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Cindy Sherman Retrospective, MCA Sydney

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 70s 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

SPORT

TOOTH & CLAW

With Jack Rufus

The Cricket World Cup being played in England calls itself "one of the world's great sporting events." But beneath all the usual hype, what do we have? A total of 12 teams to pad out the schedule, and making up the numbers are those well-known cricketing powers Kenya, Bangladesh and Scotland.

Scotland?! Not known as a mighty cricket nation, the Scots may yet surprise us. Using cabers instead of bats could give them an advantage. They can be relied upon to give England a tough time, especially if they're allowed to paint their faces blue. Field a W Wallace or two, stage a pitch invasion, terrify the English with a unison lifting of the kilt—and we have the makings of an upset.

But if Scotland are in the World Cup, what of the other cricketing minnows? Why not Finland? Or Luxembourg? Why not the playboys of Monaco to add some class? And what of the neglected citizens of the world's cooler regions? Surely a combined team from the Arctic and Antarctic should be there, competing with bats carved from ice. Of course they'd score most of their runs at the beginning of the innings, and they may wilt in the summer sun, but wouldn't the crowds love them? Come on, you men of ice!

TEE OFF

with Vivienne Inch

Teeing 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 rucks and he doesn't mind where he poaches them. He had just told a group of spindly youths at the Launceston Basketball 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 ruckwork sound 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 Cilauro doing his first culture 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 in 1959 to work as a foreign correspondent, but retained his citizenship and presumably a passion for his erstwhile home 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*
See advertisement page 43

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Editorial

Struck down by the GST?

On that fateful day, Friday May 28, 1999, a GST deal was struck between the Howard 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 well declare *RealTime* a basic food. And aren't we? Infuritatingly there was nil 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 mad to read a review, fumbled 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 a10% 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 major organisations did try in a quickly formed coalition—but to vague effect. 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 sad that the GST had to finally come to Australia. It felt really distinctive *not* to have one. It felt right to work at tax reform, to look intelligently at the relative worth of things, of tax in terms of social justice, without applying a simple-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 touting 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 Natrass' 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, millenial fireworks and spectacle, gushing and hubbub. She asks of her audience a willingness to embrace new works, and to not worry about that word 'new'–"would we recognise it if we saw it? You will see," she writes, "even in the first few items we preview here that almost all of them take something old as their beginning, and develop the new work from that antique core, providing plenty of room for reflection, plenty of scope for inspiration." It's not easy to think of the contemporary arts as contemplative—though there's no doubt that the hard edges of musical modernism have been rounded and romanticised in recent years, the figurative has made a wobbly comeback, text is in and narrative is manifest in many a new way, and the spiritual is okay. And it's perfectably reasonable to ask for a contemplative response to contemporary work as we round the millenial corner.

...and keep cool about the New

For Archer's festival, filmmaker and artist Peter Greenaway and marvellous Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, with the Netherlands Opera, will present their opera *Writing to Vermeer*. There'll be a Greenaway film retrospectrive, including a video showing of the earlier Greenaway-Andriessen collaboration, *Rosa*. The UK's Wrestling School and Adelaide's Brink Productions will co-produce Howard Barker's 6 and a half hour *The Ecstatic Bible*. Nigel Jamieson, Indonesia's I Wayan Wija, Reg Mombassa, Paul Grabowsky and his Australian Art Orchestra, and UK virtuoso designer for theatre Julian Crouch will collaborate on *The Theft of Sita*, a contemporary version of the *Ramayana* using traditional puppetry and computer animation. This is the first of a number of works yet to be announced that will celebrate Australian music theatre and which signal some challenging and potent collaborations. Also in the program will be the ceremonial opening on March 4 of the New Aboriginal Cultures Gallery which will show much of the unseen collection of the SA Museum. Next door, in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Brenda Croft will curate *Beyond the Pale*, the 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art "dedicated entirely to contemporary Indigenous art." Beyond the 'arts mile', the 2000 festival will spread to regional South Australia with a program to be announced in October. The 2000 Adelaide Festival could involve not only some considerable, imaginative journeys and cross-cultural forays, but some real travelling too. Roll on 2000.

Contents

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 sit like that obedient dog by the loud speaker cone, salivating to the tinkle of the news—responding to the aural massage, but unable to howl 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 pedagogical instrument of the state, but it still can. The problem with the coverage of the Balkan War is that the medium can't edit the message into an appropriate entertainment genre. The Gulf War was video sci-fi western, where the Rebel Alliance's advanced X-wing fighters destroyed the Death Star of the Bad Dad of Baghdad. It wasn't a moral victory, but at least the genre was clear, the titles were punchy, the promos were hyped, the action edits seamless and the narrative smooth and predictable.

The actions in Kosovo and Serbia have no clear tele-visual genre and no classic narrative structure. No wonder 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 loathe we are to admit this. NATO's problem is that there is nothing else for them to direct mainstream TV 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/US/9904/15/clinton.kosovo/index.html*).

