

Atlanta Workshop Showings, The Performance Space, April 10

The workshop showings were an appropriately informal affair and gave non-workshoppers an insight into the work of the 3 imported practitioners—Nelson, Monson and Ljhamul Houston-Jones. They had seen in performance and been the focus of much discussion. The showings unfolded for the audience like a game of charades we were invited to view but not to participate. Each artist had developed tasks, methods and rules that the viewer could attempt to decipher or merely watch the results of. The similarities and differences became striking.

Nelson was the first up and the video's commands she had implemented in her performance, Dance Light Sound, were employed here in mance, dancers either participating in the "stop," "reverse," "play," "replace" commands or waiting and watching. The choice to participate or not become as interesting as the choices about moving, and the role of the 'commander' began to slide around the group. The dancers often had to move with their eyes shut becoming instantly
tentative, exploring the space around themselves anew. The participants kept to the back of the performance space engrossed in the details of their tasks.

Monson's group made more of a spectacle of themselves in the existing way Monson can in her performances. The display of energy and concentration that Monson's actions were relentless and the participants completely engrossed. It was difficult not to follow Monson here whose self-contemplated actions made the comic her rigging about the space in pseudo-balistic hysteria. There was an energy-connection between the dancers and an awareness of the observers that sparked with possibilities.

Houstone-Jones' group showing was an "almost performance-piece" made up of a succession of ideas. Music was introduced to the proceedings (hamsuiggled as he DJ'd behind us) and the dancers moved closer to the audience. Language was also introduced sometimes more than functional, introducing narrative and emotional registers, and was interrupted yet another system of spoken commands ("what-" up). Movements became correspondingly more gestural and scenarios appeared; the group posed for a camera, revolving slowly as they changed positions, drawing out the moment of "presentation": a line-up of apparently expert botanists described their favourite flowers over the top of each other and the line began to sway organically. Erin Brannigan

RECLAIMING DANCE AS INNOVATOR
Alex Susie Fraser, Stories from the Interior; Sally Gardner, Discourses on practice survive; Julie Humphreys, Revaluation; Anne Thompson, "Rainer, Wilson and Bausch as markers in a mapping of the border terrrain called dance theatre"; Cameron Clarke; with Ian Pears, Alice Cummins, Rosalind Crisp, Orbit; Eleanor Brickhill, The Cocktail Party; Julie-Anne Long & Virginia Baxter, Rememberings on Dance.

antistatic as a whole event exposed, problematised and critiqued the current and cogging negotiation within dance between movement and words. This project has become central to new dance practices and is a significant area of inquiry. It is within the broad context of the performance arts. The relentless necessity to reveal dance—to provide commentary on the display—described by the artists is part of a community's need to move from the defensive and assume its role as innovator in this regard, could be traced through the festival from Foster's experiments combining movement improvisation and empirical discourse, to Monson's incoherent vocalisations in Keeper, to the very format of this ecstatic event.

The last day of antistatic, Atlas, was like a culmination of this apparent, but perhaps implicit, transformation of performance (incorporating texts, choreography and or improvisation), presented papers and the least could be described as "performed commentary" by Julie-Anne Long and Virginia Baxter; exposed most lucidly the curators' task. How can dance remain the primary discipline, its condition and knowledge the most influential forces, when combined with discourse and all this entails? To slide across types of language, methods and modes of communication provided the curators with one answer.

While Anne Thompson used language and theory (particularly psychoanalysis) to consider a notion of spectatorship (in which she found empathies with contact and ideokines) in relation to the work of Pina Bausch, Yvonne Ranier and Robert Wilson, Sally Gardner probed the implications of language itself in relation to government peer assessment documentation to ask Can Practice Survive? Gardner described the Australia Council's "philanthropic" activity as creating not a shelter from the mainstream marketplace, but a new economy, which deals in reducive terms...

…innovative", "independent", "creative", "pioneering." She provided an interesting alternative economic option; rather than putting money into publicists, why not just pay the audience directly?

References to Australia's lack of historical context for terminology such as those outlined above circled back to a notion of Australia as suffering from a condition of "lack" or "ignorance." Surely official language cannot represent the actual situation within which work is produced and received in any country. Performance artist Mike Parr, in challenging the academic approach of Thompson's paper to Bausch's work, assumed, I would argue incorrectly, that most audience members had never seen her work live. Russell Dumas, in a later session, revisited this subject of content and Australian audiences by criticising the "guru" status he believed antistatic's visiting artists to have been granted. The arguments represented here are recurring within the dance community and assume a condition of inadequacy in our audiences and practitioners, which in turn suggest an authority "elsewhere." Such assumptions magnate discussion and progress by rendering the majority of participants deficient.

A later discussion grouped together 3 practitioners whose solo works were performed as part of Axis, Eleanor Brickhill, Julie Humphreys and Susie Fraser. Unusually 1 missed Fraser's piece, Stories From the Interior. [In this work-in-progress, Picking up the Threads, Susie Fraser retracts a dancer's body changed by childbirth and motherhood. Her voice recorded speaks eloquently from a tape recorder. When asked afterwards why the speech is in the third person, she says, "Sometimes it feels like that." The illumination for her subtle movement comes from a video monitor running home movie footage. Meanwhile stretched across the back wall are the beginnings of her video manipulations into a painstaking choreography on the family from her place within it. Eds.] Hannah Pickering added the most satisfying combination of spoken word and movement in antistatic, The Cocktail Party. Her analogy of a party was accurate; she tentatively entered the space and presented a dance and a kind of commentary: "What is that...it looks important...why don't you just say it? I'll know what that means from..." A dance about making a dance, in her words. Words revealed movement revealed words in a moving and strikingly personal confrontation of the two. In discussion Brickhill said she was "trying not write while thinking of dancing." Fraser said she had tried "writing from movement" but "needed another pair of hands."

Long and Baxter had the last say in event and left everyone speechless; attempting a closing discussion was aborted after valiant attempts from the Masters of Ceremony, Trotman and Morrish, which were met with a request for alcohol. The irrelevant tone and attitude of Long and Baxter was a welcome change from the earliest intentions of the weekend, but their performance was an odd experience seated as I was between Lisa Nelson and Jennifer Monson who were not spared the duo's humour.

What they dared to do was admit to other preferences within performance, both through their comments and their mode of delivery, which provided a healthy interwoven within a relatively homogeneous festival. Not to deny the vast differences in the approaches of say Houston-Jones and Crisp, but antistatic engaged framing notions of dance which created an exclusive environment. Long and Baxter's piece suggested other ways of dancing and performing which, at the same time, displayed a real engagement with the proceedings. A certain frustration was sized here but always with good humour, such as Long's comments on the Clavicle program that it all seemed so "Melbourne" and her exposition of exactly what "doing a Dumas" entailed. Even Russell Dumas was rendered speechless. Erin Brannigan

DO REMEMBER THIS...

As part of antistatic, choreographer-dancer Julie-Anne Long and I created Rememberings on Dance, a performed conversation in which we attempted to harness a little of the electricity generated by the event. Looking at the ways memory operates in performance and its reception by audiences, we began by admitting to personal lapses: when Julie-Anne is taken by a particular movement, she has a strong desire to see it again and finds it difficult to see the same, whereas I retain overall atmosphere and feel but rely on conversation to recall precise moves. We spoke from a table covered with books (about memory and dance), notes, pens and markers. Julie-Anne had a knot around one finger with a large ball of string handy beside her. At one point she rolled up her sleeve to reveal more reminders scrawled in bio.

We began with "Doing a Dumas", a conversation about Julie-Anne's recent experience working on Russell Dumas' Cassandra's Dance which opened antistatic. I quoted Russell from an interview in Writings on Dance: "(The dancers are) not trying to produce how they're being seen. The trick is to have the work just out of grasp so that the dancers' focus is just on doing the task rather than displaying the task or mystery of the task." In answer to my question about the task, Julie-Anne demonstrated a fragment of the process:

JAL: "Well, okay, you might take a move like this (SHE LIFTS WEIGHT ONTO THE RIGHT LEG, LETTING THE LEFT LEG ROTATE BEHIND AND SWING BACK OUT TO THE SIDE). We'll go over and over it for hours, days to learn where the weight is, how the muscles respond to this particular way of moving. The next day, Russell might come in and teach the move in an entirely different way as if the other had never existed."

VB: So you're forgetting at the same time as working towards a deep memory of the moves...and is the audience witnessing your remembering?

JAL: Once we frame the event we concentrate fully on executing the task. The audience is peripheral.

Along with memory in performance, the idea of the audience and its acknowledgment in the works presented at antistatic became a focus for our talk. In "Stains", we conceived a conversation which might have occurred following the performance of Ros Warby's original home. The conflicting memories of 2
women with almost the same name competed with Dione Warwick's of Always Something There to Remind Me.

Susan I left I had entered some strange terrain in which I had stopped. The bodies had forgotten themselves. Movement was absolutely ineffectual.

Sure: I remember something unusually "natural" in which 3 performers were either totally uncomfortable or too comfortable.

Later I confided to a theory I'd started hunching as I watched original home. One of the pleasures of events like antistatic is the opportunity to see a lot of work and suggest some connections.

When Shiona Innes rolled across the floor and landed against the wall and seemed stuck there as though she'd forgotten what happened next I was wondering why dancers would be feeling forgetful about their bodies? Why now?

JAL: Oh, I think they've been thinking like this for a while—too long I'd say.

VB: Thinking what?

JAL: How the dancing body feels to the dancer, simple as that.

The ensuing awkward pause in the conversation forced us into the next section, "Something else", in which the hazy memories of one were prompted by physical clues from the other. The topic—Russell's crisis of work procrustas.

VB: I took a friend who said to me afterwards—(SHE STOPS AND JULIE-AUNE GESTURES WITH HER EYES) "I've never seen a dancer so self-absorbed. She almost didn't need any—" I was shocked. Then she said this didn't mean she hadn't enjoyed the work. On the contrary she admired the dancing...it strengthened.

In the final sequence in the performance, "Bunch Memory", we subtended objects on the table for memories of the performances in Spic.

JAL: Needles in eyes (scissors).

VB: Speed contained (a book of matchs).

As we lifted each object/memory we placed it in a bag and left the room and the table empty.

As always, the conversation continues. Julie-Anne's memories affect my own recall of antistatic as do other conversations had at and after the event. At the dinner conversation on the penultimate night, Lisa talked about the difficulty of people being able to look at dance. "It's so removed", she said. She thinks dancers need to re-invent, reframe the ritual and share some of the incredible things that happen in a dancer's body/mind, to show the audience at work behind the movements. Dancers need to ask themselves, why do that? Why add another layer? And sometimes, "Oh, God, take some away!" The aim should be to make something visible not to support "an illusion of necessity." She says, "Sometimes it feels like it's important to someone else's hand to say yes, and sometimes, let's face it, it's hard to watch someone so...committed."

On the same night, Ishmael Houston-Jones talked about performing his work Without Hope. It's changed a lot. Sometimes I find it too emotional to talk about my friend's who's dead. Suddenly one night I find myself talking instead about a picture I'd seen about what elephants do, how they seem to go off by themselves to find a place to die..."Having felt the power of his performance, such a significant change was at first inconceivable. And then it wasn't."

Virginia Baxter

ANTISTATIC 99

Eleanor Brickhill asked Ishmael Houston-Jones about his impressions of antistatic 99.

I often feel like a member of a band of vagrant ministers, criss-crossing the worldwide community of postmodern dance. We stroll into a town, dance for our supper and a place to sleep, and then move on. Because the friendly villagers are few and well-known to members of my merry band, we invariably ran into each other at semi-regular intervals. I might see David Z. in Houston, then David D in Glasgow, then I catch a dance with Jennifer M in London, and the other Jennifer M in Northern Vietnam; I'll watch a performance by Lisa in Amherst, then get stuck in my dress rehearsal in Sydney. This has been my life for 20 years.

Of course New York is my home. It's where the answering machine is. It's where the choques with a variety of postmarks come. It's a city that inspires and drains me. It is a city, though, that will never support me, not the majority of my downstairs dance companions. Thus roaming from small festival to small festival has become a necessary pleasure for survival. While the road can sap as much energy as being broke and overstimated in Manhattan, it does make it possible for me to make my work.

In April 1999 I travelled midway around the world to take part in the second antistatic festival in Sydney. As a safe haven for dancing, this turned out to be a welcoming and genial way station. The production of my performances at The Movable Space was done with a great professionalism combined with compassionate attention. The programs were well curated. While audience size varied, it was clear that the organizers had done a lot, through their work an attractive flyer and other publicity, to bring out the New Dance public in Sydney.

The workshops I taught, "Dancing Text/Texting Dance", were well run by antistatic. It attracted a near perfect assortment of those interested in sharing my process for a 2 week period. The "dancing paper" presented by Susan Leigh Foster was thought-provoking and added a context for the work that was being presented and some events attracted (curious) reviews in the mainstream press.

As an antistatic participant, I feel the main fault of the festival was its overabundance. During the 3 weeks, there was very little downtime or space for processing. With workshops running 5 days a week for 6 hours a day, and a variety of shows, showings, lectures etc taking place in the evenings and all weekend, I was hard pressed to find time to process (or guilty for skipping out on an event). This may have had to do with the fact that this was my first journey to Australia, and I wanted to get a lay of the land instead of challenging the audience. Also suffering from this being my virgin voyage Down Under, is my ability to adequately critique the work as it was being presented and the events attracted (curious) reviews in the mainstream press.

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The words on the following weekend were a different tale. Although I found it hard to feel satisfied the United States and Ros is Crisp is from Sydney, several of my students described the program as a "very "antistatic" event". While the work was greatly one from another, they had a disquieting similarity of tone. I found this to be most true with the "the gaze" and how it was used, or not used. Eisbert at the School of Dance at the University of the Arts, Colm and the Gelber, Crisp at the University of Kentucky, and the Chicagoans. While this greatly lessened the intensity of the workshop experience, it did allow for the participants to take one another's classes, and for the students to get a taste of many different approaches to making work. I think something between the antistatic workshop stream in which a student signs up for one teacher for the entire 2 week period, and the Moussle Beast's workshop sampler would be preferable.

A striking difference between the 2 festivals was in their ethnic make-up. This is influenced by my American perspective, but it is not likely that such a festival in the States would ever be as "white" as antistatic was [Yunus Unamarre and Tony Yip were also antistatic participants, Feith]. There were no international artists involved with Moussle Beast, but besides myself, there were dance works from African-American, Asian-American, and antistatic artists teaching and performing. Several were gay. The performers came from 5 states outside Chicago. Like the audiences and artists of new dance, the majority of workshop students were white, but there was some ethnic diversity in most of the classes. While I try not to put on an over-arching significance on these statistics—and of course I realise the demographics of the 2 countries are very different—I still feel that some creative outreach to different populations allows a festival to be more richly diverse and less restrictively insular.

antistatic was a very positive experience. It allowed me to present my work through performing, teaching, and discussing it with a new community in a very nurturing environment. It can only get better as a festival by widening its embrace of new dance.

antistatic 99...on the bone, curated committee Rosalind Crisp, Sue-ellen Kohlen, Zone Tress; production coordinator Michelle Covington; production manager Mark Mitchell; The Studio, Sydney Opera House, The Performance Space; march 24 - April 11

Ishmael Houston-Jones, Rougher Mark Rodgers

for more dance see Sophie Hansen on dance and technology in Arizona, page 35; and the Gelter, Sagan installation at the Art Gallery of NSW, page 40. Excerpts from Memorabilia on Dance will appear in the next edition of Broadsheet (CAGA)
Writing, community, virtuality

Linda Carroli meets writing groups Electronic Writing Research Ensemble and trAce on the web

If we never meet I hope I feel the lack—
James Jones, Thin Red Line

Fingers poised on the keyboard. Ready. Set. Log in. These days I have to wear a wrist support when I work: this body is making protest about speed and repetition. Internet Relay Chat and email are fast and random. Channelling through the limited bandwidth of online connections, the text prevails in email, IRC, MOO/MUD or Website, shifting the vernacular of the 'written' word if not its prepositions. Online communities are most obviously communication-based and driven, formed of meetings which emerge from these hectic flows.

In 1998, the Adelaide-based Electronic Writing Research Ensemble produced a project called Ensemble Logic, curated by Teri Hoskin (http://ensemble.uacom.au). As an introduction to online writing communities, it presented an opportunity to venture into unknown writing terrains with a cohort of like-minded strangers. For 4 months, Ensemble Logic engaged theorists, artists and writers in conversation. One experiment was to renegotiate traditional and generational differences. The term was used to consider an extract from an article by James Jones, Thin Red Line:

'though the values it evokes—nostalgic and agonistic. I use the term 'community' sceptically and charily. As 'community' sceptically and charily.

Chat bounces between a half dozen or so conversations. The chat room is 'join.' Meeting convened. A minute later, the chat blip, blip, blip is heard. The machines at which we worked and mused, the things we lived, the shared construction of an environment in which writers/players can interact with

An impression of interacting online at trAce by Teri Hoskin. Sources: trAce/Logic. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

There are faultlines and we cross them, making connections, affinities. In this context, the 'virtual community' is formed, as Sandy Stone claims, as "a community of belief." (Michael Benedict, Cyberspace First Steps, 1992)

In Icle, the command for entering a chatroom is 'join.' Meeting convened. Chat bounces between a half dozen or so conversations. One conversation extracted from Ensemble Logic Internet Relay Chat—

(theory of electracy—)

Sue do you think the web offers new opportunities...

Sue: for writers to experience fiction for real

me: makes for confused email/pardners:-)

amerika: yes, definitely americans: without if it never meet any of you & that would be a much less interesting life

think I agree...

ti: im wondering how some conceptual artists see this environment, clipper, got any ideas on this one?

me: art m-lating write m-lating life m-lating...

clipper: im thinking of 90s events and happenings to: yes, the connectivity is very important

Writing. Community. Virtuality. Each word catalyses and interacts. Virtuality, as some kind of ontological register, seems to contain postulate traditional and generational ideas about both writing and community. Simultaneously, I am sympathetic, nostalgic and aesthetic. I use the term 'community' sceptically and charily.

Community is a term I distrust even though the values it evokes—participation, belonging, trust, civility, etc—appeal to me. How do you measure a value? Founded on assumptions about consensus, rationality and collectivity, community seems to be a calculated myth of rational society which privileges and edifies the normative and unitary. An unnecessary tension exists between the individual and community. Their traces and splits difference along paths.

And writing? It confounds me. Operating as a communicative contingency, the virtual writing community forms (in and as) a networked environment, a cyberspace in which writing with no horizon. For Donna Haraway, "this is a dream...of a powerful infeld heteroglosia (Similans, Cyborgs and Women, 1991)."

Through and across this space we experiment with and negotiate connections, networks, collaborations, difference, language, writing, virtuality. These experiments are undertaken under the auspices of community for the purposes of writing: to boldly go where...

McKenzie Wark argues in his recent book, Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace, "cyberspace contains within it many possible forms of community and culture that have yet to be actualised" (Puto Press, 1999).

Writing communities, public forums or online writing resources are established as adjuncts to university programs: courses are conducted or resourced in part or whole online. These days, so many universities are offering online programs. An example is the Networked Writing Environment (http://www.ucet.edu/feffing/write.ht

Example is the Hypermedia Research Centre (http://www.bsc.brun.ac.uk), a loose collective of artists, writers, academics and designers developing hypermedia as an artform. Partly, such initiatives are the result of funding restraints, decentralisation, RED, open learning and flexible delivery. They are also driven by the promise of ideological and cultural innovation and inquiry offered by online environments: the opportunity to adapt and divide the culture of higher education. Universities can be considered ready-made 'communities,' so the shift online can seem supplementary, a means of extending a collaborative, learning and communicative environment via email list and IRC or MOO into virtuality, attracting new or different 'markets' or constituencies. As well, publics tend to form around various journals, e-zines, homepages and other cultural ventures. Seemingly, these nodes become organising, connecting or focal points for a multitude of networks.

While based at a university, trAce Online Writing Community (http://trace.ntu.ac.uk) is an independent writing environment and resource delivering a range of programs courtesy of lottery-generated funding (US$500,000) from the Arts Council of England. trAce operates out of 4 rooms in the University of Trent University in the UK. It sustains a global community in real and virtual space for writers and readers. trAce's Director, Sue Thomas, has been writing inside the text-based world of LambdaMUD since 1993. MUDs and MOOS are designed to encourage the shared construction of an environment in which writers/players can interact with

others and with objects. The environments are immersive, collaborative and polyvocal. People come and go.