This "chat war" has no characters, no narrative, no heroes and no resolutions. It is an obscene simulation of a simulated war. The real action takes place telemetrically. The repetitive montage of misery cannot be packaged into lounge-room melodrama without the introduction of a new script. NATO must be desperate to drop the *Dumb 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 cheesy stand-up routine of homilies and endless denials. The repetition routine is effective, but not convincing. It has normalised NATO's criminal activities by concentrating on the *Footy Show* genre with logistics, video replays and scores. While ignoring the human, cultural, ecological and economic tragedy. It has indoctrinated and censored by reiteration, omission and obfuscation. The explanation for the bombing of the Chinese embassy went through some 12 different, conflicting versions ("The Chinese Embassy Bombing", Michel Chossudovsky, *http://www.egroups.com/list/russian_politics/*). 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 have attacked a country with developed communication strategies and McDonalds restaurants. There is no longer a reliance on television for visuals and 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 getting authoritative, sanitised, official impressions of what was going on," Paul Tooher of Global Beat Syndicate said. "The Web gives you the ability 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://cnn.com/SPECIALS/1998/10/kosovo/kosovo.on.the.net/*).

This is a war about propaganda, info freedom, speed and reach. It is about a new media literacy and, as B92 demand, "believe no one!" And no one does, especially not the mainstream media. This is a cyber war where electronic chat is always far 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 words 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 that Western "communication guerrillas" couldn't even have dared to think about (roya*jakoby, 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 heady 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're bombing Serbia destroying the infrastructure. In a year or two, they will start rebuilding their country. They will need roads, bridges, buildings, toilets and telecommunications equipment. 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 have no chance getting their advertisements into Serbia. With SERBAD they just drop from the sky. You'll own that market soon!
http://www.zmag.org/ZNETTOPnoanimation.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 unthinkable to counter a crime against humanity with a crime against civilisation. As Albert Einstein said, "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding." Serbians bombed the beautiful city of Dubrovnik 7 years ago. NATO is now bombing Serbia 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 want to "demoralise and degrade" Serbs 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 has nothing to do with 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 slumber of deferral and silence. We are addressed as a global community that is addicted to information but is only slowly sobering to the need to establish a transnational force that will keep the bastards honest. Because we don't get to see the naked contours of world geo-politics so clearly except when this kind of thing happens.

There is always less freedom where apparently it is meant to be plentiful. The internet is a primary source of free information and global dissemination that is still available to the Yugoslavs although it may be monitored by the authorities. But the US government Loral Orion 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 'collateral damage.' The internet has done untold harm to NATO's credibility *http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/kosovo.htm* (especially Chomsky's articles), and Serbian nationalism *http://www.newdawnmagazine.com.au/yugoslavia.htm*. It has provided Kosovo-Albanians with a voice *http://www.alb-net.com/* and has supported countless vigorously engaged discussion zones *http://www.nettime.org*.

However, it has also ignited a netiquette 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, but this 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 announce this over your web. 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...

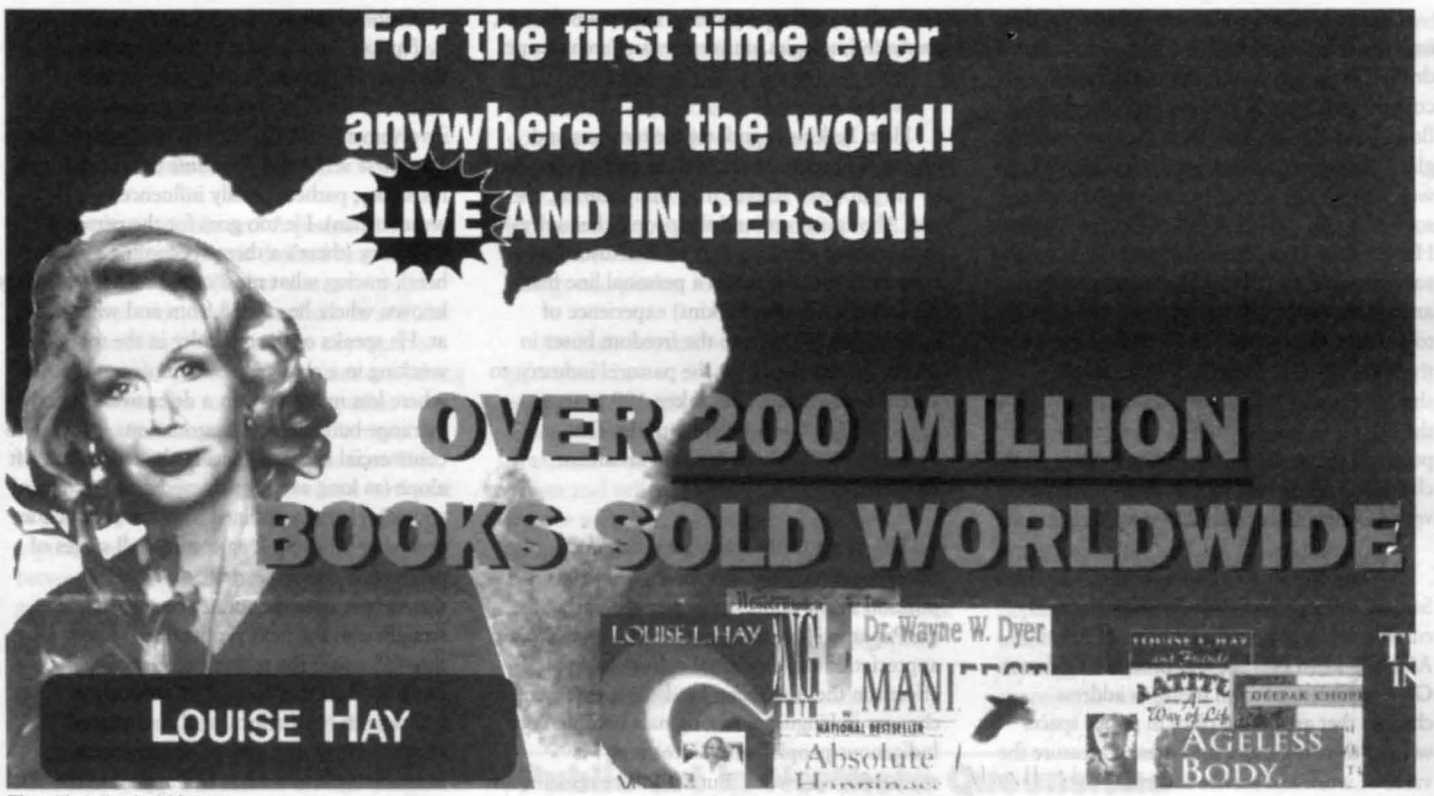
Kathryn Millard tries for Metaphysical Mastery at the Sydney Entertainment Centre