At trAce, interactive technologies are used for multiple purposes. While there are MOO rooms, hosted by Linguas/MOO, for engaged writing, there are also online lectures, meetings and tutorials, writers in residence, conferences and a discussion email list, trAce also publishes the online journal trAce and hosts webpages and projects including the Noon Quilt and the recently announced trAce/ak-x International Hypertext Award (see WriteSites, page 16). For the uninhibited a range of linked resources and instructions explaining trAce are a link away. trAce/Logic at http://crash.lig.com.au/garu/trb.htm is a site dedicated to representing the experiences and interactions of trAce members. During Ensemble Logic, Thomas delivered 'Imagining the Stone': a MOO-based presentation and tour of 4 rooms:


.nathan, says, "one also has to be electric too..."

dibbles says, "virtual disappeared faster...a00t faster than the eye can read"

leni says, "the transcience, the timeliness..."

spauz, says, "a girl (or two) could very easily get left behind in this conversation"

You (Sue) say, "this idea of electracy—can you explain it for posterity and the cap file?"

dibbles says, "there is no trace... pardon the pun"

smile diddles

You smile at dibbles.

terry says, "[Greg] ulmer writes that electracity is to the digital what literacy is to the book"

terry says, "that is, we must become literate in the peculiarities of this environment"

You say, "let's move to the next room and hear your thoughts"

terry says, "and maybe learn to touch type"

You say, "type on"

Emerging from these encounters are practices which are 'grammato logical,' which interrogate Writing, Community and Virtuality from within. It's so tempting to turn them into an equation for a better life that strives towards an idealised 'other-world' rather than live, make, imagine and play with them as part of this multifaceted and networked world. Writing. Community and Virtuality are apprehended in lost and found ways in a lost and found world.

Linda Carroli is a Brisbane-based writer, visual artist and curator whose works and work-in-progress can be found at http://ensemble.va.com

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journey into archives of memory on war.

endlessness of clicking, cameras, voice I do know—Jimi Hendrix—and a brick, solidifying speculation. Appears as it seems, but each link lays a distance. Images are ambiguous, nothing a game of patience, surprises are turned keyboards keys, dirt and heaven. Like a than our own history." Vietnamese supertourists. We stand outside, bigger to topple and we become "the different/from dead." The dominoes start...

woman screams in the early morning in a hotel room. She won't stop.

"I f you are childless/and you visit Vietnam/It is best to lie..." A cybertourist, too, wants the authentic experience. Rice plays games with our need to know, vomits up images of truth and desire, tempered with, and then punishes us for believing. Its jewels, "the beauty of junk", the collected past makes, and is resistant to, us. We continue searching for the poem factory in a creepy cyclo.

The Unknown

White Rice looks out from Australia, the other competition winner. The Unknown, in typical United States fashion, looks deep within, into the bowels and beyond. We're all goin' on a...another road trip folks and we'll take up where Kerouac and De Lillo left off...to frontier fiction with a special travel itinerary, with 3 academics who can't change a tyre, on a book tour to flog The Anthology of the Unknown. (Who says that Americans don't understand irony?). Starting from write about-what-ya-know (downside: "we are often unaware of the scope and structure of our ignorance"—Thomas Pynchon quoted). The Unknown is a satire on the world in real and virtual space. An...another road trip folks and we'll travel itinerary, with 3 academics who can't change a tyre, on a book tour to...

trAce Conference 2000
Nottingham, UK
http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/incubation

trAce, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS.
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Despite the critical focus on the frank sexuality, intense performances and deadpan wit of Praise, perhaps the most striking quality about this recent Australian film is the care with which it has been constructed as a poignant cinematic poem about failure. It is a character rather than plot driven film; one where nothing really happens beyond a study of the rhythms of a dysfunctional relationship. Within the confines of a seedy Brisbane boarding house Gordon (Peter Fenton), the inert protagonist and his demanding, eczema-suffering girlfriend Cynthia (Sacha Horler) repeatedly attempt to connect with each other.

Rarely has such profoundly personal, embodied emotion and discomfort been given such painstaking attention. Being a loser is a narrative mainstay, particularly of independent films, but in Praise it is the emotional strata of this state that are uncompromisingly laid bare. Cynthia's hilarious crudeness becomes part of an ultimately heartbreakingly cyclical self-defeating behaviour. And while Gordon is no less amusing than any number of anti-heroes in cinema in his twenty-something torpor, his lack of purpose and ambulation is often painful human dimension of post-modernism. Within the dysfunctional relationship, within the confines of a time where nothing really happens, it's a sense of its potential as a film, its influences on its sleeve, that seemed to be a very conscious of the possibilities of kind of treading water a bit. It's about what happens in that time both in relationships and in how you motivate yourself. And I just loved the voice to it, and the distinct non-style—it was episodic and rambling and pointless, but that was kind of the point. But I had misgivings about adapting it to a film. When I read the draft, though, it was the best of the book—McGahan and Coleman pulled out the love story and made it about love, as opposed to youth and music and drugs.

I spoke to director John Curran about his "almost anti-film" in terms of the contemporary climate of independent cinema where clever plot twists, retro-mania and gimmicky stylistic playfulness predominate.

NI Andew McGahan's novel does not strike me as obviously cinematic. How did the idea to adapt it to a film arise?

JC I was working with the producer Martha Coleman and she came along with this book and said "I love it, I want to get the rights to it." She gave it to all of us to read for our comments and I hadn't heard of it but read it and loved it. I reacted in the way that a lot of people had. It was a really refreshing, frank and unorthodox book. It was a love story, but it captured a time of youth that I think a lot of people related to—a period where you're done with school, but it's before reality and you're

cinema, and of what these could add to the story.

JC This is a question I always get asked and I have a different answer every time. I love filmmakers like Terence Malick, Stanley Kubrick, on a different level David Lynch, and even people like the Coen brothers, all for different reasons. With someone like Kubrick it's about being obsessive about every detail, and a reductive process whereby incredibly complex ideas become presented in a very simple manner. But the depth is still there. It's not just a simple static shot, there's a lot going on there that's been thought out and obsessed over. I love that sense of reduction because I like simple pieces where the characters can become the strongest element, but that doesn't mean that you just put them in the corner and shoot them. There's a lot of sub-text that can be implied through composition and lighting. I like working that way. With the Coen brothers I love that they can jump from genre to genre but still maintain their own voice. I love David Lynch's use of sound and what that brings to the film almost in an invisible way. And with Malick I just love how he uses film as an expressionist medium. It's like painting.

NI Malick is a very personal filmmaker, even when he is making something as epic in scale as The Thin Red Line.

JC As a filmmaker it's almost dangerous to talk about a film as personal. It sounds pretentious. But with Praise, for good or for bad, I have to thank the funding system—I had the freedom to sink or swim with it. It's a film where you can't hide behind the flash of anything—it's an anti-action film, and essentially it's an anti-film. And the opportunity to do something personal I saw as a responsibility to take it as far as it could go. Going back to something like Kubrick, because the love the character of Gordon is reductive, I knew it would be a reductive film and quite static. So there was a process where I over-intellectualised everything and if I talked about what I was thinking about it would sound very pretentious and it does become very personal. But hopefully you arrive at a point where there is some kind of power. The cricket scene for example, was originally going to have a cast of hundreds, and because of budget restraints I had to fight for the scene and then had to argue with myself about what the point of it was. And the point was that within the dynamic of his family Gordon is an outsider and is left alone in the outfield without responsibility, and people cover for him. There's a bit of a backstory to that one little scene.

NI Speaking of a reduction, some of the most resonant images in the film were the close-ups of Sacha Horler's face. They seemed to be short-hand for a dozen different narratives of pain and loss.

JC There are only about 3 close-ups in the entire film. We deliberately shot wide because eczema was a necessary manifestation of the conflict within her character but you recognise that to be cinematically quite repulsive and we have to see her as Gordon does. I played that line carefully. But when we went to close-up it was not a gratuitous 'here's a moment where you empathise with the plight of that character'. It was kind of the strongest element, but that doesn't mean you put them in the corner and shoot them. There's a lot of sub-text that can be implied through composition and lighting. I like working that way. With the Coen brothers I love that they can jump from genre to genre but still maintain their own voice. I love David Lynch's use of sound and what that brings to the film almost in an invisible way. And with Malick I just love how he uses film as an expressionist medium. It's like painting.

NI How did you capture the strong sense of place, of Brisbane, that the film has, given that it was shot entirely in Sydney? The production design seemed very deliberate and was incredibly effective.

JC Because of economic restraints, we couldn't shoot it in Brisbane, but I went up there and did extensive research, went and hung out and stayed in a hotel in the area that the book takes place in. Even then I continued on page 18
Respecting the storyteller

Neevedya Islam interviews screenwriter John Harding about the National Indigenous Featured Writers Program

For me, the most important reason I am alive now is to ensure that the image of who is black and what it means to be an Indigenous Australian, that is constructed by those other than Indigenous Australians, is paralleled by my own view. — John Harding

At a panel session at the Writers' Guild biennial screenwriting conference at Byron Bay in September 1998, playwright/screenwriter John Harding, gave an inspiring speech which addressed, among other issues, the glaring lack of feature films written by Indigenous Australians. Afterwards he was approached by Michelle Harrison of the NSWFTO to help develop an intensive feature film writing program aimed at increasing the success of the AFC's Sand to Celluloid and Shifting Sands short film series, the Indigenous Feature Writers program was created as an initiative of the NSWFTO and other funding bodies, the AFC and ARTS, to support script development for feature films by Indigenous writers. The first stage of the course began in April 1999 and I spoke to John Harding about the genesis of this program.

NI Could you tell me a little about your own writing background?

JH The first 2 plays I wrote were radio plays in Melbourne, for 3SER community radio. Radio was done as a research tool because the station was doing a season of Australian plays and they wanted some Indigenous radio plays. There were none at the time, so I wrote a couple. That was in about 1987-88. That set me on an office path—I realised that I had a bit of a knack for it and it got a bit of that kind of mystery about playwriting for me because I actually just did it and it got a positive response. And then a group of friends of mine who were Indigenous performing artists were complaining about the lack of work for them, so I said "why don't we start up our own theatre company?" We did that and set around a table congratulating ourselves and then we thought, "we haven't got a play." So I wrote Up the Road as our inaugural production.

It was a one act play, but we (Bijay) got funding from the Australia Council and the Victorian Government Arts Council to tour community centres and universities. That was put in abeyance for 4 years and then May-Brit Akhurst approached me about sitting in at the Playwrights Conference and (the people from) Belvoir (Theatre in Sydney) were there and liked the play and said they'd like to put it on. I really just wrote out of a belief that we needed to have a presence in Victoria, which we didn't have at all. One of the most important aspects of the way that you are perceived is to have some sort of ownership of your representational imagery. Everyone was starving for us to do something because we had so much support from everyone—trade unions, schools, universities, state government. The company Bijdyi is still going and it just did Stolen Dreams by Wesley Enoch at Playbox last year and ABC is touring this year. So you never know what can happen when you set up a theatre company!

NI Your motivation for creating the Indigenous Featured Writers Program seems similar—recognising an absence and doing something about it.

JH Well, when I came to Sydney in 1995 I worked for the AFC as National Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator, so my job was to actually put Indigenous people behind the camera. While working at the AFC for 12 months, one thing I did notice was the lack of Indigenous feature film writers and writers generally for that matter. That was the first year that the Aboriginal short films came out. As a writer myself I was wondering where the writers were. I thought that here we are accepting or wanting AFC policy on Indigenous representation but without writers we're kidding ourselves. The short films were very much a group of directors. But as a writer I felt that if we're going to throw money at Aboriginal performing arts then a component of that should go to writers. So that really influenced me and because of the success of Up the Road as a play, I'm now turning that into a screenplay.

NI You mentioned the short films series Sand to Celluloid and Shifting Sands, but what is specifically about having a feature film presence that is so important to you?

JH I think the idea with the shorts was that they would be a sort of training ground—that group would start with a 10 minute and then we'd get the opportunity to do a half hour, and then by the year 2000 they'd be writing features. But in the film industry you can't plan 5 years ahead and also I disagree with the idea of cultivating a select group of people. With this program we've tried to cast the net as wide as possible, to allow people to apply purely through a treatment exercise without any former qualifications.

One of the things that also motivated me was the impact that feature films had on me, particularly the Aboriginal depiction of Aboriginal people. I remember when I was a kid seeing the Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith—that had a lasting effect on me in terms of making me think "I want to be involved in the arts." The beauty about a movie is that you can put the reel under your arm and go out to the middle of a remote community, grab a projector and show a film. Also Jedda had a huge impact on me. Even though it was a non-Aboriginal depiction of an Aboriginal person torn between 2 cultures. Now the majority of Aboriginal people live in cities and deal with that issue all the time, and in Jedda it was depicted as some kind of rarity. But when I saw it, I related to Jedda! To her tearing her hair out and smashing the piano! It was important to me because it was the first time that white Australia was shown that this issue even exists. It had a huge effect on me so not as much as a writer, but in realising the power of film to show something that I thought no one would ever know about.

NI Why the focus on screenwriting?

JH With all traditional cultures the storyteller is everything—the storyteller is the person that hands it down, maintains it though their generation and interprets it to the next generation. And one of the clashes that Indigenous culture in Australia has with the film and television industry is that the industry doesn't respect the writer, the storyteller, as much as our cultures do. I've said this to people before—I don't think the director is most important. The director interprets the storyteller's vision and that's what you see on the screen. But in Aboriginal culture there was no screen, what came out of the storyteller's mouth was what you interpreted for the rest of your life. So I think that sure, in film and television the director has an incredibly important role, but with Indigenous film and television particularly, Indigenous writers have to try and gain more grounding, and get their message across in the final product.

So one thing I wanted to make sure of with this course is it wasn't for people who actually want to direct, but for people who just want to write. It goes against the industry and yet the students I've spoken to who are doing the course have all become changed people. They've written their treatments and are fully confident of completing a first draft within the next 10 weeks. These people have given up other jobs, commitments to do this—all these things tell me that I've made the right decision. And we will end up with 8 feature film scripts by the year 2000 knocking on the doors of state film funding offices around the country. And I don't think it would have happened if it went the other way and said "Who wants to direct?"

For further information on the National Indigenous Feature Writers Program contact Michelle Harrison at the NSW Film and Television Office on 02 9380 5599.

Neevedya Islam is a contributing assistant editor of OnScreen as well as a Freelance film reviewer/essayist. She hopes to one day finish her PhD thesis on teen films.
A call to action as...

...the AFC proposes its restructuring

The Australian Film Commission is currently under 2 distinct forms of pressure. Sometimes the two are seen as entwined or one is regarded as the logical extension of the other—the AFC’s budget has been cut, therefore it has to restructure, therefore production investment is likely to be cut across the board. However, the forms of screen work in the ongoing restructuring are looking like they’ll suffer more than others, and, probably they’re the ones with less obvious financial promise and clout than feature films.

The budget cuts wrought on the AFC by the federal government have been unwelcome and destructive: meaning less money to support existing, let alone ever-increasing interest and output in Australian screen activity. But the restructuring imposed by the cuts looks like moving in an ideological direction that is not to do with much money is available but on what it should be spent.

Wal Saunders, director of the Indigenous Branch of the AFC, was reported in The Australian (May 21) as saying that Indigenous film unit’s annual budget had been "more than halved from $920,000 to $400,000." In the same report, AFC Chair, Maureen Baron told The Australian that the unit would be "under review". the commission considering the integrating of Indigenous projects into "the AFC’s mainstream activities, while keeping two full-time Indigenous staff, an Aboriginal reader and Aboriginal project coordinator." We’ve heard it surmised that this move will protect Indigenous filmmaking from a more wilful demolition job. In response to growing pressure from the feature film industry and, possibly, some members of the Commission itself, there has been an insistent demand for more and more support for script development for feature film. The consequences of this are a possible reduction in funds available to makers of short films and documentaries, some year to $750,000 in favour of script and professional development. As well there are proposed cuts to the already meagre $500,000 budget of the AFC’s Industry and Cultural Development Branch (ICD) Branch which supports screen culture organisations, publications, festivals and other screen events across Australia that guarantee a $500,000 budget of the AFC’s Industry and professional development. As well there is public funding, from $1.7m to $750,000 in favour of script development for feature film. The consequences of this possible reduction in funds available to feature film. The obvious question is whether they’re the ones with less obvious financial promise and clout than feature films.

Ruth Jones, Chairperson of the Australian Screen Culture Industry Association, wrote to the AFC (Letter, April 6) pointing out that the AFC’s allocation to screen culture "had fallen steadily since 1994/95..." Jones goes on to remember that the AFC “that no other federal funding sources are available to screen culture organisations. The sector receives 2% only of total federal funds. Some state film agencies do offer support to screen culture, but in others this is sporadic and a low priority item.”

Alessio Cavallaro, director of dLux media arts, urges that: “This is precisely the reason to strenuously resist further withdrawal of funds from the screen culture sector in general, and, the AFC’s Industry and Cultural Development Branch in particular.” He adds that, “The sector is achieving remarkable outcomes despite already extremely challenging budgetary constraints. Any erosion to the level of assistance available through ICD would result in the inevitable loss of many screen culture programs and services. ICD’s support enables organisations to develop and implement an impressive range of significant programs which intricately complement and promote the products of film, television and new media industries. This crucial interrelationship cannot be overemphasised.”

Melbourne-based Experimenta Media Arts recently wrote to artists to express anxiety about that fate of experimental works. Experimenta make 2 critical points, firstly that such work is another way into feature film careers in a number of ways (not just script writing), and secondly that “Experimental works challenge the boundaries and conventions between traditional art practices...It is important to nurture and support experimental art practice regardless of whether the journey leads from the margins to the mainstream as it signals a strong, culturally diverse, egalitarian and innovative nation.” (May 25, experimental.cs.rmit.edu.au)

In her letter the AFC (with an impressive list of co-signatories), filmmaker Janet Macaluso reminds the agency that many artists choose to work very effectively outside commercial filmmaking, and that funding options beyond the mainstream can be a more viable option. Whilst more development funding may be needed for features and documentaries, some filmmakers do not aspire to these formats. Non-narrative and experimental filmmakers (and Australia has some very successful practitioners in these areas) will not benefit from these development funds, and will find it near impossible to find alternate sources of funding.” She argues that the “diversity of production support from the AFC should be encouraged for the future, rather than restricting development support to the relatively privileged commercial feature film sector. And, more pointedly: “It is unfortunate that the Department of Communication and the Arts in Canberra has, to date, been unwilling to further support the area of project development, however, is it appropriate that the AFC further cripple its own film production capabilities to subsidise increased feature film project development?”

Ruth Jones asks the question that elements of the film industry seem to have no interest in answering, “can members of the production industry afford not to have screen cultural organisations supporting them?” It’s worth recalling the support George Miller and Scott Hicks gave screen culture funding in the aftermath of the Gonkai Report, Hicks pointing out on The 7.30 Report how much was being achieved on behalf of Australian film for the cost of one low budget feature film per year.

As far as RealTime can ascertain there have been no developments and no substantial responses (beyond a form letter) to the letters from Janet Merewether ASCIA and other representatives from the sector. The AFC and the screen culture organisations meet in July—perhaps then some indication of what is to happen will emerge. In the meantime, put pen to paper, fingers to the keyboard and let the AFC know your feelings about the restructuring—such an abstract term for something so potentially destructive.

The making up of the commission will be critical. In announcing 3 new commissioners, Minister for the Arts Peter McCausland said, “Between them, the new AFC appointments have an extensive and indepth knowledge of the film and television industry and the financial sector that will be of enormous benefit to the AFC (Press Release, April 10).” The appointees are Bruce Moir (consultant, former Chief Executive Film Australia), Kris Noble (Director of Drama, Nine Network), Louise Staley (Australian Shares Portfolio Manager, National Mutual Funds Management).

Experiments is seeking responses from artists about the AFC restructuring: “We are currently inviting you to assist us with testimonials and endorsements which outline the impact that support for experimental arts has had on your own career, or on the development of your organisation. We will then provide these as a rationale to the AFC to maintain funding for the experimental arts sector.”

Experimenta Media Arts, PO Box 1102 St Kilda South VIC 3182, tel 03 9525 5025, fax 03 9525 5105, experimentsa@experimenta.org URL: http://www.experimenta.org

Australian Film Commission, GPO Box 3984, Sydney NSW 2001 tel 02 9321 6444 toll free 1800 226 615 fax 02 9357 3737 info@afc.gov.au

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Gods and Monsters - Australian Premiere
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Run Lola Run
A breathless race against the clock for Lola, who has exactly 20 seconds to save her love from an onset of death. A film rich in humour and inventiveness from director Tom Tykwer.

If All Starts Today
Philippa Tooren as Daniel, a teacher in a run-down town who catches the community against a negligent, indifferent bureaucracy. A moving feature from Bertrand Tavernier, a festival guest.

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RealTime 31 / OnScreen—June - July 1999
Okay, how is cyberspace like Heaven?

Darren Tofts enters Margaret Wertheims' pearly gates

Cyberspace is the ostensible topic of this book. It is really a kind of Cook's tour of space as it has been conceived and visualised through the ages, from the soul-space of Christian theology to the hyperspace of multi-dimensional physics. It is important to keep any discussion of cyberspace within a historical framework and to offer an astute job in providing an extended cultural history into which cyberspace can be situated. Her argument is a fairly simple one and, as the title of her book suggests, it measures cyberspace against a quasi-Christian view of space as being transcendent, immaterial and other.

"Cyberspace is not a religious construct per se", Wertheim suggests, "but one way of understanding this new digital domain is as an attempt to realise a technological substitute for the Christian space of Heaven." There is nothing particularly innovative about this suggestion, as cyberspace has been theorised elsewhere as a "spiritualist space" (Michael Benedikt's "Heavenly City," William Gibson's "Videodrome" in Count Zero). What perhaps is new in the sociological spin Wertheim puts on the emergence of cyberspace at the end of the 20th century is "Around the world, from Iran to Japan, religious fervour is on the rise." But Heaven is something to be put off for later, so I will return to this issue directly.