Green and purple lights begin sweeping the stage. The taped celestial choir goes up a notch or two. Ladies and gentlemen, the Queen of Affirmations, Louise Hay! A grandmotherly woman in a loose fitting gold pants suit, Louise, takes the stage. She stands, looking out at the audience who give her, author of the best selling *You Can Heal Your Life* and other tomes of the self-help movement, a rock star's welcome.

It's Sunday morning at Sydney's Entertainment Centre. In my $145 seat towards the back of the stadium (ticket prices range from $145 to several thousand dollars) I go through the contents of my *Metaphysical Mastery* showbag; lots of leaflets and advertisements, but not even so much as a sample of herbal tea. Disappointing, really. Earlier, during a spiel from the show's promoters, Sales Pursuit, we were encouraged to take advantage of the special discounts available on the "product", the books, tapes and videos featuring the day's teachers. Then we were all asked to take the appropriate leaflet from our sample bags and follow line by line as the Special Offers were read out. To my amazement, the entire 10,000 strong audience did reach for their Special Offers leaflets. The woman seated next to me thoughtfully located mine, since I didn't seem to have grasped the requirements. "Thanks", I offered weakly. This took me back to Grade One, 1962, when Mrs Worshon taught our class about "silent reading."

Feng shui enthusiast Terah Collins then appeared as the warm up act. Terah shared her story with the audience. Only 10 years ago, miserable and in an unhappy marriage, she was dragged along to a lecture on the totally weird subject of feng shui. A decade later, she has met and married her soul mate, written best selling books, released audio and video tapes and become the director of the Western School of Feng Shui in San Diego. There is copious applause from the audience at the list of Tara's accomplishments. And, no, Tara is no longer miserable, she is excited, she tells us, sharing her philosophy that life is basically a garage sale. Let go of what you don't want and the universe will give you what you need. So clean out your cupboards now. Don't delay. Because every house has a Prosperity Centre. And you never know where yours might be. This stuff is weird but simple, Terah says.

Back on stage, there is silence as Louise still stands, looking out. Finally, she asks for the house lights to be raised so that she can see us all. And begins speaking in soft, husky tones that demand our attention. She kicks off with a joke. Sort of. She has tried Terah Collin's feng shui and it works. Yes, Louise cleaned out the garage and what do you know? A Rolls Royce found its way in there. The audience love this. "Good on you, Louise", "We love you, Louise", the middle aged women shout. Louise changes tone now. Sincere, serious. Though that simple word does keep cropping up. "I am a very simple lady with a very simple message. Love yourself." Louise, too, 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 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.



Flyer, Metaphysical Mastery

And so the day went on. We heard how Wayne Dyer overcame having an alcoholic deserter bum of a father. How he had finally triumphed over his bitterness and negative energy to prosper as a psychologist and best selling author. His first book, we're told, sold 50 million copies. Modestly describing himself as a guru, Dyer peppered his talk with references to fellow luminaries like Shakespeare, Blake, Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

Sociologists call events like *Metaphysical Mastery* "Large Group Awareness Training." At places like shopping malls and entertainment centres, the languages of pop psychology, religion and sales collide. Though, since the 1960s, such programs have increasingly drawn on Eastern philosophies and religions, the United States has a strong tradition of these God's Salesmen with their step-by-step programs to successful living; from Norman Vincent Peale to the Forum, from Dale Carnegie to Louise Hay. The predominant performance styles of events like *Metaphysical Mastery* are drawn from religious movements; from the chants and meditations of Buddhists to the testimonials and witnessing of evangelical Christians. And the spiels of travelling salesmen demonstrating their wares; from vacuum cleaners to brushes and encyclopaedia.