How has the West configured space?

This is the question that shapes Wertheim's discussion and the book is structured around a series of discrete moments in the history of space. It is a very linear, tidy history, beginning with the theocratic world-view, as articulated by Dante and Giotto, which, via the Copernican revolution, Newtonian mechanics and Einsteinian relativity, incorporates the outer reaches of contemporary cosmology. As earthbound physicists such as Stephen Hawking contemplate the infra-thin spaces of quarks and virtual particles, they once again turn our attention to the sphere of abstraction that exists beyond the physical world-view that has dominated consciousness since the Enlightenment.

Wertheim's contention is that with cyberspace we have returned to a realm not dissimilar to the Medieval conception of "Soul Space." Consistent with the transcendent motivation of this space of spirit, Wertheim refers to "cyber-immortality and cyber-resurrection." Enter the "cyber-soul."

There is a certain kind of logic in Wertheim's account of a re-emergence of a conception of space that dominated an earlier age. However I have a number of problems with her anachronistic misuse of cybercultural terminology. For instance, Dante does not represent himself in The Divine Comedy as a person but as a "virtual Dante"; the Arena Chapel in Padua is a "hyper-linked virtual reality, complete with an interweaving cast of characters, multiple story lines, and branching options" (the italics are telling, are not mine).

The other major problem I have with Wertheim's argument is the contention that cyberspace is "ex nihil," a "new space that simply did not exist before." Contrary to Wertheim's surfeit of space, I simply don't have the space to take issue with this position. However as a statement it points to a worrying element of contradiction in her argumentation. In the same chapter we are informed that with cyberspace "there is an important historical parallel with the spatial dualism of the Middle Ages" (we are also informed that television culture is a parallel space or consensual hallucination and that in the visual arts). In the penultimate statement of the book Wertheim says: "Like Copernicus, we are privileged to witness the dawning of a new kind of space."

The book is very distracting in this respect and it testifies to an unresolved tension within Wertheim's assessment of cyberspace. While she is sensitive to the pressures of verisimilitude and the desire to create in the cyberspace model the Christian viewer/worshipper a more vicarious sense of presence, of actually being in the space, the book is being described. This is in itself a fascinating issue, for as writers such as Degree Holtzman and Brenda Laurel have suggested, VR concepts such as immersion have a respectable ancestry and their logic has hardly changed. Then why do we give us licence, though, to return to the Middle Ages armed with cyber labels for our predecessors and certainly not with such abandon? (The Divine Comedy, "is a genuine medieval MUD")? Giotto was without question a pioneer in the "technology of visual representation." He was not, though, our first hypertext author.

Australian Writers' Guild
New South Wales Film and Television Office MENTORSHIP SCHEME

Open to writers without a feature film credit resident in NSW.
Applicants should submit a one page synopsis and ten pages of the script with the entry form.
Up to four selected writers receive $2,000 each to work with a Mentor to produce a Treatment for submission to the NSWFTO.
Entry fee $20.
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Margaret Wertheim, The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace


Darren Tofts' new book, Parallax: Essays on Art, Culture and Technology, will be published late this year.

The taste of data

Jane Mills chews over the AFC's Get The Picture

Here is a metanarrative-free text which is seriously intellectual, idiosyncratically fragmented and dangerously challenging notions of authorship. It wouldn't be stretching the point to make claims for its flavours of bricolage, (re)appropriation and even the ludic. While (sadly) lacking in irony, parody or camp, it is possible to detect an essence of excess, an inferno of intergenericity, a nose for nostalgia, a quire of "quotations", a ream of repetitions, and a penchant for pastiche.

A Bauddalian wetsream? A work by Imants Tillers? The poster for The Truman Show? Nothing so obvious—but you might turn to another article if this one began by revealing the text in question as Get The Picture, the Australian Film Commission's 5th edition of their biannual "essential data on Australian film, television, video and new media" (AFC, Sydney, 1998). But if statistics, pie charts and line graphs are not your accosted fare, postmodern or otherwise, don't be put off. Where else could you discover the media facts and figures to dazzle your friends? Did you know, for instance, that Australian women beat their menfolk by 6 percent in terms of burns on cinema seats? That our consumption of popcorn and cola represents a mighty 17 percent of exhibitors' income? Or that while Sydney television viewers in 1997 preferred True Lies and Speed to Mr & Mrs' Wedding, in Melbourne they sensibly opted for Muriel and the Crown Casino Opening Ceremony in preference to either Schwarzenegger on a bad day or Reeves and Sandra Bullock on an even worse one. This may all sound like media trivia to you—but to the industry it's life and death.

To everyone who cares about the future of screen culture, reliable data about production, distribution, exhibition, audiences, overseas sales, ratings, video rentals and sell-throughs and awards is crucial. Without it, wheels will continue to be reinvented; mistakes remade and, perhaps even more potentially disastrous, successes turned into persistent formulaic patterns tuned into persistent formulaic codes and conventions.

The AFC and the editors of Get The Picture, Rosemary Curtis and Cathy Gray, should be more than congratulated on this excellent book, they deserve to be hugged. This is a model book of its kind. It proved to this normally chart-allergic cultural analyst that the mantra 'style equals content', ritualistically chanted to media students and cultural producers, applies to sets of statistics as much as it does to films, television programs, videos, digital media products, or any other text.

The book provides overviews of each chapter: a beautifully simple cross referencing system, enough historical background to make sense of the present, and clearly designed visual material in the form of charts, graphs and columns (plus the occasional production still) to make browsing an attractive proposition. In addition, the introductory sections are written with verve and style—in particular those by Sandy George, Garry Maddox and Jock Given. In short, the data collected in this book is peerlessly presented, can be effortlessly acquired and understood and provides a comprehensive survey of our screen industry and culture.

So much for the formal characteristics of Get The Picture. But what, as Grace Kelly crucially asked of James Stewart after he had (somewhat tediously to someone wanting to be kissed) adumbrated a series of observable, empirical facts in Rear Window, does it all mean? For without this question there wouldn't have been a movie—not a movie worth watching. This point is raised by AFC Research Manager, co-editor Rosemary Curtis, in her introduction:

"Then there is the issue of what the data means—what it is telling us. This question is not unique to Australia—there are few international standards of performance indicators in this area—but it is vitally important. While the breadth and width of the data collection must be maintained, the new task is to develop methodologies for analysing and contextualising it."

This, of course, is where the fun or pain begins. It is perfectly possible to draw complacent conclusions from the array of data about the state of the industry a couple of years ago. Total employment in the media industries had increased since 1986 by 53 percent. The size of the industry in number of business terms had expanded by 70 percent. The number of US screens per million population stood at 106 while we had only 64; Americans visited the cinema an average of 5 times a year while we went merely 3.9 times. Clearly growth in Australia has to be carefully nurtured if the status the US is experiencing is to be prevented.

What can be deduced from the fact that between 1993/4 to 1996/7 the number of films classified MA rose from 8 percent to 18 percent? Does this mean excessive classification criteria or more violent movies? What is the significance in the levelling off of video rentals and the increase in self-sell through purchases? Might this lead to fewer video classics as some fear?

Nor does data alone shed light on Australian screen taste buds in terms of both production and consumption. There seems little to celebrate in the reduction in the number of Australian movies in the top 50 from 2 in 1996 (Babe at 2, Shine at 20) to one in 1997 (The Castle at 13). Undeniably, the films themselves leave some screen culture analysts with an unpleasant aftertaste and raise questions about the commissioning and funding process which no amount of data will answer.

As Rosemary Curtis states, the bringing together of an extensive array of information and commentary on Australia's audiovisual industries—film, video, television and new media (as she quaintly calls what is, by now, a "medium") should be peerlessly presented, can be effortlessly acquired and understood and provides a comprehensive survey of our screen industry and culture.

If this is the result of increased budgets in an unsuccessful attempt to compete with mainstream blockbusters?

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But we can't ignore what the data doesn't (or can't) reveal. Worrying tendencies or patterns are emerging. There may be more women employed in the screen industries than the average for all industries, but there are also more women earning less and more women working only part-time. Who knows if this is from choice? Feature film production could be almost twice what it was in the 1970s, but it's down—and decreasing—from the 1980s. Is this the result of increased budgets in an unsuccessful attempt to compete with mainstream blockbusters?


Jane Mills is Head of Screen Studies at The Australian Film, Television & Radio School.
Way past midnight, the TV plays an old movie. I'm in the kitchen working. The sound of the movie is heard in the distance. It's a Japanese version. I'm mystified as to why I think the original is better. Most dismissive views of the voice as much as the face. Garfield, Hepburn, Wayne—there are no names as schematic as Garfield's faces. The sexy sound of 'classic' Hollywood comes from egonormic larvae which performed the wordy scripts hammered out on the typewriter which was brainstormed by a thousand sterile typewriters. Dialogue is important due to its soundtrack: the thickly compressed duco sound effect of mecha design, eclecticism, spatio-temporal rupture, and emotional completion.

Phil Brophy: "Neon Genesis Evangelion" and learning how to listen Japanese

Just as I am charmed by the unlikely marriage of captivating vocal performances and over-written scripts in old Hollywood movies, so am I repelled by the post-dubbing of old Japanese anime. There is no 'new' in a subtitled version to someone who then encounters it as an American or English dubbed version. Needless to say, most dismissive views of the voice as much as the face. Garfield, Hepburn, Wayne—there are no names as schematic as Garfield's faces. The sexy sound of 'classic' Hollywood comes from egonormic larvae which performed the wordy scripts hammered out on the typewriter which was brainstormed by a thousand uptight Barkin Tiptons.

Hideo Kojima's TV series "Neon Genesis Evangelion" (1995) has a soundtrack which is so Japanese it will be decades before Occidental forms of audiovisual entertainment begin to successfully mimic it. Not only does Evangelion have many memorable vocal performances (Shinji, his father Gendo, the other 'children' Rei and Asuka, the 'Mother' of the series) and a score which both typifies its 'Japaneseess' and qualifies the role of the recorded voice within the soundtrack, but the sound itself has never been forgotten that 'sound design' is the creation of a sonic logic wherein all elements are orchestrated in accordance to our pecular and precise understanding of how an imagined reality would audically operate and psychoacoustically resonate. To understand how any one element—a voice, an example—happens, happens and/or is rendered in a narrative form, one must wholly comprehend the role of the voice in sonic logic. Neon Genesis Evangelion exemplifies four primary categories of aural narrativity which define the sense of its soundtrack: mecha design, musical eclecticism, spatio-temporal rupture, and emotional completion.

The design of mechanical devices and machines—known as mecha design—is an important area of pre-production in Japanese animation. In manga and anime, objects are imagined, envisaged and designed as if they have to be used. That is, their logic is based less on their "look" (a very Western notion that joins Daliancepts and modernist sensibilities) and more on their tactility. Virtually all Japanese design promotes an erotic relation between user and machine, between object and hand, between shape and body. This pervades everything from a Kawasaki motorcycle to Sailor Moon's skirt. Most importantly, the "look" of objects in Japanese design is accepted as a separate and auxiliary and auxiliary of the object's purpose and function. Bank machines can be based on the look of tombstones, oven mitts, milk cartons; cars on deep sea crustaceans; perfume bottles on carafes. Each will do what is required of them, so there is no real reason for them to specially prove their existence through their look. (This is but yet another aspect of the 'calligraphic' in Japanese culture, where an image or a look is embraced as pure visual substance with no referent to the real.) The design of machinery in Japanese manga and anime is therefore a prime textual layer in the many futurist scenarios wherein man and machine exist in a complexly modulated harmony. It is no surprise then that the voice actors for anime obey the logic of the mecha design, carefully analysing issues of weight, grunty, force, energy and mass before they even start to imagine the acoustic and transmissive properties of the machines.

Neon Genesis Evangelion features such a sharply defined sense of acoustic design by Toru Noguchi (in dialogue with director Anno who is also one of the key mecha designers of the series). Firstly, most of the human machinery is connected to either one of two places: the city of Tokyo-3 (a speed of 'armament buildings' which retracts underground when the Angel invasions occur) and the headquarters of NERV (based underground in a 'geofront' complete with artificially maintained land, water, light and air). Simply, all preconceptions of difference between inside and outside, between status and motion, between base and apex, between form and ambition no longer operate in such a city of the future. Accordingly, acoustic ecology, industrial compression, noise pollution and aural atmosphere underlie new logos and codes. Secondly, each of the Angels (the diabolical threat to Earth) has their own look and an equally distinctive sonic sound. This is especially noticeable due to the design of the Angels whose visuality references a series of modernist and ancient archetypes of biomorphic form—from Aztec wall paintings to Miro's murals to Donald Judd cubes. Amazingly compounded, all effects accompany their terrible force, based on the power of violence they unleash in Tokyo-3. And despite the problem in designing sound for such impossible imaging, an"immatichasing" of these unnameable sounds with unexpected forms/shapes/being runs throughout Neon Genesis Evangelion.

And thirdly, Shinji and the other 'children' operate their Evas (giants robots) by being inserted into the machines via a liquid-oxygenated capsule which psychically links their nervous system with the Eva's sophisticated robotics. Sound is bound to behave differently under such conditions, and an awareness of this governs much of Evangelion's sound design.

Now if the acoustic and psychoacoustic world is turned inside-out as it is in Evangelion, it is entirely appropriate that a musical eclecticism prevails in all of Evangelion's music. Evangelion has consistently offered alternatives to the hegemonic Euro-styles which have shaped our ways of thinking, seeing and hearing. And as their society is imperative, so is the very concept of 'drama'—pathetic and universalised by the western intelligentsia as they lick the butts of Grecian philosophers—unwieldy in Japanese entertainment. Not that Japanese characters behave 'differently', but that the schisms which we perceive as corrupting and interfering with a character's identity are the result of the nude existence of a character's identity. In the West, we will crudely designate the hero, the bullion, the cyborg. In the East, characters are founded upon their schiapheria, established through their multiplicity, and defined by their inability to be grounded. Evangelion is quintessentially good, bad and ugly. Musical, sound and voice do and dance in intricately orchestrated lines that map out these characters with the precision of emotion, but shimmering and shifting apparitions of emotional complexity—not "rounded out" by authorial conceit, but unformed by the logic which dictates our everyday exchanges.

Now that the issues of mecha design, musical eclecticism, spatio-temporal rupture, and emotional compaction and how they impact upon the sound design in Neon Genesis Evangelion have been briefly outlined, consider the presence of an American voice in the midst of its non-Western soundscapes and the relationships between spot, spot-effects and vocal performance are jettisoned by actors who—trained in the Western theatrical/dramatic tradition of naturalism—would probably neither understand nor agree with anything I said above. American post-dubbing is woefully exaggerated as the actors reinterpret the emotional schisms of Japanese characterisation as aberrant and illogical. Western post-dubbed performances always sound devoid of context: the American voices unconvincingly exact and narrate a scenario which is beyond their comprehension. American eyes—by some writers—pathologically expal a smarminess which polarises the worst clichés of nobility and deceptiveness.

Even though SBS-TV has screened the embarrassing dubbed-version of Evangelion, there is a way to successfully encounter the complete aural experience of the series thanks to the release of the subtitled edition by Siren Entertainment. Granted that most people are not going to buy the series for the few who are intrigued by—sound—and those who are genuinely interested in immersing themselves in the "transmediality" of the "trailblazing" of much of the American voices pathologically expal a smarminess which polarises the worst clichés of nobility and deceptiveness.

Neon Genesis Evangelion screens on SBS Saturdays, 9.30pm and is available with the original soundtrack and subtitles in video from Siren Entertainment.
Interview

The not-to-be-missed Cinesonic earfeast

Philip Brophy spruiks the 2nd International Cinesonic Conference to an eager listener

One of the most talked about screen events of 1998 was dedicated to listening, Philip Brophy’s Cinesonic, the International Conference on Film Scores & Sound Design held at RMIT, July 29—August 1. Anna Denis wrote a comprehensive account of the event, for RealTime 21 ("Sounding cinema’s depths," 398). Reading it again, I’m struck by the calibre of the guests, including composers Carter Burwell and Howard Shore, who conducted and demonstrated the performance of his electric guitar sextet for David Cronenberg’s Crash, and Yasunori Honda, the leading Japanese animation sound designer who immersed his audience in “oceanic” surround sound effects. Fortunately for the many of us who couldn’t go but would have loved to, or found out about it after the event, Cinesonic 1 is in print, thanks to the Australian Film, Television & Radio School, in a 300 page volume reproducing the impressive collection of conference papers. The book will be launched at Cinesonic 2.

I spoke to Philip Brophy at a moment when final programming for the 1999 conference was just settling. His pleasure at drawing very close to confirming his latest guest was evident. David Shea is a composer from the East Village, Knitting Factory music scene, working in a similar fashion to John Zorn, with performers with advanced improvisational skills. Brophy says that, "Along the lines of what Zorn did with Spillane, Shea has done a series of works inspired by films and books and film versions of books, referencing the archaeology of the imagery of a text. Probably his most famous piece is on Samuel Fuller’s Shock Corridor; a kind of physicalisation of an interpretation of the movie. A couple of years ago he did a version of Stravinsky’s. It’s as much about Petronius’ political satire in the original novel as about acknowledging the spirit of the Fellini film and the Nino Rota score. Shea also did the impressive score for Grimespoint’s Table For Four, currently being shown in Australian galleries (see page 28).

Another key guest is Francois Musy who has mixed Jean Luc Godard’s movies since the mid-80s, including Passion and Hail Mary. "He also did the film Voulez Vous in 1962 which ECM released in 1997 as a double CD—the soundtrack to the whole 100 minute movie completely untouched, dialogues, atmospheres, music, everything." Musy is currently working on Godard’s latest film. Hopefully his presence will help draw the film theory crowd out of the woodwork, just as Randy Thom, the renowned surround-sound designer from Skywalker Sound, Los Angeles, and sound designer on Colours, The Right Stuff and Contact, might pull the film industry crowd off the set for a few instructive hours. Brophy notes that not only did "Thom train up Academy Award winner Gary Rydstrom," but also that surround-sound is something of a neglected area of study—"the sound in Contact is very complex (RealTime 24 Cinesonic p 23). Shea, Musy and Thom are the conference’s practitioner guests appearing over 3 nights, with Shea contributing a live performance of his work. During the days there’s a writers’ program, also featuring international guests. Last year Brophy focused on a film theory perspective, "but this year I’ve concentrated on getting interesting writers on music to talk about film music even though some of them have never written about it. I’m trying to cultivate as much as just grab things. Even Eisenberg wrote The Recording Angel (Picador), an amazing book about the phenomenology of listening to recorded music. He’s really excited about the opportunity to talk about music in film."

East African, London-based Kejo Eshun, says Brophy, "is a specialist on all forms of African music and has written a remarkable book, More Brilliant than the Sun (Quartet), from a very non-European perspective, a sort of postmodern history of science fiction in black music from Sun Ra to Miles Davis through Herbie Hancock to George Clinton and the Psychobank Parliament to Dope Tech... and all the offshoots. Eshun will talk about sound-image relationships in video clips. He’s also written about blackexploitation movies."

Francois Thomas "has written a lot of articles for Positif in France and is pretty well acknowledged as the leading expert on the soundtracks in Onoran Welles films and on the radio plays as well. He’s written a book, Celine Rane, which deals a lot with the film’s sound. His articles for Positif on sound and music offer a different, more historically researched perspective from that of Michel Chion. Another guest is Claudia Gorbman, the author of the famous Unheard Melodies and translator of both of Chion’s books. She’ll be doing something on pop music in films."

"A half day of the conference is devoted to Australian sound on film and will feature discussion of the innovative soundtracks of Rowan Woods’ The Boys and Alex Poyas’ Dark City. Their approaches to sound are unique, quite different from each other and not your standard naturalism." The sound designers from both films will be on the panels. The session will be made up of 2 panels this year on sound designing and another on film scoring—with composers, to be confirmed, on hand. When he surveyed his audience at the first Cinesonic, Brophy found that they wanted an Australian component. He’s met this request admirably with his choice of films. This should go some way to boosting industry interest in the conference.

The other request was for single session tickets, allowing attendance at ‘specialist’ sessions. Brophy has met this but is nonetheless hopeful that conferences will think beyond categories and embrace and be stimulated by the incisive and instructively lateral offerings he’s programmed. Last year, the conference audience was made up of fans, composers, short filmmakers, and filmmakers wanting to get into the area.

Phil Brophy & Carl Priestley, City Blood, Next Wave

Angela Bailey

Brophy expects a bigger audience this year, with an increased theory and industry turnout, along with, I suspect, the growing audience for film soundtracks whose curiosity takes them beyond the music into the intriguing terrain of sound design. This is a conference not just of words, but of performance, film excerpts, video clips, and a rich serve of ideas about the relationship of sound and image. As Anna Denis said of Cinesonic 1, it "was a truly remarkable event and the next one should not to be missed."

Keith Gallasch

Cinesonic, 2nd International Conference on Film Scores & Sound Design, Story Hall, RMIT, Melbourne, July 8-11, tel 03 9252-2193, emma@ciscom.rmit.edu.au

Peter Callas: Initialising History

three-component program featuring Peter Callas, one of Australia’s most distinguished electronic media artists and curators, commissioned and produced by dLux media arts with the financial assistance of the Australian Film Commission.

national tour now at National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

• Peter Callas: Initialising History video works 1980 – 1999

thurs 27 may 6pm, introduced by the artist

Peripheral Wavelength international video and computer art

runs 3 June 6pm, introduced by the curator

An Electronic Ode video art in Australia 1980 – 1994

pt 1 thurs 10 June pt 2 Thurs 17 June pt 3 Thurs 24 June

for further information please contact

alo stein curators, director, dLux media arts

PO Box 366 Paddington NSW 2021 Australia

tel 61 2 9370 4255 fax 61 2 9370 4311

alo@dluxmediaarts.com.au

Dux media arts is a member of AAUSA (Australian Screen Culture Industry Association) and ASCN (Sydney Contemporary Arts Network).
Beyond the shockumentary

Melinda Hasluck reports on contemporary documentary forms at Small Screen BIG PICTURE in Fremantle.

Call them doco-soaps and they are considered low brow, call them doco-series or documentaries and they are considered high culture. Whatever you call them, they are bringing to the world the acclaimed and groundbreaking Video Diaries series, explained that the doco-soap arose out of the BBC's requirement for sitcom. The doco-soap provided low cost programs that were funny, with drama and real passion to engage an audience. The aggressive approach works and has been reiterated by Christopher Jorg, Commissioning Editor at La Sept/Arte and Rudy Buttignol, Creative Head of Documentary, TV Ontario, Canada. "The show calls documentary serials or soaps "sit-docs." The successfull ones happen in recognisable situations with characters in a story that people can follow from week to week.

Buttignol explained the shift in documentary form back to narrative structure. "Music video has chewed up 100 years of filmmaking vocabulary in 2 years."

Global rewards

Sydney Film Festival previewed

The Sydney Film Festival opened in just a few days with a new Arthuristic Director Gayle Lake, additional venues (Dandy Martin Place, the Arcade) and a program which includes an extensive Australian Cannes retrospective—a rare chance to see films on the big Majestic screen. Among the titles are: Women in Contemporary Influence, Gloria; Faces; A Child is Waiting; Love Streams and Mickey and Nicky.

As usual the Dandy Awards showcase the best Australian short films, offering a rich assortment of forms and approaches in other short festivals. Last year's Dandy winner Two by Liv Stendler went on to win the AFI award for best short.

Categories include: documentary, fiction over and under 15 mins, general category and animation. Festival feature films cover the globe this year, although films from Japan and Hong Kong are significantly absent. It's worth thinking about flying north early August to see what Tony Rayos has selected from Asia for the Brisbane Film Festival. Nonetheless, as subtitled international films inevitably fail to turn up in Australian cinemas, it'll be good to see distinctive films, many unlikely to get local releases. The Cuban Life is to Win, the French Paper boat is set in Havana, the غزة Rehearsal for War is an Italian film about an actor and director in Naples rehearsing a play to raise awareness of the war in Gaza. The Brazilian Keepsake is in small town life in Norway Belgrade over one hectic night; Run Lola Run from Germany plays with well plotted film time: a man running from police and trying to stop his girlfriend from committing suicide. In Beijing, the Harris Rehearsal War for an Italian film about an actor and director in Naples rehearsing a play to raise awareness of the war in Gaza. The Brazilian Keepsake is in small town life in Norway.

in recent years the strong emphasis of the Sydney Film Festival has been in its documentary programming, often comfortably outshining the feature films. One sign of this is the often padded-over 1500 film programme that made the name of the festival.

SBS, like Arte, is not driven by ratings and is seen as complementary to other more mainstream services. SBS is interested in the possibility of being more adventurous and how they feed into new ways. Says Hughes, "it's all about the creative possibilities that filmmakers can bring to subject matter, form and framing, interesting ways that brings new engagement with audiences.

John Hughes, designer of the doco-soap genre: "There are no rules anymore, where to watch? How much deeper into voyeurism are audiences willing to go? The enjoyment of this is that you can be seen in the US where broadcasters have been asking for years for access to executions. There's no doubt the diversity of outlets for factual programming has become huge. The other big question is whether there is a future for the heavy weighty or 'high impact' documentaries. According to Rudy Buttignol, "the percentage of documentaries is probably the same, the same percentage of a much bigger pie."

The panel maintained this form still has a place, particularly for broadcasters who make their niche an alternative to the exploitive genre documentaries of commercial broadcasters.

There is no shortage for the high impact documentary just as there is no shortage for contemplation and thinking and reflection. The highest risk documentary is one where the filmmaker invests his/her life, often a long-term project. These documentaries are the most difficult to support but they tend to be the real hits that travel around the world, win the awards and last long term, being re-programmed as classics.

"Shapeshifters: New Forms & New Markets" forum at Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference, ScreenWest Fremantle, Western Australia, Feb 18 - 20.

Melissa Hasluck is a Perth based independent producer who uses Media Liaison Officer for the 1999 Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference. Sitting in the Globe Cinema watching the Can't Buy Me Love animation screenings, guacling champagne and grasping for the popcorn, it occurred to me that this culinary efficiency perfectly reflected the essence of animation. You take the champagne—our only indulgence in a world of subtle symbols, complex concepts and the deft swipe of satire—and then you add the popcorn—the limitless imagination of the child that is locked inside our problem solving day to day realities, and you get the bubbling stimulation and light and fluffiness that is animation. The collection presented in conjunction with the Curly Boy Milk exhibition at silicon Gallery presented works such as Arthur! The Square Knights of the Round Table (1968), a spoof on the old myth; Dr. Atomic (1985), a Ren & Stimpy style tale of an anthropomorph smoketaker courting himself; and an animated version of Die Karpathen's series of Great Moments in Science: Falling Cats, an hypothesis on why cats don't hurt themselves when they fall from above the 7th storey. The highlights were Love Song, a 3D animation of a very ragingly attempt to win a cat's affection of the fucco's, and the works of Bruce Petty and Jill Carter-Hansen.

In his introduction to the screenings Arndt Trautsch from the AFC talked of the need for more script development, not just in feature film and documentary, but also in animation. It is the strength of the scripts, both visual and verbal, which make the difference between a film from 1970. His two years as Australian History Lessons (which won the Academy Award for Animation in 1975) is an incisively written, documenting the errors and follies of human history. He uses the intensity between the contrast of the delivery, as documented a vivid voice over, and the simplicity of the animation of putting down things and collage to create a very intelligent political commentary that both thought provoking and highly amusing. Stylistically, Jill Carter-Hansen's works, Song of the Immigrant Bird and The Messenger, offer a visual script. Using heavily layered graphics in startling colours, the compression of images creates a mythic visual poetry that is breathtakingly humorous and savage. Cel-cut, print collages, acrylics and cut-outs by Bruce Petty and Jill Carter-Hansen are on display at the Silicon Gallery. Impressed by the success of the silicon Gallery, SBS is contemplating making the event a regular feature of the gallery's activities.

Gail Priest
Can't Buy Me Love, presented by silicon Animation Production and the Globe Cinema, Stomatom May 12
Anomalies and inspirations

Megan Spencer at the Real life on film documentary festival in Melbourne

Claiming to be Australia’s first ever film festival devoted solely to documentary films, The Real life on film Festival presented a program composed of shorts and features selected from 2 New York-based international documentary film festivals. Firstly, a “traveling package” of 17 films curated by the 1999 Margaret Mead Film Festival, an annual event presented by the American Museum of Natural History, and secondly, a selection of 6 films which premiered at the most recent Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. Real life on film also marked the first time the travelling Margaret Mead Festival had screenered outside of North America, and the first time that the Human Rights Watch films have ever toured to the South Pacific region.

Under the banner of “reflecting cultural diversity”, and “providing a voice for important human rights issues”, Reel retained the Margaret Mead programming structure, dividing its documentaries into “seven thematic” programs. The festival included work from 12 countries (English and non-English speaking), embraced a broad range of documentary filmmaking techniques and subjects, and included 4 Australian films (from the Mead collection) which addressed indigenous cultural issues. Speaker forums also ran across the week, where various documentary practitioners, academics, industry pundits and social policy makers addressed the festival’s themes.

Ultimately the real merit of any film festival is contained within its content and program structure. The thematic programming proved a user-friendly way to navigate sessions, and although primarily billed as a political documentary festival, the films incorporated a diverse range of stories, ideas, cultural representations and artistic models.

Highlights included 7 films in particular. From the “Only the Lonely” program, the poetic 16mm short The Bathhouse (Patis) painted a gentle, dark portrait of a 100 year old steam house used by an aging Lithuanian community almost as a refuge from their harsh rural existence. Stark observational footage was offset by non-diegetic recordings of the residents’ daily conversations, reminding about the past and bewirdered by possibilities of a bleak future. From Belgium, Skin’s Sorrow (Peaux de Chagrin) explored the delicately Gothic terrain of taxidermy. A journey into the internal and external landscape of this strange art, the film intercuts from various taxidermists with several lonely, women who “naturalise” their deceased pets to keep their memory alive. With visual stitchings reminiscent of Psycho, gentle integrated insightful interviews gave this film grace.

Bread and Day was my favourite film from the festival. At 56 minutes and with only 15 edits (an extremely important detail), Bread and Day reminded me just why documentary filmmaking is so powerful, unpredictable and why Russian filmmakers are so hardcore. Via 10 minute takes and slow 360 degree pans, this astoundingly observational film transported us into the timeless, homely existence of a remote community outside St. Petersburg. Each Tuesday, forgotten elderly citizens fight the elements and each other for their bread rations which they must pick up by pushing a train carriage by foot—a 2 hour journey. Truly bizarre and beautiful.

Factors, contributed to the corrosive absence of documentaries from our big screens and their paucity on the small.

So along comes Real life, whether by default or by design, to remind us where we’re at, what we’ve sacrificed and where we could go. Naively—observation not a criticism—Real life presumed/assumed that we wanted to see these films and that we care about political issues. However conservative this festival appeared from its marketing campaign, it presented films which never underestimated their audience’s capacity to understand film language. Through its content, the challenge it presented went way beyond the hyperbole of its official pitch. It encouraged us as documentary makers and viewers to go back to the cinema to see documentary films. For one week it wrestled away the documentary form from the place that potentially does it such damage in this country: television. The Real life on film Festival compelled us to not only listen to that all important cultural voice that Richard Frankland so cogently reminded us of in his opening night address, but to experience once again other cultural realities through unique artistic perspectives and practices and to work at it.

Real life on film Festival, incorporating the travelling Margaret Mead Film & Video Festival and the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, presented by the Cultural Film Foundation of Australia, Cinemedia, Treasury Theatre (formerly State Film Theatre), Melbourne, April 29 - May 6.

Megan Spencer (Heathens, Hooked on Christmas) is a Melbourne-based documentary maker and a film reviewer for the Triple J national radio network. The views expressed here are her own and do not reflect the views of Triple J. This is her first article for RealTime.
Relaxed, but engaged?
Samara Mitchell queries audience positioning at bergbau a techno spectacle in Adelaide

The Mercury Cinema was the venue to host the final major event of (upon a time) a 4-part series of chance-based art events held at the Lion Arts Centre in Adelaide's west end. Presented by, amongst others, MNC's new media coordinator, bergbau and its ensemble of local sound engineers, filmmakers and artists set out to experiment with the relationship of sight and sound through developmental combinations of old and new media technology.

Throughout the performance I felt myself shifting restlessly from anthropological to engaged participant. The dexterous display of geekery from the technical crew humkering around elaborate consoles and back to back projections on the wall, was often far more captivating than the hypnotic streams of light and sound resulting from their adroit manoeuvres. After attempting to consciously collide with the gaudiness of the techno-wizardry going on around me, I began to grow weary of the fleeting windows of escapist immersion.

Picture theatres invite a physical lethargy that forms part of the entertainment, as cinema audiences trade the vulnerability of their static bodies for the sanctified and total engagement of sound and picture. In this hoaxing of consciousness we require the complete collaboration of the senses. Theatres harbour the ritualistic external narratives to the individual experience of self through the acquisition of bodily comfort and safety. If the collaboration of body and mind is in any way interrupted (if your bladder is about to erupt or someone in front keeps rustling that chip- packet it is impossible to attain the state of lethargy required to truly transpose your conscious beliefs into the psychic space the film is attempting to invoke. Filmmakers have made their life-work out of convincing audiences that what they see and hear occurs simultaneously and without mechanical intervention. The artists within bergbau, however, attended to the amplification of mechanical intervention within the duration of the performance, creating a noticeable rift between the cueing up of sensory input and the delivery of sensory output. The quilting of archived film snippets with what appeared to be live webcam grabs and DJ’s sound generated some gorgeously bizarre dialogue: the resulting compositions made for some delightful aural and pictorial experiences. Unfortunately, the architecture of the Mercury Cinema made little contribution towards sustaining the audience’s involvement or augmenting the atmosphere bergbau would have attained, had the audience been able to move around within the space. It felt as if we may have been interested, given that the ‘operation room’ of the show was exposed, to display the images appearing on the screen in reverse, as if we, as an audience, were tapping into the back projections of a spectacle directed at an audience on the opposite side of the screen.

Within the context of a rave, revealing the performance of sound and artists, musicians, visual and performance artists is a major part of the art itself. In the context of a sit-down theatrical event, however, I feel that the experience of those audience members within the physical parameters of bergbau may have been sacrificed for the benefit of a remote audience receiving a live stream of the event across the internet via radioqula. As often is the case with art ‘happenings’, fixed and catalogue documentation will hard-ware the forms our memories seek to recreate them. The documentation of bergbau (http://www.realtime.radiouqlia.com.au/bergbau) would make for an exquisitely beautiful aural/pictorial if treated not as false advertising but as another plateau for the work to spread.


Review

Guns a'blazing
Anthony May reviews 2 Jim Kitses’ books on genre films

April saw the visit to Australia by US film scholar Jim Kitses. In a trip motivated by curiosity and international collegiality—he was researching a book—Kitses spoke at several venues in Sydney and Melbourne and was only defeated in meeting colleagues in other cities by the contingencies of travelling. It is nice then to be able to mark that visit by a review of the 2 books he has in the marketplace: Gun Crazy and, co-edited with Gregg Rickman, The Western Reader. Kitses is Professor of Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University, Rickman teaches film at the same institution.

Gun Crazy is one of the BFI’s terrific little book series, otherwise known as the BFI Film Classics. Some have already been reviewed in RealTime (Addison Martin’s Once Upon A Time in The West see RealTime 28), and others, such as Edward Buscombe’s Stagecoach and Richard Schickel’s Double Indemnity, are being recognised as classics of contemporary film writing. Gun Crazy is one of the best of the series. The book is obviously a labour of love as Kitses not only reveals the delicacies of the film’s narrative but also its precarious route through the Breen Office.

Gun Crazy is one of the great little films that have gone towards forming the canon of film noir. Released in 1950, it has become a standard of deceptive love and violence that has been rediscovered by successive generations of film students and filmmakers. Kitses, quite rightly, looks not to explicate the genre in Gun Crazy but to make apparent that which singles it out, highlights it against its dark companions. Its pleasures have been sung before, sometimes, but except for Kitses is systematic as he works through the narrative charting the demise of the young fools, Bart and Laura, from the high point of their meeting through their gun-crazy spree to the foggy hilidade of their doom.

It is a testament to the authority of Kitses’ research, and of his prose, that his exposition of the film reads not so much as a critical account of the film but as a dossier of its production, themes and style. Delving into the careers of those who brought the film together, the King Brothers as producers, Joseph H Lewis as director, writers Dalton Trumbo, Richard MacKinlay Kantor, and actors John Dall and Peggy Cummings, he treats the film as a site for the collective sedimentation of their years in the business. Alongside this depth of talent he runs the film’s own lineage, part romantic tragedy, part Western, part gangster flick. It is no exaggeration to say that Kitses’ encyclopedic knowledge of the movies provides our key for understanding why this particular noir shines so brightly.

Kites is best known for his earlier work on the Western genre, Horizons West. He returns to the Western, with Gregg Rickman, in The Western Reader, an edited collection of 29 essays. The essays range from Robert Warnke’s fine Partisan Review essay, “Movie Chronicle: The Westerns”, to essays written specifically for this collection. They are arranged into 3 sections: The Western Genre; The Classic Western; Revision, Race and Gender. Of the 7 essays for the genre section, there are 2, Doug Williams’ “Plagirins and the Promised Land” and Edward Broscher’s “Inventing Monument Valley”, which make the interesting move of seeing the Western as created out of American myth rather than being a source for those myths. Williams builds a genealogy of the Western around the persistence of pilgrim attitudes from the 17th century. Buscombe establishes the locations and stylistics of 19th century photographic imagery as it constructed the west through its various traditions of anthropology, tourism and other genres.

The essays on the classic Western bring together writings on filmmakers and films which need to be preserved. In particular, Lee Russell’s piece on Budd Boetticher (1965) charts the brilliance of a series of Boetticher Westerns. It’s a saud iron that as The Western Reader preserves the Boetticher piece, some of the films it recalls, Seven Men From Now, the Randolph Scott classic, for example, are lost forever with no prints available.

Two very different books, both successful in reasserting the claims which these films can make on our present day attention. The critical work by Kitses et al is instructive in the way it crosses the divide between recent reconifications of Hollywood and the system at the time of these films’ production. There are many lessons here for how the contemporary film scholar goes about dealing with the past.


Anthony May is a lecturer in Film and Cultural Studies at Griffith University, Brisbane, and a member of the Queensland editorial team for RealTime.

The Shoot out
Fancy a weekend in the city of reinvented steel whose fortresses are protected by the famous red and blue lights? Why not enter The Shoot Out, a new event aiming to encourage the work of creative, emerging filmmakers. Organised by PAM (Performing Arts Newcastle), The Shoot Out also seeks to help establish a film and TV industry in the Newcastle and Hunter region.

Interested? You must be available from Friday evening July 9 to Sunday evening July 11. You can have a team of up to 5 creative spirits and you must have your own VHS camera. Your mission involves producing a short work (maximum 7 minutes) within 24 hour period in the Newcastle Hunter region. (Anyone who’s taken part in the White Gloves festival will know what’s involved). Only in-camera editing is allowed. When you register you’ll be given a brief, a list of 10 items. Five must be used in the film to prove you haven’t been cheating. You are free to work your story around these items. An outdoor screening will happen on Sunday evening where winners will be announced. For more new media and multimedia see Dance and film installations at antastatic, p11 Geber, Guerin & Guerin at AGNSW, p40 Haines & Hinterding on Bruny Island, p38 Galamand Salamanca’s S/S/Lite p.34
The paradox of the material and the spiritual

Fiona A Villella attends a rare Robert Bresson retrospective in New York

Between January 27 and February 7 1999, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, in association with the Cinematheque Ontario, presented a comprehensive monograph and the films of Robert Bresson. To accompany the retrospective, the Cinematheque published a complete collection of critical writing on Bresson to be published in English in almost 30 years. Both the retrospective and the monograph comprise the "Bresson project" undertaken by the Cinematheque Ontario throughout North America to bring the cinema of Bresson to the public.

Bresson’s cinema has ‘aged’ well: its powerful and incisive simplicity and mystical quality continues to galvanise and impress audiences. His elemental and charged representation of reality—precise framing, powerful appread tion—creates a strong and compelling appreciation of this masterful filmmaker.

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Terror as nostalgia?

Daniel Palmer dials for history hijacked with a provocative video work from Johan Grimonprez

The raw material of dial HISTORY—which premiered at documenta X (Kassel, Germany 1997)—is a comprehensive compilation of news media footage of airline terrorism (or 'hijacking'), as it's been called since the 60s. From this global (though predominantly Western) chronologically coded audiovisual archive, Johan Grimonprez has constructed a montaged genealogy. We're led from the first 'hijack' (a 1931 Peruvian takeover to deliver political pamphlets), through its 70s heyday, to its symbolic decline as a political gesture since the anonymous parcel bombing of the Pan Am over Lockerbie in 1988 (for which terrorist groups worldwide claimed responsibility).

Hijacking is hardly a random choice of subject, like all terrorism, it's a mode of demands that seem to defy exchange value (hence its hip status to 80s leather theorists). The hijacker is Don DeLillo's ultimate 'false believer', one who is almost sure to fail yet dare to stand outside the hijacking of history by the media and its fanatical cast of crowds. Hijacking is also the media event par excellence. It's enabled by modern media technology, a staged catastrophe with identifiable 'goodies' and 'badies' engaged in a real struggle over a symbolically contested 'home' (embodied in the jet plane).

Grimonprez's pseudo-documentary shows the obvious complicity between TV news and terror, and reminds us that what is at stake in the obvious complicaty between IV news and 'goodies' is stature to 80s leather theorists). The work from Johan Grimonprez (1997) - is almost seems to pronounce on the slippage of what is at stake in the millennium. In the process of serial repetition of the hijackers, 2 key scenes stay with me: the stopping, in slow motion, of an airport floodlight which is (and a legless cowboy boot), and the cleaning of blood ingrained in an airline's carpeted cracks. Our gaze is left to linger. To Godard we might say, 'This is not red, this is blood. And in saying this, we confront the index'.