Metaphysical Mastery featured 7 speakers, many of them well known on the New Age/pop psychology lecture circuit which seems to exist primarily to promote their books. Deepak Chopra, author of *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, told us how the born again "wild man of rock" Jimmy Barnes has turned from "spirits to spirits" since his participation in Deepak's own *Spirit Of Seduction* week long adventure in India. (Tickets for the Australian gig on sale during the "potty break" for only $4,000 per person plus accommodation and air fares. I don't think that even Mrs. Worshon referred to our recess times as "potty breaks.") Jimmy performed *I'm Still On Your Side*, his intense vocals strangely out of place in this environment. As if some genuine emotion had accidentally broken through. Or perhaps I've just got a soft spot for the working class boy from Elizabeth made good. Jimmy returned Deepak's compliment, introducing him as the "Man With The Plan." Deepak's own testimony about the abundance that had come into his life involved stories about conversations over breakfast at first class hotels 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 *Celestine Prophecy* and *Celestine 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 where we massaged our neighbours' shoulders and backs. By now, early evening, exhausted audience members began sharing around their Maltesers and Cadburys. Around 8pm most of us went home. A few enthusiasts stayed behind to get their books autographed.

Thinking back on the day's events, I'm most surprised by the authoritarian, school-teacherly approach. It was a bit like playing "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 scriptwriting 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 shed's still empty, material wealth is yet to drive in; but I'll keep you posted.)

Metaphysical Mastery 1999, *Terah Collins, Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer, Michael Rowland, James and Sally Redfield, Deepak Chopra, Sydney Entertainment Centre, March 28.*
Metaphysical Mastery II, *Stuart Wilde, Paul Wilson, Sandra Cabot, Charles Kovess, Brandon Bays: tours nationally in July.*

Kathryn Millard is a screenwriter and director. She is currently developing a feature screenplay Step Up *with the assistance of a Writer's Fellowship from the NSW Film and Television Office.*

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 lewd joke.) He orders a drink. He suavely 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, chatting. What's weird about this scene? In a triumph for the rock star ego, the bar is full of George Michaels. Hundreds of Him, dressed identically in swisho suit, 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, shmooze, order from, party with, himself. (Even the DJ is a George.) Can you imagine the potential. Soon we will have films where all the 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 Hetti Perkins, and Emeritus Professor Gill Bottomley; 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 speaks of watching TV in Thatcherite 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 art (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 meant a shift in position in the public sphere. In the early 80s, the Papanya "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 more a whitefella issue, based on secrecy and shoddy dealers.)

Cultural cringe

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 *Bargearse* serial and *Frontline* (who can forget his smiley, pathetic, easily influenced weatherman). He too goes 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 meant 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* doco—but how does this control of production translate to both critical and commercial success? How, as a group, do they seem to instinctively 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 sit 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, such 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 constraints (be market driven and developed accordingly) is the preponderence of 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 panelists was their use of the personal narrative; (later criticised by 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 telling stories to each other. In a postmodern world, the idea of the public has been renegotiated to such an extent that even within the margins differences are recognised and celebrated. McKenzie Wark argues that as women have entered the workforce and become independent, they have changed the terms of 'publicness', brought the private (domestic) domain into the public world: "It's not some special essence of 'woman' that women bring to public life, but particular capacities to speak about what arises from their everyday lives." (Wark, *Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1999). Nikos Papastergiadis comments that "art makes its own audience" so perhaps we should be talking about diversification rather than disappearance. Yet, all panelists 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.

Hosing down the sidewalks

Gill Bottomley (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, she 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 *think* is going on (the 50s). She spoke of the sociological impact of increasing globalisation and economic rationalism, the Anglo fixation on individualism in the States, which has resulted in competence being used as criteria for everything; unemployed people on the streets seen as born losers (by birth/social class), hosed off the sidewalks, not belonging even in the gutter. In an Australia where "mind your own business" is becoming the dominant mindset/accounting software, Bottomley 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 publics 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 Forums, chaired by Nikos Papastergiadis; Ana Kokkinos, Santo Cilauro, Hetti Perkins, Emeritus Professor Gill Bottomley, Artspace, Sydney, April 27

There are 2 further forums. May 25: Dr Scott McQuire, Professor Ien Ang, John Hughes, Ivor Indyk; June 29: Juan Davila, Professor Leon Van Schaik, Peter Emett, Professor Paul Patton. Enquiries, Artspace, tel 02 9368 1899.

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next wave festival

The City in performance in development:

Alex Hutchinson and Clare Stewart follow the development of new works for Next Wave 2000

RealTime and Next Wave jointly commissioned the writers to talk to the artists and to attend rehearsals and presentations of 4 festival works-in-progress.

Alex Hutchinson:
Adam Broinowski's *Hotel Obsino* and Geoffery Dunstan & Kate Fryer's *Projections of Fear*

A description of the promo for inVISIBLE energies. A single piece of coloured cardboard, the promo is surprisingly subdued for a youth-related project. It avoids both the spastic application of Photoshop and any of the usual painfully deliberate misspellings which so often haunt similar projects.

A Biography of Adam Broinowski. As a performer Broinowski has worked for many companies, including Stalker (*Blood Vessel*) and Playbox (*Thieving Boy/Like Stars in My Hands*) for which he received the 1997 Green Room Award for best lead actor. Work as a devisor/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 his play. More on that later.

What is Hotel Obsino? *Hotel Obsino* is a play based on the real-life Hotel Hotham which squats in the heart of the city on the corner of Flinders and Spencer below a 5 lane train track beside the Yarra at its most effluent opposite Crown Casino and an active police station. The Kennett government wants to demolish it. Broinowski wants to write a play about it.