Underlined by the 70s disco beat (Do the Hula), nostalgia is at the core of the project. Not just for a more radical period of history, or for the 70s decade itself, but for the bounded past history. We see a historical specificity of the apparatus of capture, the history of the technical means by which historical events become symbolically represented, conserved through time as well as space, as an archive (from black and white film reel to colour camcorders). The VHS forms itself is already nostalgic, since with interactive digital 'real time' communications a different constellation of the future media archive is even now taking shape. The tape thus winds us through modes of Indecisiveness. And, as many of the images are so familiar, their historicity is intense. dial HISTORY thereby gives to television a memory that is other than structure, or at least a more nuanced one than we're likely to get in the millenial TV specials this Christmas.


Daniel Palmer is a doctoral candidate in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne, and Public Programs Coordinator at the Centre for Contemporary Photography.

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The centre shifts

Keith Gallasch talks to Norie Neumark about bodies and computers

If the installation Shock in the Ear (Artefact, 1997) and the subsequent CD-ROM of the same name are anything as are to go by, Dead Centre, the body with organs, a new installation by Norie Neumark and collaborators should entertain, disturb and certainly make you think—think, that is, your relationship with your body and with your computer. The usual analogy between brain and computer is out. Norie Neumark thinks that scientists often get the analogies wrong. What if we thought of the computer as a body instead of a brain—we feed it, it feeds us. And the body and the computer are linked in a symbiotic relationship, where the body and the computer are linked in a symbiotic relationship, where the body is the computer and the computer is the body. Neumark thinks that this is one of the key figures in Dead Centre, the body and the computer are linked in a symbiotic relationship, where the body is the computer and the computer is the body.

To encourage this reconfiguring of our metaphorical habits, Neumark works through stories she's collected, performances, sounds, still images and projected animations, that 'frame the natural body'. The images by digital visual artist Maria Montenez, David Brown, Rogerio and Siegried Naumann, scans, the sieve of the computer and the language of the Western images of the body. The vocal tracks (recorded by sound artist/performer Amanda Stewart) to be 'new' by Neumark but also performed live improving with herself on several occasions during the installation's gallery life also fragments and transforms. Stewart, a distinctive post, reports that she's enjoyed the rare process of working to someone who looks to the body and to the body and to the body and to the body and to the body.

I ask if the radio works form the template for the installation. Neumark says yes and no, a lot of other things happen as the works transform from one medium to another. She likes the creative accidents that happen The one thing that is constant, she insists, is her preoccupation with sound. For all the visual appeal and drive of Shock in the Ear Dead Centre is sound. She describes the sound of these working bodies as a background of familiar cultural sound. An important part of Neumark's ongoing project has been to see how sound artists can work with visual artists. In a few months, Neumark will lecture in Media Arts Production, University of Cincinnati, to help launch a programme for a year in a Society for the Humanities Fellowship at Cornell University, teaching a course she's designed and doing a lot of work on her next project, about the envelope making machine—her father invented the device and also the envelope with windows—and the greyscale of email. It's a work about the desire to create 'envelopes' and the culture of invention.

You can find more information about Dead Centre on the ABC's Headspace website on the In the Making page. Dead Centre, the body with organs, The Performance Space Gallery, July 9 - 22. Live performances with Amanda Stewart July 8, 11, 18. Enquiries: 6369 2325.
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The aesthetics of forgetting

Cira La Gioia's personal reflection on the ambivalent response to Life is Beautiful

In my student days at Pisa University, I was one evening in the People's House at Porta a Lucchese, Tuscany is traditionally a 'red' region with a proud history of partisan resistance to fascist violence. People's Houses (Case del Popolo) are sort of community or neighbourhood centres run by the Italian Communist Party where people drop in for a glass of red, a game of tavoli or just to be in the always favourable Italian sort of conversation on politics.

Standing at the bar, chatting away with some old folks, was Roberto Benigni. He wasn't famous then, but well known in the People's Houses for his wit and improvisations of people's characters drawn in fact from the very audience he was performing to. He was soon surrounded by a crowd of bystanders laughing to tears, the chat had become the show. It went on until late and finished with Benigni's exhilarating attempts at leaving the room; exits were all blocked by an enthusiastic audience asking for more.

On my way home, in the nocturnal quiet of Pisa's paved streets, there was a girl sitting on the threshold of a house, crying and swearing furiously in a foreign language mixed with Italian. She was in a state of distress and one could guess that those Italian swear words were flowing from her mouth with unusual fluency. I was going to stop, however she was far too agitated for me to approach her. She was screaming 'I wasn't born when it happened, you fucking bastards, I didn't do it, can you hear me? I haven't killed anyone, I AM INNOCENT!!'

She was a German medical student who had a pettig argument with flatmates and had been quickly silenced by accusations of Nazism. I had never spoken before to a "real" German but I had watched many movies made after the war and they were full of trains full of people full of fear, full of death and full of Germans, to the point that, though not having experienced the war and not being Jewish, I had nightmares of being deported.

These recollections were brought back by Benigni's film Life is Beautiful, in a cinema and crowded with Italian families, where I watched the movie, trying to spot old friends amongst the extras in the concentration camp. They looked like extras, it has been remarked, rather than victims of the Holocaust. I do the same search when I watch the Taviani brothers, who often choose Tuscans setings for their films and also always keep you aware that the film is being filmed, to the point that sometimes you feel in the images the weight of the filming equipment, the shape of the rails over which it rolls and the fee per hour the extras are getting.

There have been many reactions to Life is Beautiful. Whether the Holocaust can be accepted as a site for comedy, and the lack of realism in its representation, are the main arguments in the debate the film has provoked.

A book comes to mind, a book on the disappearance of a book, Umberto Eco's In the Name of the Rose, an historical thriller set in a monastery where Aristotle's text on comedy is guarded by a monk to protect the world from the moral catastrophe that would occur if it were to become public. Knowledge of this book would legitimize, in the monk's view, the "bellowed laughter of the simple" as a "true terror". The God of History without which no motivation remains for moral conduct.

Similarly, we cultivate a "Simon Holocaut", an ethical duty to remember which keeps watch against its repetition. The Holocaust is a limit that must not be forgotten.

It is knowledge of an enormous human capacity for savagery that demands no slackening of our historical memory and awareness of the role of the truth with its truth. It has been written that this ethical duty to remember the Holocaust cannot be reconciled with the aesthetic requirements of a fairy tale as far as the true details of the experience have been glossed over, averted by Benigni.

But, (trying to recognise friends amongst the extras), have always been disquieted by thoughts other than those inspired by the true details of the experience. Is it the Holocaust as "normal" that causes my vaccination, the Holocaust as industry, with its production process, allied professions and aesthetic opportunties for research and development and the number of people it kept "busy" for a length of time sufficient for any qualm; scruple or conscience to rise. Weren't the Holocaust contiguous and continuous with the daily toils of the simple men with all his virtues, including the Holocaust and capacity for savagery when there is no Nazism? Was it a quality of evil in itself or a question of density of something that, diluted, looks like something else?

There is limit to the knowledge where the disaster becomes impossible. And the disaster care of everything including its forgetting. The forgetting has already happened, it happened with the disaster and left the trace as its trace. It is a perfect machine for the implosion of history; the Holocaust is the residue floating at the rim. As such it is the only thing we can know. The rest is either too human to be known or too ordinary to be memorable.

Reviews

Bedrooms and Hallways
director Rose Tremain
distributor New Vision
July release

You never like the things you should. Take head genetists. As students I've discovered an aversion to this boy born with dirty blonde hair, and the BBC funded movie turns into a Friends episode. Just because the slow-straight slow-limper grew you an extra row of picked germs on your breadroll, well full for you.

They made some frames when he was wearing a rough-hewn jumper, and that's the moment that ripped the opening of his nose. Well I want to emote: I'm about to turn thirty too, I've also never had a seven year relationship and may be running out of my cheap sweetheart. (Sub-titled Why I fall in love with inaccessible gay boys each time.)

Cut to the next frame & the "yang, yang" chant at the men's group.

As I sat back in my seat, comfortable with the irony, mis-identification over with.

It's there the gorgeous (now 21) Timblin holding a Guiness in one hand & the "truth stone" in the other, holding questions from the group about their Gay men & how (if paradoxically) helps a man understand women better.

While his bands lassos, too scarce by far, is out chasing some Amy of his own.

Keri Glastonbury is a poet who saw Rose Tremain's Go Fish! (latest) movie Bedrooms and Hallways and wrote a positive review, in fact her first. About the film, the movie, the roman comedy, was full of too many narrative conveniences to allow much real empathy with the characters in their sexual roundelay.

Kevin McInlaid (Transplanting) plays Leo, a gay man who

every day, Rohmer's Brynhelms and Griffiths-- Fresh Air is about Wesley and community, where we are all Brynhelms and Griffiths, more than just the Whitney or the Hillbilly or the ordinary. It is especially those unable to conform to the environmental regulations of their state and the state of the Howard government. The incomprehension by Toby Oiler means shifting between styles to make a point: when Kit meets up with an old friend at an advertising exec. the visuals change to the suitadored blue, yellow and greens in advertising and video clip vogue, highlighting her feeling that she is standing at the end of the longest queue, going nowhere, outside the mainstream.

What's good about Fresh Air is its injection of small realtities, checking out the wacky outbound characters that have become so commonplace in Oz film (see Film Review for urbanites who speak the lingo) and in Kit's eye Buggies! does it have the look'n'feel of being low-fi and cultural backgrounds? What is it exactly they do? Doesn't everyone these days want to be a filmmaker? Doesn't everyone these days find the fink outback characters that are traditionally "traditional" and "bush" look like something else? Fresh Air is a perfect vehicle for the implosion of history. It is a perfect machine for the implosion of history.

What is good about Fresh Air is its injection of small realtities, checking out the wacky outbound characters that have become so commonplace in Oz film (see Film Review for urbanites who speak the lingo) and it has a "normal" feel when I watch the Taviani brothers, who often choose Tuscans setings for their films and also always keep you aware that the film is being filmed, to the point that sometimes you feel in the images the weight of the filming equipment, the shape of the rails over which it rolls and the fee per hour the extras are getting.

Life is Beautiful, written and directed by Roberto Benigni, screening nationally. Grand jury in the Final Five, the recent Donatello (Italian Oscar) awards including Best Picture, Actor and Director.

Cira La Gioia is a freelance writer living in Melbourne.
The best of the best

Suzanne Spunner on the Keene-Taylor project

This season of 6 short works in 2 programs brings the best of The Keene-Taylor project, a collaboration between playwright Daniel Keene and director Ariette Taylor. Since November 1997 it has seasons at various venues—The Trades Hall, La Mama and the Brotherhood of St Lawrence Warehouse—KTP have presented 16 short pieces, mostly monologues, and 2 full length works, often played to small audiences but invariably to universal critical acclaim, with 2 of the above mentioned in this season and new daughter Dan Spielman, being nominated for Green Room Awards. In their own words, “what began as an experimental comic improvisatory enterprise and even without having seen the previous seasons I am prepared to affirm that these are the best of the best.

Each piece works on its own but in sequence each program indirectly forms a discontinuous narrative. The same characters don’t actually recur but represent possibilities of being, witness to previous lives, or even the same character grown old. Each work realises the potential of subtle threads of imagery and concerns.

Shared between Kaddish, The Violin and The Rain there is a recurrent sense of loss, of things misplaced, left behind to speak of what has happened. It begins with the plastic bags of a dead woman’s things that her husband feels burdened with. He wants to toss them off the pier but instead throws them over somebody’s fence. It ends with all the rooms full of possessions belonging to Jews who were transported. The girl now an ordinary boy with a blessed voice walks through the piece from time to time singing Latin plainsong, but as the lives and the relationship between the 2 homeless men is revealed in all its sadness and fury, all its absurdity and all its rancour—and we have laughed with them at things that they and we should cry above—it’s right that the song is heard soaring above and around. It seems to say they have been heard, if only in heaven, or some better place, or failing that, by a middle class theatre audience, who might leave not quite as complacent as they entered.

If the world of things was more about Europe and possibly the past (though events in Kosovo made it dreadfully current) this world of alienation is more recognisably Australian now and just beyond our comfortable security-grilled front door.

Keene’s characters are the people that most of us don’t know, the homeless, the desperately unemployable, the boy facing a connection between the legacy of things. In these 3 plays everyone is living or trying to amongst other people’s cast-offs. Meanwhile death or annihilation, from loneliness and the difficulty of living alone, outside and on the margins of society, is snapping at their heels.

We don’t want to know, in the way that, if I had read about the rape case in the newspaper, my attention, my sympathy, my empathy would have been entirely with the woman. That would have been the story, the issue. In, Untitled Monologue, Keene takes up where we have not so much left off, as left out, bringing us into the heart, mind and body of the attacker and makes us see there is another victim for whom we as a society are just as answerable. He does not try to justify or explain away what the boy has done, just allows us to understand what had led to that night in the carpark. None of what we are privy to hear, the boy’s letters to his father, will most probably ever form part of his statement to the police, so no one will ever know what else they really need to know. The boy himself would not think any of it mattered, it was just the condition of his life, and only we and God knew the aloneness at the centre that led him there.

In A Glass of Twilight, a man pays another man for sex. To need not to be alone so much that intimacy must be paid for, to have nothing to trade but your body is awful and tragic but this is not. Once the deal is made, it is transforming, it is love and we are allowed to see it as love in the words and gestures of these men, and in the ghostly exquisite pair of older men, ballroom dancers immaculately dressed in tails who perform a dance of love and death, a dance of the rarity of touch.

The Rain

For the love of this (alleged) killer. (Zucco) speeding. escaping, disappearing acts. trained acting, collaborating. For over an hour Roberto Zucco in jail-break mode, making commentary, enjoyment the moment in unison. This was near the end. It was a moment where (finally) everything/everone tuned in, wrote the story, foregrounded us. Intense white searchlights blind the audience in random flashes. This jolted me. I felt engaged, Invigorated. I was enjoying the moment in unison. This was near the end. Zucco in jail-break mode, making commentary, enjoying the moment in unison. This bothered me. It happens too often of Twilight, of the rarity of touch.

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Jason Sweeney waits for the epiphany in Brink Production’s Roberto Zucco

The Balcony Theatre is cold tonight. There’s a sense of hostility in here. In a kind of black silence, the whole theatre audience, who are laughing with them at things that they and we should cry above—it’s right that the song is heard soaring above and around. It seems to say they have been heard, if only in heaven, or some better place, or failing that, by a middle class theatre audience, who might leave not quite as complacent as they entered.

This is a very real theatrical experience, a unity of means and meanings, fine writing matched by fine direction and fine performances from all of the casts. Yes, I’d agree entirely with the nominations of Greg Stone and Dan Spielman but add Malcolm Robertson to the list. There is an assuredness about these pieces that is rare in new...
Beyond the black and white

Grisha Dolopolov enjoys the feel of Neil Murray's first play, King for This Place

Not all Aboriginal theatre needs to be political. Sometimes the experience is far more potent and the meaning far more lasting when there is no message, when story and time wash over the audience like the dawn mist—gentle, chilling and very promising. King for This Place is a subtle experience. It manifests the sparseness of the bush and the complex web of human and spiritual relations that bind survival to respect, history to homeland and white to black.

This is the first play by Neil Murray, who is better known as a singer-songwriter (Christine Anu's My Island Home) and founding member of the Warumpi Band. The play was commissioned by Angela Chaplin for Deckchair Theatre Company who says, "with its visual 'stranger in a strange land' structure, King for This Place takes its audience on a journey we all want to have."

The story follows Lenny, a white farm boy from country Victoria, as he leaves home looking for his known not what and going he knows not where. During his drive in the middle of the night somewhere in the central desert, Lenny has a flying kangaaroo, burns a tyre and passes out.

Lenny (well played by newcomer Phillip McIntosh) is found by 3 Aboriginal men of the Luritja language group, the imperious Ted (Stephen 'Bassha' Albert), the smooth and sexy Don (Trevor Jamieson) and the obstreperous Peter (Keiton Pell) who rescue him, but warn him he has been for a lovely scene of macabre negotiations, Lenny is persuaded to stay by Ted, who is the 'King' of this place, and use his farming skills to help them build facilities for a self-sufficient community. Lenny settles in easily despite his continuous conversation with his new friends 'ways of doing things, but he also learns something about their way of life and their sense of fun in the process. Despite their continuous squabbles, Lenny develops a warm relationship with the explosive Peter. Then a romance develops with Sarina (Melodie Reynolds) a feisty young girl who is promised to an old wife-beating polygamist. But tradition comes in their way. Lenny gets a beating and Sarina is forced to marry. Overcome by homesickness Lenny travels south accompanied by his buddy Peter. Camping out in Lenny's Victoria they are confronted by the ghosts of the people killed by the invaders. It becomes clear that for Lenny to understand himself and to sanctify his homeland he needs to understand both the Aboriginal past and present. So he returns to the desert community and that is the play's rather abrupt end.

The strength of this production is not in the writing (which is awkward and has insufficient dramatic construction) nor in the modest direction, but in the lively and well rounded performances. Trevor Jamieson of Brain Nue Dar and Corrugation Road fame said that creating the feel of the outback, the heat, the way to move and the timing was the city-bounded cast's toughest task. He was a little apprehensive of performing for the mob up north because he was sure they would be harsh critics. He should not worry. The performers clearly awakened in some of the audience a longing for the bush and for the freedom of their homelands. Perhaps it was the loose rhythm, or the sparseness of the script, or the haunting musical riffs or the red dust and open staging (cleverly designed by Michael Bern) or the unconstrained, relaxed performances or maybe all these things that created a particular atmosphere rather than simply a message.

Yet, the play was full of fascinating and unrealised possibilities. The romance that ripened between Lenny and Sarina—sneakily facilitated by Don and Miriam (Sher Williams-Hood)—was not given the space to evolve. The absence of strong and developed female characters was surprising for a commissioning piece, especially by Deckchair with its commitment to women's issues. Both Melodie Reynolds and Sher Williams-Hood made the most of limited material in vivacious performances. The highlight was Miriam speaking to Sarina behind the back of the rampaging Uncle Ted with elaborate (and reasonable) gestures that had the Aboriginal audience in stitches.

Murray wanted to show how Aboriginal people and their cultural heritage can enrich white Australians. Although there is nothing new in this message, it is certainly worth repeating and exploring at length. His second claim that spiritual sensitivity and attachment to land are not exclusively the preserve of Aboriginal people, while refreshing, is already well within his first and required some elaboration.

Lenny, the boy from the bush, adapts far more easily to the Aboriginal way than could be expected of an ordinary urbanite. He is eager and quick to learn and is sensitive to the land. This lack of dramatic tension is partially the play's problem and perversely a virtue. King for This Place is unusual theatre: sparse, sometimes shocking and violent, and yet there is something right about its pace and the way it smells. It is pleasing to see a performance that takes a refreshingly simple and subtle approach to theatre with the issues of whites and blacks that at its best was far from black and white.

King for This Place, writer Neil Murray, director Angela Chaplin, Deckchair Theatre, Victoria Hall, Fremantle, April 15 - May 8

A double helix of tricks and ideas

Mary-Ann Robinson inspects desoxy Theatre's DNA

How do you make bodies sing? How do you use 'tricks' to convey narrative? You don't, if that's the sole intention. These quirky clauses arise when the concept in performance is privileged over the doing of performance. When it's divided in this way, then messages are driven by text through a vehicle/body/actor, to be perceived again as concept: 'tricks' to convey narrative? You don't, if that's the sole intention. These quirky clauses arise when the concept in performance is privileged over the doing of performance. When it's divided in this way, then messages are driven by text through a vehicle/body/actor, to be perceived again as concept: 'tricks' to convey narrative? You don't, if that's the sole intention.

Since 1990, desoxy (Teresa Blake and Daniel Witton) have developed a style of close, physical performance that is packed with sound, images and ideas, all in a fluid sea, overlapping. Because being human is both content and form of this performance, subject and medium never split apart.

Their bodies in woolly, water-baby bathers, are sometimes shockingly close, sometimes so far apart as each other's mouths, or finger up the arm, as she cars him around the space like a rag doll, or wrapped together, balancing, arcing and beautifully inelegant. These are supremely skilled humans in a performance filled with stuff.

A lot of stuff about sex and science, the body slave to the forces of nature. When the shiny apple descends between them from above—she's taller so she grabs it with both hands—it opens like a trendy salad container, but the salad is anatomical paraphernalia, the gear for doing the business. He puts on her, and she's off: sex as driving force, the gear for doing the business. He puts on hers, she's off. Bodies animated and moved by genital bits and pieces, the spot, as extraordinary as walking on the huge surface of the moon, curved across the back wall.

Lumps of meaning in text risk being 'concept driven' and telling this story, dumb body as a story, giving it all together as the subject of science, as animal explained by mind: disembodied, clever little thoughts. Just as you were about to say, 'I gel it', the work steered away. A car accident: a limp dying woman. Moments of revelation are not about being told new things ('I get it') or shown new tricks ('Wow!') but about being reminded of what we know and have forgotten. Life is hard to understand, strange that we keep wanting to 'make sense' of it. Everybody will die one day. The elbow of the man next to me is really annoying: we're human.

Through panting and babbling, the physical/animal is so strongly established that speech is an hilarious shock: "Looking stunning this evening..." Later, singing emerges as a further physical achievement, the control of breath in a cool stream of sound, hitting

...
Training: personal and spectacular

Keith Gallash talks to Nigel Jamieson, co-director of the 1999 Australian International Workshop Festival

Nigel Jamieson set up the International Workshop Festival in the UK in 1998 and has established it in Australia, first in Adelaide and now in Melbourne in collaboration with Monash University and presented at the Victorian College of the Arts. Jamieson is a well known director of theatre-based works (Legs on the Wall's All of Me, and large scale outdoor events, Flamma Flamma, Adelaide, Australia 1998). He is artistic director of the ABC TV's Millennium Broadcast part of a millennial television event involving 30 countries making one program lasting 25 hours. There will be Australian content and a series of 9 minute pieces which will be live, event-based works. "All of the ones I'll be working on involve putting some of Australia's most exciting contemporary artists within iconic geometric landscapes," says Jamieson. Indigenous artists will play a considerable role in the project.

KG I notice that as part of the Australian International Workshop Festival you're having a focus on ceremony and spectacle both in a conference and in the inclusion of a workshop with Peter Minshall (director, designers, Barcelona Olympics), What sort of people do you expect to attend this workshop?

NJ The Australian arts community is currently having laid on its plate all these very large and finally, I'd say, culturally important events in terms of the way our culture is defined to the world and therefore to ourselves. To have as much input from some of the really great creators of those forms of theatre and expertise is enormously useful. On the level of say the structures and fabrics to use. To learn that if you want to put that thing up in the air it's going to be 30 foot high but the wind always knocks it down. But also the soul and the structure of the event. Someone like Peter Minshall has taken the idea of carnival and created a form which has an incredible sense of content and drama to it. It's a long way from carnival floats. Julian Crouch is constantly and hugely inventive in terms of materials. And really his mark is that he keeps going back to looking for the simplicity rather than complexity of the solution. He does this wonderful show where he designs the show within the show onboard, making the sets and props and masks out of paper and cellotape there in front of you, right through to the fact that he makes all of the stuff for Welfare State. Like his collaborator, Phelin McDermott, he grew up in a house which had a poltergeist in it and they did a show about that, actually made the house out of selotape during the show. At the end of the show they just snipped the cellotape and it all suddenly contracted and became the poltergeist.

KG So people who attend these workshops and go to the ceremony and spectacle conference might be artists and companies who have a vision for their work to be included in these proliferating large scale public events?

NJ Sydney is promising the biggest outdoor spectacle ever for New Year's Eve and Kenneth is saying this time we're gonna do it big. There's the Olympics and the build up to that. Victoria is celebration happening all over Australia. I think there's always the risk of that work being crass but I think we can prevent that. And also for the whole of long reasons. There are few places in the world which are better suited to outdoor work, I think that if we can make sure that the work isn't just fireworks and glitter and that it actually does address our identity and cultural issues and has a soul then I think it's very much a fantastic way of bringing people together for a public collective experience of what our culture is and what our icons are.

KG While everyone's excited to see your workshop festival announced, there's been a lot of discussion about the lack of longer term training in performance (as opposed to conventional acting) in Australia.

NJ My first Workshop Festival was in 1988 in London. At the beginning it was political. I got a job to try and promote a, in a fantastic, fairly crazy way. It was a fantastic idea of making one program lasting 25 hours. There will be Australian content and a series of 9 minute pieces which will be live, event-based works. "All of the ones I'll be working on involve putting some of Australia's most exciting contemporary artists within iconic geometric landscapes," says Jamieson. Indigenous artists will play a considerable role in the project.

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NJ My first Workshop Festival was in 1988 in London. At the beginning it was political. I got a job to try and promote a wider vision of theatre and the Workshop Festival was in many ways an attempt to start that process. The ridiculous situation there was that in England we had 27 drama schools where you went and learned how to put somebody else's play on and deal with the text but we had no circus school, no mime school, no physical school. And also, the England's multisocial culture wasn't in any way represented by the training. So there were fantastic African dance companies and Indonesian stuff, Chinese traditions and all of that, but really no forum whatsoever to even look at the process of creating work. I think really if you look at the diversity of work in Australia and the arts practice that Australia is famous for and what's extraordinary about it, again it's absolutely lamentably represented in terms of training facilities. In Canada they got a circus school up in Montreal and now Cirque de Soleil is out there training the Canadian economy billions of dollars. That Cirque tradition was very much inspired by the likes of Circus Oz. And yet we're still looking at a situation where an astonishing establishment like the Flying Fruity Circus is absolutely struggling on and there's no school. We need new forms of long-term training which is certainly happening through UWS Nepean and places like that, and we're working closely with the VCA on this project. So I think it's improving. I think this kind of training is about those performers who are out there creating work in difficult circumstances. They need to be able to go back and re-explore their language and methodology with the input of a really inspiring teacher. It's very much about that ongoing exploration.

KG The workshops are for experienced performers getting a taste of something which they haven't had before and they're working for 5 days or 8 in some cases. Can this have a significant impact on them?

NJ It's a very different experience going to a workshop for a week than going to a school for a year. It's an intense experience having that 6 to 8 hours a day for 5 days in one space. I've had a number of experiences within this kind of one or two week event that have fundamentally affected the way I've gone on to work. I did a 2-week course with Lecq back in the early 80s that had a huge influence on me...
New media yield

Diana Klaosen on a multimedia performance in a Tasmanian wheat mill

The mill complex is an ideal venue for this kind of production. There are stable (which featured heritage photography), an orchard (manipulated Polaroid self-portraits), the miller’s cottage (live performance), an old well (soundscape), an emptied lake (aka “The Dry Lake Drive-In”: video screenings) and the multi-storey mill building (video montage, photographic installations, live performance, soundworks and spoken word pieces).

Son-et-lumiere style presentations were beamed out of cottage windows and a junior “roving reporter” with a video camera and monitor waylaid audience members for their “vox pop” opinions of the show. There was also a student-designed website. To prevent crowding, the large audience was divided into some 6 groups to be guided around the performance sites in random order.

The event was more than a qualified success. Clearly the STC had succeeded in inspiring the project’s participants and the crash courses in new media had been effective. Some of the school-age performers were nervous, but most of them settled very quickly and gave creditable and engaging presentations.

The limited space in the mill itself meant that it was necessary to queue for half an hour to enter, so not everyone saw its many highlights. And a technical hitch beyond anyone’s control meant that the video/Nintendo projections onto that cow didn’t materialise, though the very friendly animal was present, decked out in her blanket-like slide screen.

Perhaps the main achievement of the venture is in involving and empowering an entire, relatively isolated community and giving them access to new media with which they would usually have very little interaction. One could not deny the value of a community coming together and speculating on its history and its future—and sharing its ideas with a wider audience.


What interests me in a dramatic context is the immense frustration and passion that can find few outlets amongst today’s youth,” says Raimondo Cortese whose “sharp, shrewd; sometimes shattering” (The Australian), Features of Blow Youth, opens in Sydney this month. The cast includes musician Kim Salmon (ex Beasts of Bourbon) who sits perched on a burnt-out car wreak throughout the play. The production by Ranters Theatre, the company formed by Raimondo Cortese, brother Adrian and a group of performers “to invigorate theatre and make it speak directly to young audiences from a range of cultural backgrounds in their own language” opens at The Performance Space on June 2. Following the Sydney season Ranters will join 32 theatre companies from around the world at the prestigious Theatre der Welt in Berlin whose program notes: “This piece follows its central figures through the urban landscape. The production is, however, not seeking a psychological realistic style of acting; on the contrary, irrational elements and the absurdities of city life express themselves in an often fragmented hyper-realism.”


The promise of interesting things to come in experiments with live performance interacting with technology in Sydney. Samuel James Space 1999 (April 16 - 21) definitely had its moments (review in RealTime 32). The Performance Space was divided by multiple screens while, at a desk between audience and performers, multimedia and sound artists mixed projections, live camera, action and sound. Three performers drew in and out of a transparent dressing room to merge in a variety of loose impersonations with famous figures projected in fragments on the screen. While we watched unaware, the enigmatic Denis Beauvoir quietly caught us on video, projecting our image into the night on a tiny screen in the wall facing Cleveland Street. Meanwhile, “a hilarious assault on the common perceptions of theatre” is promised in a new work, Russia, by Fibre Cement, a company formed by Craig Anderson and Antony Walters. Since 1997 they’ve created a number of theatrical events at the University of Western Sydney. O’Theatre, PACT, The Performance Space’s Open 97 as well as various pubs and non-theatrical spaces. Russia mixes multimedia and absurdist humour; the performance skating round and eventually breaking the ice between 2 worlds—”assumed rut” and “the show.” The main characters played by Anderson and Walsh exist within an almost cartoon world. Familiar images are painted on their bodies and onto the space which is charged, with percussive rhythms and electronic music. The work uses and addresses projected images and sound, both pre-recorded and live.

Fibre Cement, Russia, The Performance Space, July 27 - August 7, 9698 7235

Craig Anderson and Antony Walters at the opening of Bunny’s Hardware

Craig Anderson, PA C T

Tessa Masters, Kris Boldosco and Beth Buchman, Features of Blow Youth

Must be ready to begin work in July ’99
Polarised in Tempe, Arizona

Sophie Hansen on dance and technology at IDAT 99

Ferocious debate characterised the third international dance and technology conference, IDAT 99, before it even began. Hosted by Arizona State University in Tempe, this event sought to maintain its status as the foremost and formal platform for this ever growing field of work—on a tiny budget. So the dance-tech internet mail list blazed for weeks in advance with dynamite vitriol from far-flogging artists, angry at the lack of bursaries and fees.

In the event, the international turn-out was impressive, with a strong Australian contingent done proud by Company in Space's sublime telematic performance in the internet cafe, and the intelligent debate of artists such as Sarah Neville of Heliograph. Whilst there were many Europeans, in particular Brits, who appear to have suddenly discovered to be in dance, there was naturally a preponderance of Americans and an overdose of academics, so that many of the panels deteriorated into navel gazing. Fortunately the pace of the conference was hot, with 3 events occurring simultaneously at every slot throughout the weekend, so that the attempt to juggle the seminars were able to buck themselves with workshops and demonstrations.

The potential for creativity offered by pre-existing or artist-invented technologies was clear in the diversity of the performances. The scale of quality was equally well explored. In well-equipped studio and theatre spaces, the presentations ranged from Troika Ranch's now minimal performances. The scale was pre-existing or artist-invented technology; there was a naturally aponderance of particular Brits, who appear to have published their interaction with Benoitaubrey's home-made electro-acoustic suits.

Isabelle Choiniere from Canada offered a terrifying neo-hit Kal figure in her full evening performance, Commission, which scored high for sound and fury but low for the slightest discernable meaning. Local hero, Seth Rinsky, put his Star Wars styled sabers to their logical conclusions in Light Dance, an Oskar Schlemmer styled series of tableaux vivants which trained an instructional attention loss curve, in which the decline of audience engagement was predicated on the initial impact made by each newly introduced effect. The more we saw, and the more dazing it at first appeared, the more quickly we grew bored. Jennifer Prelock-Linnell had a crack at the good old partnership of dance and film, with strong imagery provided by Rosgula Wolf, and Sean Curran made a small concession to technology by tripping his virtuoso solo in front of some projections. Ellen Broembali provided the choreography in a collaboration with Douglas Rosenberg and John D Mitchell, and yet her production suffered for it all too well integrated media and fell somehow, slickly slack. Sarah Rubidge and Gretchen Schiller both created touchingly personal environments with responsive performance installation works, and Johannes Birringer and Stephan Silver opened their interactive spaces to marauding dancers in a workshop context.

Many other excellent performances added to the impressiveness of an energetic and abundant art-form, encompassing a dizzying array of practices. There were few shared starting points to be found in any of the events, and this became even more apparent in the debates, which stirred up some exciting disagreements. A panel of artists took on the provocatively titled, "Content and the Seeming Loss of Spirituality in Technologically Mediated Works." Presentations demonstrated a grounding in the sensual (Theda Schiphorst's images into touch and "skin-consciousness" through interactive installations) and the religious (Sirlanc's shamansitic suspensions.).

There was talk of the potential for abstraction contained in digitally mediated realms. The informed exchange inspired as many "back-to-basics" anti-technology comments as it did eloquencies for hard-wiring and hypertext. Much was made of the fact that new media work in progress is often forced into the guise of finished product, when really it is only the start of a dialogue. The debate polarised; the artist should just dive on in, only this "hands-on" approach will get results; the artist must always approach technology with an idea in mind; technology can only ever facilitate, never create.

At the round table titled "The Theoretical-Critical-Creative Loop", British artist Sarah Rubidge nailed her struggle to make work and theorise simultaneously by inverting the phrase "work-in-progress." Rubidge is searching for a new way of thinking about the evolving dynamic of productions such as Passing Phases, her installation which offers a route out of authorial control and into the newly imagined realms of genuine audience interactivity. Something innate to the complexity of the technology and its intervention into the experience of the viewer has taken Rubidge's Choreography out of her hands. Still struggling to escape her analytical roots and wary of the "initiator" language appended to much theorising about this work, Rubidge presented a tentative and thoughtful approach to her parallel roles as artist, academic and writer.

Another British choreographer, Susan Kozel, discussed her approach to the potentially restrictive technology of motion capture. Strapped up with wires, Kozel explores the margins of the technology, testing it to its point of failure. She spoke lucidly about artists working intimately with technology to counteract the idea of depersonalisation. The radical individualism of her appropriation of the motion capture system (to the extent that the bouncing cubes of the animated figure could be "named" according to who was wearing the sensors) was evidence of the vigour of the relationship between the body and technology which she believed to be at the heart of all the work on show in Arizona. There was no shortage of strong opinion at IDAT, and none of it simplistic. Let me leave the last word with a cynical crip from the fiery final panel. Her double-edged sword summarised the conference experience, by provoking exacerbation and exhilaration in equal parts, "The more I see of technology, the more I thirst for live performance."

IDAT 99, International Dance and Technology Conference, Arizona State University, Tempe, Feb 22 - 29

Strange qualities

Julia Postle takes a virtual tour of Canberra

Peter Sheehy and Csaba Buday have worked together before, but never like this. As the Choreographic Centre's first Fellows for 1999, they had a few weeks to explore the national capital, workshop their ideas, and then bring it all back to the studio to create (it) New. From Berlin struggled onto a bare stage, to interpret the deafening feedback created by their interaction with Benoit Mauveuy's home-made electro-acoustic suits.

Sculpture Garden. Projections of the flora and fauna garden in the National Gallery of Australia illuminate the space. Sheehy's solo is first. He hangs from a crude set of monkey bars, one arm holding his limp body, feet dragging beneath him as he twists to spin himself from the structure. He climbs, jumps, and falls sharply; the momentum increasing and diminishing randomly. Buday uses the space differently, with sculptural movements between the shadows and projected images. Both men have an awareness of the quality of their every movement and how this relates to the performance environment.

Olympic Pool. Fully clothed, with goggles, Sheehy and Buday are filmed from within the Olympic Pool at the National Institute of Sports' video capture unit. It's a playful, absurd moment: they run in a distorted slow motion, move about ridiculously. Sheehy checks the time on his watch, and it all happens to a remix of Elvis' Suspicious Minds. (If two) works well for these unique choreographers, in every way. In contrast to the rare luxury of seeing the body, movement, thinking, thinking now making eye contact. When movement begins, it is small but rapid, starting in the scene. Balancing on the back rim of the chair, suspending the moment. As they confront each other through increasingly daring eye contact and physical encounters, Kozel's athletic, aggressive energy is heavy breathing carries through the tiny space, hanging over the audience to beat the energy.

Brickworks. The film projected on the back screen shows one of the many caverns in the disused Canberra Brickworks. Buday and Sheehy appear, sweeping the sand with their feet. The pace oscillates as they kick the sand and it goes flying, and they seem to jump up the walls. The score uses sounds of machinery, bells clanging and hollow rumblings, evoking a sense of the history and atmosphere of the site. Then they are in space, in reality, with the projected image of the Brickworks towering behind them. They use contact work that progresses to visual contact, with Buday's shadow playfully exposing and covering Sheehy.
Site steps

Indira Mahajodhan traverses Cherry Herrings’ Cityscapes

Brisbane Riverside development—a maze of boardwalk, white cement, grey bollards, busy eateries and granite steps. A deep melancholic note like a foghorn at world’s end draws my attention to a fantasmic pair of Gothic characters (conceivably in the middle aisle). With a hauntingly lyrical flourish from vocalist Christine Johnston and a desolate angel carrying her burning heel, the Gothic heralds (with Lorne Gerlach on trombone) wordlessly lead us off on a tour of the dance life that abounds in the crevices and hollows of this unlikely habitat, thanks to Cherry Herrings’ Dance Week offering, Cityscapes, 5 site-specific works by 5 choreographers bringing dance to a public space.

First stop: a deserted beach. Barely washed ashore, a half submerged human corpse shudders, and graps, rising from the shallows, tearing at the plastic bag that contains its head, dragging itself from its swampy death. So far Brian Lucas’ Golum has me convinced. Standing on the near bank, Golum moves, Golums dance, Golums even points its toes. Now something gets moving and the face flickers between dancer, Lucas, and swamp-monster Golum. Aside from intrusions of contemporary technique, Golum is mindful of his stagecraft. Odd. From our off shore position we observe from afar Golum’s private moment of returning to the world of the living. But Golum the dancer turns back to the water from where he came, to face his audience, to dance to us, before strolling into the city. This crepuscular being, who might have emerged from the Paris sewers, is glimpsed again later, more sustained, haunted by some inner dialogue. What seemed a neutral response despite the executive workday atmosphere.

Jean Tally and John Utans use contemporary vocabulary in more conservatively. Tally utilises a shallow most of ankle deep water in a beautifully lyrical, if safe, formalist expression of the aesthetics of wind and water. Less dancelike and self-conscious. Utans’ Boardwalk proves remarkable in its simplicity: an unaccompanied celebration of movement in particular spaces. Viewed from a distance, the exploration of perspective and architectural feature becomes the viewer’s role. On a second viewing, I am disappointed to find that its a capella effect was due to technical problems. With its intended soundtrack of contemporary music (inappropriately positioned behind the audience) Boardwalk loses much of its subtlety.

Around the corner Lisa O’Neill emerges from her ultramarine satin hoop-skirt and threatens to dive into the hobby kitchen. With signature Suzki physical control, she advances toward the glass exterior wall. Face us from the inside, her staccato duel with the vertical planes of movement detail and dynamics informs this well-crafted performance by a consistent and self-assured choreographer. Then the whole is closed by a requiem hymn for a bonfire rope from our Gothic hosts.

Excerpt for O’Neill’s Foyce, contemporary dance vocabulary was the bottom line here. One wonders what different juxtapositions might have been precipitated had a more diverse movement language been explored. Reflecting on Cityscapes, I can’t help feeling that contemporary technique, like guitar music, is one of the more beguiling of performing arts.

Cityscapes, The Cherry Herring, curator Sharaan Boughen, choreographers Brian Lucas, Jean Tally, Lise O’Neill, Cityscapes

Body think

Rachel Fensham on Philips Rothfield’s Pensive and desoxy’s DNA 98.4%.

The privacy of the body as matter for thought has become a tenet of poststructuralism. Likewise the notion that embodiment is a form of knowing. Philips Rothfield’s ‘thought experiment‘ at Dancehouse was to bodily explore these ideas, by allowing a little ‘Pensive’ reflection to take place in performance. And she dances. Elizabeth Keen, who began with a thought experiment logic that mustered up a progression over the squares on their floor—the feet of footballers diminishing lines to perimeters. Keen speaks of pijaya — the man who caused the problems... She asks what then am I? Keen watches. Rothfield’s an armchair archipelago. She is more beautiful than Dectares in her shimmering shot fabric, fake fur and leopard spots. She is a lioness while her ‘observes and speaks—utterance seems to defy questioning of God’s existence, her shimmering shot fabric, leopard spots and de oxy D which mustered up a thought experiment logic. As her feet of footballers diminishing lines to perimeters... Her feet of footballers diminishing lines to perimeters...

Soon the 2 find moments of overlap. There is a latching, sliding, pawing— they become a conjured woman. A Siamese twin with 2 heads, 2 hearts, 2 hands, 2 feet— how does she think? This is a problem for psychology—both hands are holding the mouse of the computer—but would philosophy have them torn apart? Two sides of the body moved, one around the other and round until their heads appear to rest, one against the other. They are like-ince with a certain coyness about their private discoveries. Their gaze is direct and beyond reach but not far away. I am struck by an intentionally in their looking which suggests a certain theatre—a thought realm that can be held in and around the body. It stays quite constant throughout, the way that thoughts ventured forward so fairly and then return.