Where Hotel Obsino *is at about a month before the work-in-progress presentation at the North Melbourne Town Hall which takes place about a year before the final presentation in May 2000 at the real-life 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 Geoffery 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 Geoffery Dunstan. Geoffery Dunstan isn't certain why he's talking to me at all. It's a work-in-progress, he says, and the article will come out after the presentation. What is this publicity actually doing? I tell him it's all about process, about giving people a 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 Projections of Fear? For a start, it might not be called *Projections 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 theatre and circus, and how there are groups on both sides who'd like to keep it that way.

Geoffrey Dunstan, Kate Fryer & Rudi Mineur in *Risk Reduction* — Angela Bailey

Where Projections of Fear *is at about a month before the work-in-progress presentation...* Dunstan has just finished a week talking story with his navigator, playwright and director Michael Gow. He says he wants to find a way to create a more physical type of theatre while still hanging on to a sense of narrative. He wants to physically express ideas of social dislocation and try and uncover who it is that the city trains us to be. "Look at kids. From day one they're taught that everything is terrifying. If people want to contain themselves, that's fine, but when society does it..."

A note about Navigators. Each of the groups is assisted by a navigator. For Broinowski, this is filmmaker Tony Ayres. For Dunstan and Fryer, this is Michael Gow. Their roles vary. To Broinowski, Ayres is somebody to discuss the play with. For Dunstan, Gow takes a more active role. It's his job to thread a story through Dunstan and Fryer's acrobatics.

What's so fascinating about process? It's a question posed in various ways by both parties. Says Broinowski "Looking at another's 'process' or the workings/mechanics of something fascinates people. Revealing things, uncovering things, showing the making of things, deconstructing things, pulling things apart." Maybe it's the next step along from selling productions by pushing the story of the author not the story itself. Now we can sell the story of how the production was put together. Maybe soon we won't even need a final product.

Where Hotel Obsino *is at a few weeks later.* Broinowski's biggest problem is finding a way to convey the essence of the finished play in a reading. While the final production will be fleshed out with movement, the performance at the Town Hall will be static. "I'm torn between linking the passages with summaries of what would happen there, and just telling stories about the 10 days I spent in the hotel." Perhaps the most interesting point Broinowski raises is that before he went to the hotel it seemed to him as though the occupants really lived, "unconcerned with careers etc because that had been taken away from them. But afterward, I realised that it was a world I could never be a part of."

Why show a work-in-progress at all? Broinowski: "In relation to *Hotel Obsino*, it seems to be very democratic to show a first draft to an audience and to listen to their responses. It gives the maker a feel for what they feel, gives the audience an option to voice an opinion before the work is done and brings a wider opinion than just the maker into the making. Anti-auteur I guess you could say."

Where Projections of Fear *is at a few weeks later.* The preparation for *Projections of Fear* has been cut into 3 parts. The first involved Michael Gow and Dunstan sitting in cafes for a week, getting down 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 Rudi Mineur working at Circus Oz, 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 Broinoswki the morning of the presentation. "[Hotel Obsino] is still about poverty and fear in Australia, and the invisible distance between the classes—you could still say Alice in Deroland but less overtly '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 Description of the North Melbourne Town Hall. A high-ceilinged, wood-floored, typical inner suburban town hall. Not quite a lecture theatre, not quite a stage. All the chairs are portable. The stage curtains are heavy and sea green. There is a kind of Juliet balcony jutting out from the back wall. Dips and cheap red are served at every interval. Thankfully there are no gym mats.

An interesting but mostly irrelevant tidbit about Michael Gow. His greatest fear is becoming an artistic dinosaur.

What the canary yellow photocopied flyer says about Hotel Obsino. Apparently Broinowski is confirming a "present day underclass of political zealots, junkies and assorted dispossessed souls" and has "taken these authentic voices and is interested in moving their stories beyond documentary into his own work of drama."

What the canary yellow photocopied flyer says about what probably won't be called Projections of Fear. "Fully integrating acrobatic and aerial work with a narrative", *Projections of Fear* explores how "fear affects the way youth relate to society and how the city space informs these fears."

Hotel Obsino. Filled with foul mouthed fuck-ups and presented in a series of vignettes, *Hotel Obsino* is dominated by religion, pornography, requests for cigarettes and a character called Nigel. Nigel moves through the work as a kind of initiate, progressing from wide-eyed novice to the point where he begins to take on the strange and wayward logic of the hotel.

More a portrait than a deconstruction, Broinowski pulls out some of the filthiest (and funniest) caricatures of various pieces of human flotsam you're likely to see. The scariest thing is they were probably not caricatures at all.

The reading by Ruth Bauer, Katia Molino, Ross Thompson and Broinowski is loud, heavily accented and pretty damn good. Although Broinowski says that "the next draft will focus less on the words and more on the theatricality of the events in the play", there's already enough there to get your teeth into.

Projections of Fear. For the first half hour Michael Gow summarises the sad, pathetic tale of Country Boy and his unhappy (and sometimes imaginary) relationships with Hitch and Mr Muscle. Using physical confinement to symbolise the emotional and intellectual constraints imposed upon Country Boy by the city, Gow describes an attempt to act out acrobatically a very intellectual deconstruction of the role of society in shaping our personal phobias.