Dancing separately, there begins greater variation— though they are in contradistinction, thinking like no other, thought in a hand held up or thought holding itself in a copping at the lack of the head. The body and mind we are told is a ‘fleshand’ soul. Possibly a wound, or possibly something to be filled. Their final duel is a reply to this go thought—but it is filled with ugly words that end with -ly or -acry or -ob and -ahen. They hook toes and elbows, they investigate incorporation.

The piece was like a higglety-pigglety—shadows of women, legions and creeps bottled in Paramount and therefore, a little flat, following a single narrative line leading us from proposition to proposition with interludes of wonder in between. I am very fond of Descartes’ thought meditations and although we might be troubled by his conclusion ‘I think therefore I am‘ there is a wonderful delusion in his questioning of self, of God and of reality... In his writing he lets himself go to the limits of thinking through his body. Pensive suggests a more measured contribution to thought and it seems that Rothfield’s work was the preliminary sketch of a meditation that is still to ‘hafacinate’ the dialogue between him and a body. The conclusion with its postmodern emphasis—an artistic movement drawing by the bodies of bodies and thought together—arrived too soon, historically and artistically, to shift the influence of Descartes from this self-conscious dance work.

Another approach to the problems of the cogito, the defining of the human subject by the thinking, is evident in desoxy Theatre’s (DNA 98.4%) (being human). This major work asks the question ‘what thinking has made the human species regard itself as above all others?’ or more directly ‘what makes the human genetically different from other animals?’ Their answer is not so pretty, in fact what you watch is also funny peculiar, as Teresa Blake and Dan Whitton portray the crepuscular being, who might have emerged from the Paris sewers, is glimpsed again later, more sustained, haunted by some inner dialogue. What seemed a neutral response despite the executive workday atmosphere.

through the piece. Pensive suggests a more measured contribution to thought and it seems that Rothfield’s work was the preliminary sketch of a meditation that is still to ‘hafacinate’ the dialogue between him and a body. The conclusion with its postmodern emphasis—an artistic movement drawing by the bodies of bodies and thought together—arrived too soon, historically and artistically, to shift the influence of Descartes from this self-conscious dance work.

more disturbing reality is that it could be dispensed with altogether if the scientists of the human genome project advance their suprising biological thinking. Suspended in cocoons, desoxy swept away their dying so that the human DNA can be incubated for future generations. I am confronted by the work to consider evolution, its inexorable hold on science and its relationship to humanness.

There is too much to take in, to absorb in ideas and in looking from desoxy’s sometimes didactic presentation of this material but I am grateful that they are artists whose living is to make art that asks seriously hard questions. It seemed ironic that this production which was watched by small audiences was fitted against the Melbourne Comedy Festival—will we really laugh ourselves into oblivion?

Rachel Fensham lectures in Performance Studies, Monash University, and is co-editor of Dissertation: Cultural Praxis in Theatre, Monash Theatre Papers. For more on 98.4%DNA, see Mary-Ann Robinson, “Double helix of tricks and Ideas~ page 32

Young woman glass soul is a multimedia work conceived by Jennifer Newman-Preston in which dance is the governing thread with puppetry, illusion, images, sound and words as integral elements: images are by Vinn Pitcher; words and storytelling by Victoria Doodle; music by Alexander Nettick with vocal harmonics by Joan Stanaway; projection by Tim Gruchy, video scripting and direction by Joanne Griffin. Young woman glass soul explores the Cinderella fable for contemporary resonances taking on no less than six versions of the story—the goddess Isis; a Brazilian fable in which a sea serpent plays godmother; a Cinderella variant in the context of a Muslim woman’s ritual; the German folk tale of Aschenputtel or Ash Girl; Charles Perrault’s The Little Glass Slipper—commissioned by Louis XIV—as well as the Walt Disney version. Young woman glass soul opens at Bangarra Theatre July 1. For more information tel 02 93573471 or contact Jennifer Newman-Preston at Liquid@acssoft.com.au

Indira N. Mahajodhan writes and directs randal folk tales for her Brisbane-based company Bush Kill! (SAT) which produced The Homebird Matriarch: Story of Reno Nilam Sydney, 1998 (Carnivale, A Sea Change). She is working on The Butterfly Seer for randal, and touring schools with her bilingual folk play, Mr Stupid.
**Tilting the plane**

Christopher Chapman profiles South Australian artist John Barbour

John Barbour's exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia was a mini-survey of sorts. The exhibition included installed works, photographic works and paintings from 1993 to 1995. The exhibition was an occasion to witness aspects of Barbour's practice over the past few years, and to consider his ‘photographic’ work *Sisters of Charity,* a group of 12 lightboxes containing images of places where the artist has worked from 1978 to 1995.

The exhibition was one element of a larger project. At the Top Floor gallery in the city, Barbour reinstated his important 1995 work *Still from the Liquid Plain,* previously exhibited in various versions at yulicrowley gallery, Sydney, and at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide. In addition to the exhibition components, Linda Marie Walker, Director of the Contemporary Art Centre of SA, also organised a forum on Barbour's work, and produced a handsome catalogue to accompany the exhibition.

The project was a gesture of recognition of the significant contribution Barbour has made to Australian art as artist and teacher. He lectures at the South Australian School of Art, continues to be closely involved with the Experimental Art Foundation through its Council, and, with Anton Hart, recently organised the major public art project *Underbelly,* which included work by over 40 artists from Australia and overseas.

The exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre presented a series of ‘set pieces.’ The gallery is a converted house, and the experience of moving through the various installed works was akin to a journey of sorts. In the front gallery, large mirror-glass plinths of various dimensions reflected the architecture and each other. Occasionally one caught a glimpse of one’s own body, or the bodies of others—incomplete. Sliced styrofoam cups were placed on the objects so that they appeared to be sinking, or floating—a motif that occurs in other works of Barbour's.

A version of Cinema for the Dead was installed in the smaller middle gallery, and this work, too, required navigation by the viewer. Small panels painted in light greys, pinks, greens, on wooden props faced the viewer like little mute sentinels.

The act of encountering these works required a bodily involvement on the part of the viewer, extending their ‘performative’ capacities. They have to be moved through to be comprehended. This aspect of Barbour's work was highlighted in the forum that accompanied the exhibition. *"It falls flat in field. Beckert, Bataille and the performance of the formless in some recent Adelaide art. " Here Barbour's work was contextualised by its relation to the work of other artists and other disciplines. Anne Thompson, for instance, spoke about contemporary dance and choreography, I drew a conceptual link between Barbour's work and the notions of horizontality implicit in the work of Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock.

But what of the content of Barbour's work? His ‘populatures’, constructed from cardboard and tape, and painted with gesso, are titled *The Hours of Anonymous Object.* They suggest boxes or blocks or, when they grow extended ‘limb,’ the spaces inside connected corridors, or else strange organisms, struggling. The bleakness they suggest, their autism or inability to communicate, is tempered. They are somehow softly or gently rendered (taped, painted) and their surfaces are always lightly coloured. The chalkiness of their surface can offer something different and altogether ethereal; the light reflected generates a coloured glow against the gallery wall—so mysterious that it may be mistaken for a trick.

Likewise, the images in the lightbox work *Sisters of Charity* appear bleak—detailed, set pieces, and empty interiors. But in some there are ghost-images of other spaces and thoughts—a patterned bedspread, a soft toy. The apparent simplicity of means suggested by the plain brown finish of the lightboxes belies the complexity and dream-like nature of the imagery they illuminate.

Thus, if John Barbour's work is concerned with the difficulties of communication, with the impossibility of translating emotive states into spoken or written language, it also proposes a kind of open field where a different kind of communication becomes possible. Rather than 'rough', Barbour's cardboard, taped or painted objects might be considered 'remedial.' They don't refuse human touch, rather they incorporate bodies and corporeal sensations through the performance they evoke, and through their allusion to psychoanalysis. The somatic body is also signalled via the metaphors of texture and illumination. And the body seeps through in the Stains, Smeared, Drop, Raw paintings, and in the little drawings that appear in the bases of coffee-stained styrofoam cups in Untitled Objects—in one, a strange little bag that looks like a pair of testicles in the corner of a room.

In the exhibition catalogue Linda Marie Walker writes that “John Barbour's work touches lightly upon all surfaces, upon all ideas of surface. It lightly touches material, its materiality is worn, patched, darned. It spreads out, as if mushan, and yet shaped by being lived in.” I quote Felix Guattari in suggesting that Barbour's works occupy a space that is “atmospheric, pathetic, fugal, transitional.”

At the forum, I evoked the idea of horizontality as a place to begin exploring other spaces. Borne out of horizontality, these works tilt the plane through all possible axes, they create new, multi-dimensional spaces. Spaces composed of inter-woven lines that whip and seethe like electric currents, intensely human and emotional. Multi-level horizons that stretch as far as the eye can see. Frozen planes of shining ice, and convulsing planes of energy and thought, that exist outside of time.

**Accredited Losses, John Barbour, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, February 5 - March 14**

Christopher Chapman is a curator/writer/artist. He is the Director of the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.
A meta-world of watchfulness

Diana Klaosen on a new media residency on Bruny Island, Tasmania

Joyce Hinterding and David Haines are Sydney-based artists who have been exhibiting internationally for over 10 years. With an eclectic background that includes a diploma in gold- and silversmithing and a trade certificate in electronics, Hinterding is best known for her work with installations utilising electricity, electromagnetics and acoustics and for the manufacture of idiosyncratic artworks which render visible inaudible atmospheric energy. Haines specialises in combining apparently incompatible elements into works exploring landscape and fiction and presenting a "constructed world of the imagination." His work includes painting, video installations, soundworks, computer-generated pieces and text-based conceptual work.

Last summer, Haines and Hinterding arrived in Tasmania for a 3-month residency at the lighthouse on South Bruny Island, south of Hobart. Bruny is a small unspoiled bushland island. Accessible only by vehicular ferry, it has a limited permanent population but is a popular holiday destination. Located at the southernmost tip of the island, Bruny is often described as being "as far south as you can go—the last stop before Antarctica..." Haines and Hinterding spent a month setting up for the landscape and the environment so the South Bruny Lighthouse was a logical location for their residency, which was commissioned by Contemporary Art Services Tasmania.

The lighthouse site was made available by the Tasmanian government's Parks and Wildlife Division and the Arts Ministry, providing a series of artists' Wilderness Residencies throughout the state. As local arts administrator Sean Kelly notes, the scheme is very appropriate—if somewhat overdue—and should permit a variety of artists, from different backgrounds and disciplines, to work within and from a wilderness base. It could also extend the discourse on landscape art in the state and counteract its tendency towards the purely representational.

Joyce Hinterding describes the lighthouse as a place "where sky, sea and land meet in a space of watchfulness, beacons and signalling." She explains that the aim was to "create an environmentally low-impact work that involves the use of fictive and imagistic elements directed by environmental data to create a meta-world, an interior and contemplative space, affected by the surrounding environment."

In essence the work uses the sensitivities of the local environment to "activate an interior space of the imagination", the interior of the lighthouse containing a light and sound work generated, created and affected by the passing of all sorts of weather and technologies.

The installation utilises computers, data projectors, a sound system with missing desk, wind monitoring and radio scanning equipment, a digital video camera and editing system plus assorted microphones, modernists, data and antennas. The work monitors and decodes the automatic picture transmissions from passing polar orbiting satellites, translating the data into a sound event and a triggering mechanism for other elements of the installation. Wind-monitoring equipment on the lighthouse determines the speed of footage shown, so that shots are shorter and sharper when the wind is strong and more meditative when the wind is low.

Sound and video footage taken from the local landscape is composed with 3D generated systems where the natural world collides with synthetic imagery. The work grows and evolves over the time of the "exhibition" as the database of real and 3D footage increases. Haines and Hinterding regard the work as a contemporary slant on the tradition of remote landscape works, existing outside the gallery system. In effect, the whole lighthouse becomes a multi-layered high-tech installation artwork, a sort of shrine to the possibilities of new media.

During their residency, the artists became part of the Bruny community, welcoming numerous visitors to the site and interacting with the Hobart arts fraternity. The project coincided with the 2-week Curators' School in New Media organised in Hobart by CAST and ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology). The 50 participants from all around Australia visited the artists at the light house to observe the work in progress, an experience highly regarded by all involved.

At Hobart's School of Art the pair participated in the weekly public forum (in which influential and interesting contemporary artists, designers, curators and arts administrators, both Australian and international, discuss their work). These sessions are usually enlightening, but Haines' and Hinterding's presentation, in which they spoke about the residency in the context of their earlier works, was certainly one of the highlights in the forum program to date. With their self-deprecating humour and enthusiasm, the artists were able to take a difficult, even obscure, science-based, specialised subject, expand it to an arts-and-humanities audience, and make it accessible, intelligible—even entertaining and amusing. Like the installation itself, this was quite an achievement.

All quotations from the artists' statements.

New Media Residency and Installation by Joyce Hinterding and David Haines, CAST, Bruny Island, Southern Tasmania, March - April 1999
Going public

Maryanne Lynch on the implications of Art Built-in, the public art policy of the Queensland Government

I used to catch the university tram down Swanston Street, Melbourne and look out the window at the city's past. The City Baths, the State Library, the Queen Victoria Hospital, the Town Hall. But when I reached the city square, I knew that I was in for something different—not only between one and another era, but also one week and the next. Who had the sick sense of humour to plant the Burke and Wills statue—commemorating explorers, who happened to die of thirst—beside a fountain? And what was so bile-inducing about that sculpture nicknamed the Yellow Peril which was eventually dumped in the CBD's lower reaches? Then there was the big bulletin board that didn't seem to work when it rained.

But it was not only these obvious art-facts that drew my gaze. The space itself was square, I knew. But in this instance—public art. In mid-March the Beattie Government released a policy called Art Built-in. The policy, with the cautious subtitle "Creatin Better Public Places", outlines what is pitched as a new deal for art in public spaces. Its centrepiece is the promise of a dedicated 2% of all capital works. There are, of course, numerous exemptions but the move is potentially a bold one. Indeed, Peter Beattie's government is claiming that this is a first in Australia in the sense that the procurement of a building (say) "is enshrined in policy as a cultural as much as a physical act (John Stafford, Executive Consultant, Public Art Agency)."

But what is public art? A perennial question, and one that is defined here with risk-taking breadth. Rather than my crude examples of civic works, Art Built-in is closer to Melbourne's debate over the city square itself in that the policy encompasses everything from door handles to rooftops. In other words, Art Built-in seeks to instil 'artistic' ideas into every aspect of construction. This, paradoxically, risks a dilution of the 'art' part of public art at the same time as it opens capital works to a variety of relationships between design, construction and 'the public good.'

The brochure outlining the policy reflects this tension in its choice of images. Side by side, for example, are a video installation and an executive chair. Despite the heading "Public Art Policy", this is in fact an art and design policy. Another conundrum is the emphasis on integration. Must all public art be 'fit', or as the notion of 'built in' suggests? What does this mean and who is going to determine it? Is art about 'creating better public places' (for whom?) or something more?

These are all necessary questions in a healthy debate. This policy manifests, in fact, one response to several years of discussion and consultation in Queensland about the nature of public art. Indeed, the preceding Coalition Government had all but signed on the dotted line in articulating its own public art policy. Probably the most striking feature of Art Built-in is its emphasis on consulting with government departments and successful contractors in the development and establishment of public art policy and practice. Not that arts bodies or artists have been ignored; rather, the policy identifies the decision-makers as those who hold the purse-strings and pitchers itself accordingly.

Art Built-in's success in Cabinet may be in part attributable to this and in part to the link made to the employment market. Queenslanders will be privileged in the policy's implementation, which means jobs for local artists and other workers. I don't want to impute a Philistine approach; there are advocates for art at the highest levels of the Beattie Government. However, these days no government is willing, or able, to stick its neck out on art without some economic argument to substantiate the move.

Advice and guidance on the mandatory process will be provided by the newly created Public Art Agency. This agency links successful contractors with 'project managers' (for example, the Queensland Artworkers Alliance) who in turn identify and procure appropriate artists as well as co-ordinate project progress. Among these potential projects are, pleasingly, events and works that are ephemeral such as performance in a festival context. Another welcome feature is a mentorship scheme for young artists.

Art Built-in is a grab-bag of possibilities. It represents a step forward in its commitment to public monies to art and, prospectively, a step back in the breadth of its definition. What seems most likely is that the results will be mixed, at least in the short term. In the long term, there may well be some interesting changes in the cultures of government departments and their capital works associates. Changes beyond the window-dressing of a statue or a screen, changes in spaces and minds and meaning-making.

Public art in Northern Queensland

For North Queensland has been quick to act on the Art Built-in policy (which sets aside 2% of the costs of State Government building projects towards the integration of Queensland produced art and design in $5 million/year in commissioned work), with 5 large public art projects already underway. Art Built-in projects in North Queensland include the Community Justice Centre in Bamaga which services the Northern Peninsula Area Communities—New Mapoon, Injina, Umingko, Seisia and Bamaga—where artworks will be commissioned from local communities; the Community Justice Centre in Kowanyama where residents will contribute to the establishment of public art policy and practice; and the Cairns Convention Centre where public art has been commissioned from 13 artists, including 11 from Far North Queensland.

For further information, contact the Public Art Agency on 07 3250 1200, fax 07 3250 1201, email publicart@arts.qld.gov.au or online www.arts.qld.gov.au/publicartagency.

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Mutating contradictions

Peter Harding sees the concealed and the revealed in the work of Paul Saint

Glimped through the glass door of the Contemporary Art Centre from the garden, the first part of Paul Saint's installation, Three Vases and a Ball, 1999, is revealed. A light cane sphere is described by several interlocked hula hoops lashed together with a confusion of reeds, their tendi-like ends left unrestrained. As light as spinnakers, and containing only air, it looked as if it may blow away.

Upon entering we see 3 columns, one a tube of photographic paper sheathed in a beige, semi-transparent fabric that makes up the facade of Three Mountains. The other 2 comprise tightly washed plinths with transparent supporting glass boxes. One contains a lidl jar decorate decorated with lotus flowers. It sets in a few centimetres of water, its interior filled to capacity with more water. As we move around the tank the liquid both magnifies and distorts the lower part of the vase, giving the impression that it is no longer a fixed solid. The second aquarium is packed almost to the brim with ground turmeric, and the lip of a vase is exposed, signalling a promising archaeological find. Like an archaeologist we may speculate on whether the vase continues below the surface, but looking from above we can detect the bulb of the vase; a black void in the turmeric. What was once a rhizome in the earth has here become the earth. All 3 objects are a little top heavy, like skittles, and suddenly the cane ball is not so benign.

Moving around the corner we come across another 3 columns: 2 more of the "mountains", this time dressed in more vibrant hues of maroon and orange, the images beneath the veils even less tangible than those of the first mountain. The third vase on a plinth protrudes from a block of wax, its shape now the only memory of the glass tank which once contained it. The wax surface is flat and unresponsive to the objects around it, unlike the turmeric behind glass, which becomes a lively coloured mirror, reflective and opaque at the same time.

Saint takes apparent contradictions between opaque and transparent, full and empty, inside and outside, and reveals their mutability. The outcome is a beautifully resolved work that sets up a continuous dialogue between the different elements of the installation. Ultimately the success of this show relies on the artist's skill in knowing where to direct the viewer and where to leave some loose-ends, a balance that is not as easy as it seems to Saint makes it appear. It is the age-old problem of knowing where and when to relinquish control and allow that other thing which makes art take over.

Paul Saint, Three Vases and a Ball, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, March 19 - April 18

Peter Harding is an Adelaide based writer and dealer in 20th century design. His current projects include curating the furniture component of the University of South Australia's Frances Burke and Mambo exhibition, and writing "Innovation and Art Fashion: post-war Australian Design", the accompanying catalogue essay.

Male icons at the Melbourne Fashion Festival

Andrew McQuoter on the male body and fashion in the lives and work of Leigh Bowery and Percy Grainger

Look at Me: Leigh Bowery and Male Order. Addressing Menswear presented the work of 2 of Melbourne's most famous sons in the context of the 1999 Woolmark Melbourne Fashion Festival. Bowery (1959-94) and Percy Grainger (1882-1961) were consummate avant gardists, railing against the conventions of their time and producing bodies of work which broke with the past and influenced future developments within the field of their practice. Male Order and Look at Me set out to assess the relevance of their subjects in both historical and practical terms. From an historical viewpoint of the impact of Bowery and Grainger's Modernist period, Grainger reflecting the conceptual optimism of early Modernism and showcasing the innovations in the field of ambient and electronic music; and Bowery as an exemplary practitioner of World War II's nihilistic approaches of punk and postmodernism. These exhibitions make a timely contribution toward the reassessment of the Modernist period in Australian art.

In the context of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, Look at Me demonstrates the practical influence of Bowery's career on contemporary fashion design—his eccentric and iconoclastic approach to traditional systems of signification and representation of gender are part of the common language of contemporary fashion. The exhibition featured photographs, magazine articles, and slides; film footage of Bowery's collaborative performance work with the Michael Clark Dance Company; and garments made and worn by Bowery from the collection of his partner Nicola Bateman Bowery.