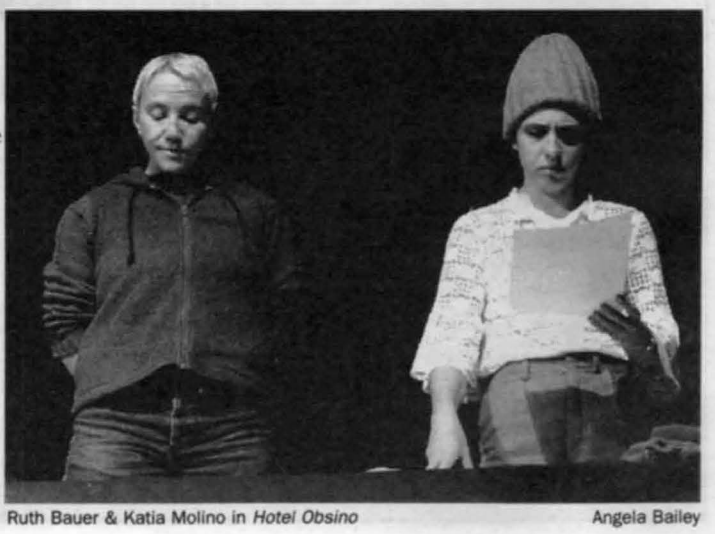
In the physical section of the performance, Country Boy is forced to board a vertical tram after his car breaks down by standing on Mineur's shoulders. Hitch boards by standing on his. In a nice touch, the rope hanging from the ceiling has 3 real tram hand straps attached. He has elaborate fantasy sex on a photocopy machine and flees an enraged human-sized cockroach. All the while Mr Muscle attempts to protect him from the dangers of germs, bugs and contact with other human beings.

Heavy on the acrobatics and light on the dialogue, it's a high-energy display of (mostly) non-verbal ideas, and it works. The tiny snippets of dialogue reinforce the acrobatics and better still, the acrobatics actually contribute to the story. Although the performance will likely change before it's finished, there's already a lot to be excited about.

A Post-Coital Moment. Afterward Broinowski complains that the audience didn't talk about the content of the work. All the criticism and suggestion was aimed at the structure and form of the piece. I say maybe this is an extension of people's fascination with process. Maybe because it's a work-in-progress presentation the audience feels like it's on the inside. They all think they're editors. Fuck that, he says. Did they like it?

A bizarre objection recounted to me by a strange woman in a kaftan after Hotel Obsino. Apparently somebody had left the Town Hall with the following complaint: It just hadn't been what they expected at all. They wanted a more obviously *youth* production, more verve, and apparently a much shoddier production. Quality and a decent story weren't in keeping with the work of people under the age of 35. Apparently.

What You Should Take Away from this Article. There are 2 points I want to emphasise. One: The productions I saw were great pieces which just happened to be put together by young people, not young people's work being sponsored merely *because* they were young. And two: There's a long way to go to May 2000, but please try and remember.



Ruth Bauer & Katia Molino in *Hotel Obsino* — Angela Bailey

Next Wave's *inVISIBLE energies*

next wave festival

Clare Stewart: *Innate* and *City Blood*

This is the way the Concept-city 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.

Michel de Certeau, trans. Steven Rendell, *The Practice of Everyday Life* University of California Press, 1984

Let me get this perpendicular: I am a grid girl. I choose a cartesian lifestyle because it satisfies certain fundamental requirements: it keeps me centred. 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 G7—is all people really need to think they know me. Leaving Melbourne's CBD, I experience an immediate sense of vertigo. Taking the No. 57 seven stops to North Melbourne Town Hall for this series of works in progress makes me nervous, disoriented.

The city (its true name) is the topography of my imagination: I live its everydayness and love it as Ideal. In my laneway 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 laneway 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 Priestly share this sense of citizenship. It is manifest in *Innate* and *City Blood*, their respective works for *inVISIBLE energies*, the city in performance in development. Sacchero's movement work and Priestly'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 backdrop, it is not locale—it is the fabric of the work. Sacchero's collaborative vision and Priestly's individual noise do not mess with ideas of utopic or dystopic cities: they put forth clear, valid, interpretations of the city as it is experienced.

Viviana Sacchero's *Innate*

"In approaching the curatorial brief of 'the city', I wanted to address the pervading sense of things ending—virally, 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. The young people on this project have their projections, memories and desires for the future. Dance culture and raves create a very exciting time for movement.

"*Innate* gives form to the city as a battery of design, icons and iconography and rhythm. It's about the imprinting of culture, of thoughts and projections, walking, space, medic forms of communication, the ebb and flow of the city, and the idea that the city turns over." Collaboration is central to the development of *Innate*. Sacchero worked previously with this youth ensemble on *Distance* for the 1998 Next Wave festival. *Distance* was itself a collaboration between Danceworks (director Sandra Parker) and Stompin Youth Dance Company (director Jerril Rechter). [*RealTime* 26 p. 8] Sacchero's experience on that project as performer/facilitator led her to choose Jerril Rechter as navigator on this, her debut work as choreographer. She is careful in elucidating her position as a young person developing a piece with this ensemble: "I'm working with 10 young people. We are not participating in this project because of the semantics of youth arts, we are valid cultural participants."

It is this idea of the ensemble as cultural participants, as citizens and artisans that motivated Sacchero to develop a piece through workshopping: her role as choreographer is to "cut and paste" the experience of the performers. The individuals in the group bring their own ideas of the city to the overall work: Fiona—the experience of the individual and the mass; Elise—the criminal underbelly; Damien and Kyle—the signposts of culture, graffiti; Kimberley—the shadows, the cyclical nature of light; Duncan—the architecture, the permanent edifices of culture; Jasna—the city defined by the interaction of its participants. Sacchero tells me: "their bodies are inscribed with the city and its forms. This document is relevant to the 10 bodies performing it—it does not matter where it is located, it belongs to those bodies."

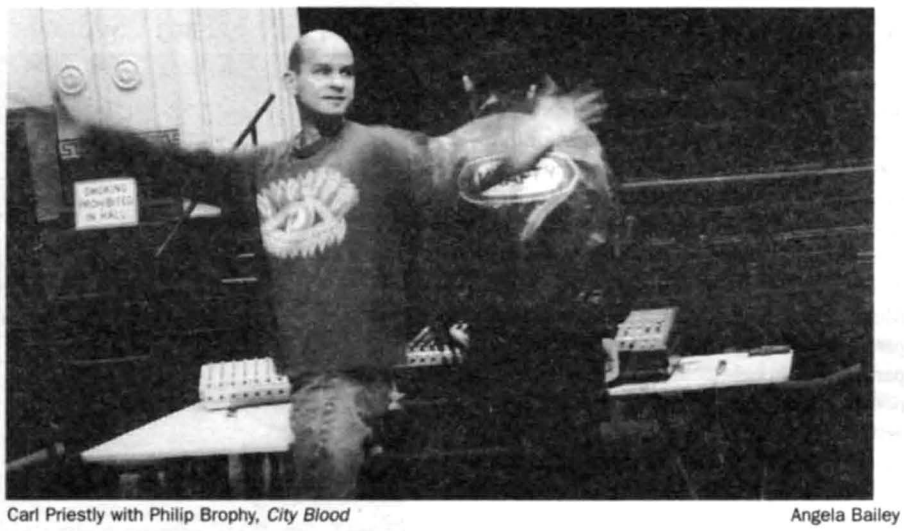
This sense of ownership is evident in rehearsal, and even moreso in the staged piece. These movers are not flawless, but they understand what their work is about: a very visible energy, an interpretation and structure that emerges from everydayness and that gives form to difference.

I see the huddle of transport in peak hour, the long shadows of the buildings as they stretch and fade in magic hour. I see the habitualised stamping and stowing of incidental objects. I see danger and pleasure. I see a city defined temporally, spatially. I see narrative in these bodies: the narrative of a lived day, of the strategies and tactics a body uses to negotiate the city. This is not some grand, totalising narrative—it is inclusive and provisionary. *Innate* makes me feel like moving through the streets of my city.

Carl Priestly's *City Blood*

The raw material of *City Blood* is gathered through pedestrian activity, through communing with real sounds. Priestly tells me: "the use of location recording and surround sound are very important choices. I wanted to capture sounds that would be sonically imprinted, that would activate memories—visual and spatial." We are meeting toward the end of the first stage of development. I ask him about the importance of location to the staging of the sonic event, concerned about positioning the audience for a sound work. "I want to set up the piece so that sound will move left-right, forward-backward establishing the audience as a relative point, in the same way that an individual in a city is a relative point.

Viviana Sacchero's *Innate* Angela Bailey



Carl Priestly with Philip Brophy, *City Blood* Angela Bailey

"*City Blood* configures the pattern of visiting, of arriving, travelling through and leaving a city. This is the pattern of young people, it is my experience of the city. It is experience through a filter: iconic sounds are transformed digitally into metaphoric sounds." Priestly is a graduate of the Media Arts faculty at RMIT. Over his years at RMIT he has been influenced by his chosen navigator on *City Blood*, Philip Brophy. During that period, his work has gone through a transition from rock'n'roll to the musique concrète form that *City Blood* appropriates and reworks. "*City Blood* reflects on the 'natural' sounds of the city, which are not what might usually be considered 'natural'…what I'm doing is kind of in opposition to new age stuff which takes natural sounds out of context and puts them in a sterile environment. I'm taking machine sounds and making them natural."

We discuss the limited opportunities for presenting soundscapes, the barriers pushed in order to get work heard, and understood. It is important that *City Blood* is perceived as a sonic event. Although Priestly has finished recording, and almost finished the pre-performance mix by the time we meet, he points out that the work is not complete until the moment of the live mix. This is essential to the project: "The work takes the body as its central metaphor of the city, especially arteries. It attempts to transform city sounds into neurological information…it is important that *City Blood* capture the life energy of the city." The performance enacts that life, that energy—a synchronicity of the pulse of the mix and the mixer, it defines the 'eventfulness' of the piece.

I hear the mediated babble of railway announcements, the lurch and blur of traffic momentum. I hear the fetishised hum of communication, the distortion of faxes and modems transferring information. I hear ritual, collision and fear. I hear the city insinuate itself: speak its functionality and its history. This is the expression of the city as a body: morphing and fluxing. This is the city so abstracted, it becomes readable, recognisable. *City Blood* makes me feel I am walking the streets of my city.