Male Order: Addressing Menswear comprised 2 parts. The first was a collection of objects from several Bowery and Grainger, notably a series of exquisite watercolours by Percy Grainger and his innovative ideas to mere reactionary gestures. What some designers in Male Order strike a chord with hard. Bowery is in his sensitivity to his motives for making the clothing that he did. Ted Robinson's Leaf print tunic and jacket, Scott Norris' knitwear, and World's jumper and breeches ensemble—featuring Argyle socks and Polynesian grass corset—succeeded in their combination of innovation and practicality; whilst expressing a sense of style peculiar to the individual designers.

What these exhibitions convincingly demonstrate is that the legacy of Grainger is and Bowery is the power of fashion as a material expression of ideas. Although they practised to very different ends both invoke the Heideggerian conception of philosophy (thinking) as a handicraft.

1999 Woolmark Fashion Festival: Look at Me: Leigh Bowery, curator Robert Buckingham, RMIT University Gallery, February 11 - 13 Male Order: Addressing Menswear, curator Robin Haely, featuring designs by Jenny Banister, Foot, Martin Grant, Mark McQueen, Karen, Kitty Reinhardt, Todd Robinson, Glen Rollason, SIX, tart, Vinen, World and Percy Grainger; The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, February 16 - April 4

Andrew McQuoter is an artist and writer living in Melbourne.
Cultural transport

Keith Gallash interviews David Young, composer and artistic director of Melbourne's Aphids Events

Composer David Young is 29 years old. He trained at the Conservatorium at Melbourne University in composition as well as studying English literature (including modern theatre). In May, he and his ensemble were invited to a festival in Belfort in France (just across the border from Basel) for performances of Ricefields, a collaboration between Young as composer and 2 visual artists, Sarah Pete and Rosie Joy, working with 4 musicians (Yasutaka Hemmi, Pete Humble, Natasha Anderson, Deborah Kayser), lighting designer Lisa Teale. On and sound technician Hugh Hughes. The work was first performed at La Mama Theatre in Melbourne in September 1998. In October, they’ll perform Ricefields in Japan where the project was initiated.

DY The project began when I was in Melbourne, Japan with experiences of ricefields and especially the juxtaposition of a ricefield with a very urban environment. And from bringing that back here and seeing what it meant for the visual artists and others involved in the project. It was always built in for us to go back to where the project came from.

KG How did the performance work at La Mama?

DY It was essentially an installation of a series of found objects and made objects. Sarah Pete mainly worked with paper pulp and very much on its texture in a slightly figurative format, always focussing on the pigment and texture. Rosie Joy who has a background as a musician as well as being a visual artist, was in a way the bridge between Sarah and myself. What we created was a score, a sculptural score so that there was some traditionally notated music for the musicians but there was other stuff which was graphically notated, to be much more freely improvised. All of that was incorporated and actually became the installation.

KG So it’s an installation-concert. Is it performed in real time?

DY Yes. We called it installation-performance but it’s hard to define. Certainly the audience was invited to wander round and touch and engage with the instruments.

KG And did they?

DY They did. And in some parts they were forced to because things were given to them or some sections were mixed to catch their interaction with the installation. A lot of stuff was incredibly detailed so that if the audience wasn’t actually touching it, they were compelled to come very close to it.

KG Were the objects you described Sarah Pete choosing the sort of things that would work in the audience?

DY Some were made with sea sponges and kitchen sissors and then coated in paper pulp. They ended up looking like enormous sushis—obviously so you see the tactility of being able to touch it.

KG How do they relate to the subject matter of ricefields?

DY I suppose there was an almost coincidental correspondence with things Japanese. We’re looking at the installation as a score. It’s very much a technical preoccupation with how to notate music, how to find some kind of visual template. There was an archaeological map of a Japanese shrine which I’d picapped up on my way. We played with using that as a basis for musical composition and also as the basis for the physical layout of the installation. So maybe the text is on the paper pulp, that kind of thing—using literal techniques to bind the work together. At the same time, we were exploring the continuum between notated music and improvised music.

KG What role does improvisation play within the performance?

DY The 4 musicians come from very different backgrounds. The percussionist has an improvisational background. The recorder player comes from a notated Western idiom. The violinist is from Japan. The musicians brought a whole lot of different expectations to the each of the works. So that meant, for instance, the improviser perhaps would be trying to very everyone away from some of the notated stuff in some ways, whereas the musicians might be hanging on more tightly to the cues and notations.

KG And what is the effect? Does it become a struggle?

DY A tension and, in terms of struggle, a positive one in the sense that it was about challenging preconceptions about improvisation. Even improvisers will give themselves notes or use graphic notation. We were attempting to explore the continuum, to say this is not only improvisation and not just notated music. It’s trekking across that territory. For example, the show begins with all 4 musicians sitting at music stands with music in front of them. The initial impression we wanted to set up was here is a decorative installation and the musicians are sitting there playing next to it. Gradually what happened was that the music stands were removed by stage hands. And the musicians would gradually approach the decorative stuff, some of it found objects, almost like junk—say a bottle which when picked up and turned would reveal certain markings or, in some cases, staves. Other things were very obviously incredibly finely crafted. The musician would draw the audience’s attention to the object and what eventually happened was that the installation was transformed into a score for them to reflect on and remember and interpret.

KG How long does the performance take to unfold?

DY At La Mama the performance took about an hour and a half with food and drinks, sake and that kind of thing. The touring version is slightly shorter and has been re-worked to a large extent so it’s more portable.

KG So did the installation to Belfort come out of the blue?

DY Pretty much. I’ve done a fair bit in Europe now and I suppose you slowly build up connections. I can only assume that someone spoke to someone who spoke to someone. It’s a very exciting opportunity for us.

KG When you take it to Japan, will it be the circumstances there?

DY Matsue is a regional centre—still quite a big city by our standards but it’s regarded as rural. It’s incredibly pristine. It has one of the only sections of coast of the Island sea which isn’t industrialised. For me in it I will be a homescaping. I undertook a residency in Matsue at the university a year or so ago and worked with a lot of the musicians and had contact with a lot of individuals. So the context there I regard as a very nurturing, hospitable one compared to Tokyo for instance. People in Matsue describe Tokyo as "Tokyo Jail" which I think quite apt when you’re on the subway at night—it’s like there is no escape. We’ll be performing in a theatre and that’s being supported by the local government.

KG Will you take the same group of performers?

DY Yes. The original company—I think that’s an important part of the project and the violinist comes from Matsue.

KG That’s a great connection. So there’s a bit of cultural exchange going on! How was your original visit to Japan supported?

DY The City of Melbourne. I won the Young Artists Award. Lots of people talk about cultural exchange all the time. It’s a difficult thing to define. Sometimes it’s very formal or happens through festivals. You take work there and they bring work here. But I guess the more valuable ones have always been long-term, inevitably based on some kind of personal relationship to begin with. I met Yasutaka Hemmi at a festival. We connected immediately and there’s something about that personal relationship that’s new spanned some 5 or 6 years.

DY It was interesting at the Adelaide Festival in 1998 to hear Herman Goebels present himself as a postmoderne composer. In other words, his collaborators were as important as him. His music would stop sometimes and other music would start which didn’t necessarily belong to him. And he felt thoroughly comfortable with that while some people wanted him to align himself with the individual “genius” composer notion from the 19th century. Do you feel you are in a similar realm here or do you see yourself as the composer, the author in the work?

DY It’s tricky territory. Almost all my work has been collaboratively driven. I’m always drawn particularly to the visual arts and I don’t feel I need to be involved in other arforms. I think it’s a desire of mine to somehow devolve authority so that I’m not at all regarded as the end point, the absolute final word. It’s difficult to shrug that off. Working with musicians, you know, as soon as the composer walks into the rehearsal there’s always this sense of, Oh we can ask the composer ‘cause he’ll definitely know the answer. And often I don’t do that and that’s really like not knowing. That’s what I like about writing music—not knowing and being able to let go of something so that it does assume a life of its own. However, I guess I’ve found working with visual artists or artists who are not so involved in contemporary music, or sometimes any music, what happens is that because my background is music, I become the authority on the music. So I work at it with varying degrees of success.

KG When you go back to Japan and perform Ricefields, it completes itself in a way. Do you have any long term projects in mind?

DY The next project, which has grown out of Ricefields, is called Maps. It’s also grown out of the Aarhus Visionlines Conference (1999). You’ll remember Julianna Hedkisson.

DY The English woman who was composing in Denmark.

DY Maps is a collaboration between Julianna and myself and Keiko Harada who lives in Tokyo. Keiko and Julianna and I also met in Japan originally, several years ago. So Maps is a fairly simple project in some ways. It’s a cycle of 3 works, one by the other, but for an ensemble made up of 2 musicians from each country. We’re looking at issues of cartography, representation, distance. Keiko will be working with a writer in Japan, Julianna will be working with a set designer and I’ll be working with a film projectionist in Melbourne. So while it has a strong conceptual core and the ensemble will be the same, there are these other preogs as well. I think it will happen first in Melbourne next year and then it will almost certainly go to Tokyo and then Denmark.

Aphids Events Inc 1999: Curtulious, an evening of dance, food and drink, music, folk dance & film projection with guest composer Yu Wakuho from Hiroshima University; Lithuanian House, Errol St, North Melbourne, 11 June, 8pm.

Radio 1: Samuel Beckett’s Radio 1 and Richard Hughes’s (Netherfield), whose number is 23 and kills in an unnatural fashion, plus John Cage compositions. North Melbourne Town Hall, July 22, 8pm. Aphids Events Tel 03 9128 2249 aphids@bigfoot.com

David Young spoke at the Visio,1lines conference, Aarhus Festival, Denmark 1998. His panel contribution is reported on the RealTime website:

http://www.rtimearts.com/-open icy/
Old, new, borrowed, blue

Gretchen Miller and Kaye Morley discuss The Wedding Photo workshop

The Wedding Photo workshop turned out to be a marriage of several varieties. First there were the 7 ABC and non-ABC radio producers, performers, students and sound engineers brought together by ABC Radio Audio Arms—any of whom married these different roles in their individual practices. Then there was Kaye Morley, winner of the 1998 Prix Europa and an Australian radio-maker now living in Paris, who joined us for the 2 weeks it, if not holy, then certainly a matter of mining, and who also functioned as a kind of celebrant, guiding the process. The offering was a project which itself married different styles, forms and voices, to create an album of aural images. But okay, enough of the corny wedding puns.

The workshop began with nothing but an idea. "The wedding photo, it's an idea," Morley says. "It's what resonates around the idea. I think it's interesting to work with constraints. If you choose a visual idea then the constraint is in-built, because you have to find some way of expressing it in sound, you have to find some way of translating the visual into an aural equivalent."

We had no pre-recorded material, no structure, no conclusion to come to (except the hope of producing a program), no radiophonic grammar. Morley says this is the way a project always starts for her: "I do start always with nothing, but sometimes it's less 'nothing' than what we started with in the workshop)—because we started just with the subject. There was no sound material, no aural material to go with it. But...I never have more than an idea. Even if I knew where I can get and go get the recordings it's just an idea. Afterwards I think the sort of material you have dictates the structure and it's rather hard to explain this. I suppose you can do anything with anything, but it's not entirely desirable. What you have to do is feel something. It can't just be a 'vocal'. But you've got and then find a structure which is appropriate."

Yes, the recordings. As with almost all weddings, there is always a guest whom you'd rather not invite. In this case it was ourselves. In the first week we recorded, more and less successfully, a series of discussions. In groups of 2 or 3, or all of us together around a few microphones, already creating a kind of pre-mix. It's also a way of getting everyone to work together...it was a way of making sure everyone was participating in the project on some level," Morley says.

We talked about the things we had brought to give us a springboard—something new, old, borrowed and blue. We talked about our roots to the material, what it meant to each of us. We discussed wedding photographs we found in books, magazines. We often felt uncomfortable, the microphones pointed in our direction. Some of us may have been married, but none of us were 'experts'. We didn't want to be so overly the voices of authority, of universalism, too many of the radio makers. We listened back to the tapes, begged to be spliced out, had fun of bridal pose. We were happier out chasing frocks, flowers, cakes, photographers. Kaye understood.

"I like location recordings better than anything else you see," she says. "And for me the sound of whatever it is comes before the discourse, whatever the discourse might be. And then the sound plus the discourse dictates the structure. So in the case of the material I didn't have any sound, in particular, you were the sound, the people in the workshop were the sound. I wasn't getting my own voice and your words and ideas be treated as sound, to be composed and recomposed."

We had to realise we were material in ourselves. This we resisted, particularly in the first week. But Kaye gently made us listen, and hear. From our eyes to the material itself. And then helped us to find a way of positioning our material in relation to the verité interviews and sound worlds. A long lesson, and a hard one. There's something about an entire programme being about ourselves and our voices and utterances. And finally, a fondness for the characters we had become.

Kaye rarely includes her own voice in her programs. "Sometimes I feel I have nothing to say, by writing to the subject, even though I feel it very much a part of my own writing, but in the way she generates material other than location recordings. For Ori Naros, she had been holidaying on the Greek island and made some casual location recordings which were especially happy work. She'd been so happy that, great because I recorded them with small, light equipment and not a grandiose microphone, and I remembered that you should have that small microphone in the bottom of your beach bag. Every time I saw something nice it was like taking out a camera."

Material is generated in other ways. "I got someone to translate the songs from the island...they're very peculiar love songs, called from one island to the next, or one village to the next. This gave me the idea of getting out a bundle of old postcards and writing a collaged one, line drawn from each postcard. Then I had an idea of asking these male writers, friends, but they all to be male, just to write a card as from Naos. And I was not generating material purely because it seemed to me the aural material I had wasn't dense enough to make anything moving with."

Finding the gems, letting go of recordings which you love but don't work—"killing your babies." In the workshop we had to let go of favourite recordings—the Chinese wedding photographer who was so charming in person, so full of a unique energy and enthusiasm, but who became meaningless when recorded and played out of context. The flower shop owner who gave us flashes of inspiration but had a way of speaking which did not sound so good on tape. And we had to let the sparkle in our own material, where it existed.

Rather than wait for inspiration, or enter into one of the detailed discussion about where we were going, what we were making, we began recording straight away. From seemingly randomly gathered material, occasionally we saw a form emerge, and strongly, in a way that we might not have, working as individuals. The subject of the photographs was taking on a life of its own, the "7 producers" are a particular kind of nightmare, with each pulling in different directions, in some ways the situation allowed original material to come in its own influence and come through more clearly.

"You have to find what to do with it; the way in which you can use it," says Morley, who mostly uses a mixture of recorded sound (including interviews) and especially written texts, or texts which have been written for the work. "But I have done a certain number of programs in which there was no text at all, so it..."
Scalng dangerous peaks
Michael Morley is moved by a new CD of Eisler's Hollywood Songbook
On his recent CD of songs to lyrics by the late Woody Guthrie, alongside numbers suggesting Christ for President and invoking the memory of Igor Bergman, Billy Bragg also includes one entitled Eisler on the Go. While one suspects that this piece will probably fall flat without a gloss on the name for most of his audience at the live concert, the title can be seen as more apt now than, say, a decade ago.

For, coinciding with the hundredth anniversary in 1998 of his birth, Eisler's name and music are more familiar currency than they have been in 30 years. Re-issues of CD's of Ufa previously available in the GDR have been matched by new recordings of his German Symphony, other orchestral and chamber works, and a striking compilation from Ensemble Tern, (02) 5247 4677: Gruber, of orchestral suites and songs to orchestral accompaniment. However, even allowing for the quality of the first and last named of these discs, this recent collection of Eisler songs from 1942-43 represents not only a highlight in the recorded Eisler repertoire, but quite simply some of the finest, most penetrating and moving Leader singing I have heard in over a decade.

Bartokian Matthaeus Goeme, though still young, sings with the intelligence and sensitivity to every shift and nuance of text and music. It's a way of associating things which cannot really be transcribed, that's why I speak of a language - you can write things down on a page but it's not what is written on the tape.

In the photograph they look in different directions. They are standing out of doors; the groom is hidden behind the best man, the bride's umble is too broad to be holding, her bouquet is crooked. The marriage has taken place and a radio program is born. And everybody has had a good time, when all is "done."

Gretchen Miller was one of the participants in The Wedding Photo workshop last December, alongside Russell Stetson, Sherre De Lls, Sophia Lerner, Lucia Barona, Kate Bochner, brave Clough and sound engineer Adam Choulson: The Wedding Photo will be broadcast again in August on Radio Eye, Kaye Morley's Exodo will be presented in the Listening Room on June 7.

The Wedding Photo continued
"I think each producer has his own grammar of radio which involves associating sound and silence and text and music. It's a way of associating things which cannot really be transcribed, that's why I speak of a language - you can write things down on a page but it's not what is written on the tape."

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Never quite the same again
Jim Denley inspired by Australian on CD

music: igma 003
siggmad@sbnet.net

Amsbach/Amsba
The Alter Rebbe's Nigun Tracks 7311

Ten new releases from Sydney musicians both recorded in 1998 that are so different in style, substance and meaning that you wonder what time/space and its implications on music are. One is just for itself, to have no attached context, the other is so full of cultural baggage that you feel in other less skillful and less knowledgable hands it would have crashed into a sea of pompous p

The mini CD is entirely of loops that subtly weave and overlap around each other to create groove/atomosphere that are strangely song form, at imbued with soft focus tonalities. The last track "V111" is the only one where this tendency is clearly defined (there is a hint also of a voice over the groove), and it's over with as soon as its begun, no boring endless recapsilation here. This is thing, the thing that delights me most about this music is its playfulnes with duration. Just as you settle into the obvious, it ev olts. The grooves have metric solidity but they aren't nornal or obvious. The only track with any direct involving assablity is dance is track 6, "111", but in out (minutes) it's really a rhythmic for a beathing warren of distant electronic snorts and snuffles. There is often ambiguity and polyrhythmically as the loops move and transform and mutate. The sonic material is carefully and astutely chosen (there are lots of reversed sounds density treated), so that nothing is recognizable as much is vaguely and beautifully familiar. Traditional, Track 4, "EV11", includes some distant chattering electronic bell birds that have moved out t the window except in the real corroborations that were joining in on my Sydney. Sunday morning. Track 3, 1DX, which has sounds that suggest what a "I, Oldenburg" garment might sound like. You can't say this music is abstract, but its sonic origes and implications are more ambiguous. Like a cover art and track titles this work stands outside of any implied content or meaning.

The purity, gentleness warmth and roundness of the recorded music is extraordinary. This is electronic with no hard edges, gently massaging your listening with trance tracks that are rich in detail and stimulating in a non-cerebral way. While the vocal line is mostly treated with echo and delay.

The Alter Rebbe’s Nigun (on John Zorn us US label Tzadik) could be very different. Content and meaning is what this document is all about. I wouldn’t begin to believe that understanding and appreciating the implications on this CD, but it is imbued with such richness and seriousness of purpose that what is created by the musicians is power. I can only begin to want what this power conjures or implies, but that shifting to:

Amsbach and Amsbach play a rich palette of instruments to create "a world", or tracks, "Amsbach", "Beran" and "Abat" on this CD. But at the heart of everything is their distinctive and accomplished keyboard and guitar playing. In the opening track "Akpoy", the opening of "Abat", the opening track "Akpoy" Action starts with Rabbi Shneuer Zalman of Liad’s (the Alter Rebbe) melody from the 18th century fiercely beautifully but ominously on vibraphone and guitar. The Alter Rebbe was apparently the founder of the Chabad philosophical system. After 3 minutes it dives into a hyper-energy, free jazz guitar and drum improv, imbued with melody, which at 6 minutes extends further into wilder, noise-like territory, the opening of "Abat" is a mystical melody at the end. This is an extraordinary fusion of free jazz with Jewish religious composition, the like of which has never been heard. Len notes explain that here “the spiritual actually interacts with the physical realm, bringing into the continuum of the four worlds to its intended fulfillment.”

Track 2, "Abat" - Formation, starts subdued but quickly assumes the same level of drama, with crashing gongs, screening double reed instruments and huge drums, that enter once and leave. Lilt is an eerie slow guitar melody. Track 3, "Beran" - Creation. Back come the reed instruments, multi-tracked with what sounds like two musicians in a double drum kit duet. Scratched gongs and bass brass and string drones take over and "Abat" returns. This is a real rhythmic for a beathing warren of distant electronic snorts and snuffles. There is often ambiguity and polyrhythmically as the loops move and transform and mutate. The sonic material is carefully and astutely chosen (there are lots of reversed sounds density treated), so that nothing is recognizable as much is vaguely and beautifully familiar. Traditional, Track 4, "EV11", includes some distant chattering electronic bell birds that have moved out t the window except in the real corroborations that were joining in on my Sydney. Sunday morning. Track 3, 1DX, which has sounds that suggest what a "I, Oldenburg" garment might sound like. You can’t say this music is abstract, but its sonic origes and implications are more ambiguous. Like a cover art and track titles this work stands outside of any implied content or meaning.

The purity, gentleness warmth and roundness of the recorded music is extraordinary. This is electronic with no hard edges, gently massaging your listening with trance tracks that are rich in detail and stimulating in a non-cerebral way. While the vocal line is mostly treated with echo and delay.

This review originally appeared in the London Musicians Collective magazine Resonance and is reproduced with thanks.

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For further information contact Clara Gari, email clclois@intercom.es

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