City limits: *inVISIBLE energies* debated

Innate and *City Blood* have been developed and presented in a very specific context. The City of Melbourne's endorsement of Next Wave, its message to its constituency, is that projects of this kind "nurture a culture of contemporary ideas into the 21st Century, support the work of a new generation of artists and encourage young people to engage in the arts" (Cr. Peter Costigan, Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne, Next Wave 1999 program brochure). *inVISIBLE energies* is itself a political strategy, a component part of the metanarrative of urban and cultural planning. However, the complete project title—*inVISIBLE energies the city in performance in development*—has so many qualifiers, its position is rendered ambiguous. On the one hand, it wants to make visible the work of young and emerging artists (I take "inVISIBLE energies" to refer to both the idea of surfacing artists and to the subject of the works). On the other hand, it (the title and the project support material) polishes the semantics of youth arts with the rhetoric of the urban designer and practically apologises for the provisionary nature of work in development. It is my disposition to find this precautionary language irritating, to read it as an attempt to contain the participating artists within the boundaries of the project. The problematic nature of this contextualising mode was ardently addressed in the panel discussion, "The Ubiquitous Program Note and Other Working Dilemmas", where artists, navigators and audience members passionately dissected the difficulties and benefits of developing and presenting material within this framework.

This is Next Wave's historical (and perhaps, inherent) contradiction: it provides a solid infrastructure for the presentation of new work, an infrastructure designed precisely as a safe zone for young and emerging artists to push limits and test ideas. *inVISIBLE energies* takes this one step further, using Next Wave's downtime to construct, and financially support, a space for the development of such works. Next Wave transforms this contradiction into something to live with. It allows practitioners to tactically employ the City's strategy to their own end, secure in the knowledge that the City requires them in order to be able to celebrate its diversity, in order to be able to lay claim to the political by-line: Melbourne, City for the Arts.

This dynamic was further addressed in "City Views: Where We Live Today, How We Want to Live Tomorrow", the first of the 2 panel discussions which took place over the 4 days of the presentations (putting North Melbourne Town Hall to good civic use). Fiona Whitworth, Project Officer for the City of Melbourne, put forth her view that council policy positions itself as a concerned guardian or parent, "containing young people and their use of the city." She cited the CBD skate park as a key statement in the development of a "youth precinct", the provision of a safe, but not sanitised, space for young people. This is a space (or ghetto) endorsed by urban planners and policy developers rather than everyday users. The small, but vocal, audience argued that skaters would always transform the obstacles designed to deter their activity in public spaces (stepping, benches, ridges etc) into props for new tricks and moves, that they would continue to use the city tactically, illicitly.

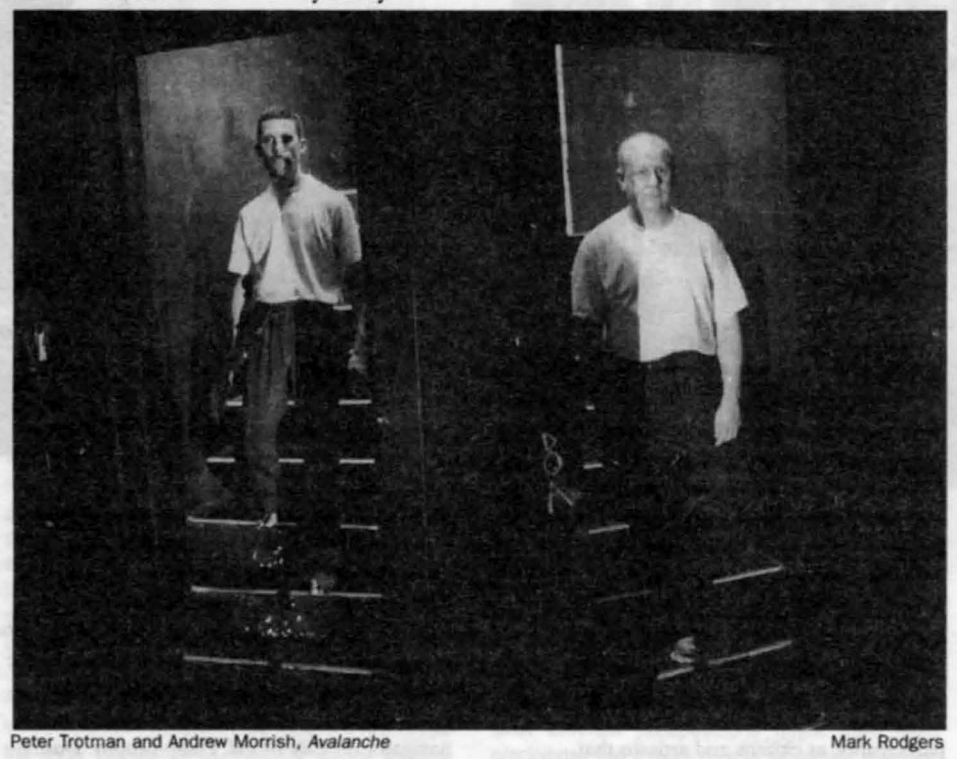
Let me get this straight: the act of skating, like walking, "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc the trajectories it 'speaks' (Michel de Certeau)". Skating and walking are urban tactics which appropriate and transform the space they traverse. *Innate* and *City Blood* use movement and sound to articulate the myriad of narratives these appropriations and transformations create. Sacchero and Priestly have actively, and creatively, protected (through representation) the concept of the city as a site of difference and diversity. They have employed the framework of *inVISIBLE energies* to develop performances which knowingly give form to the city as everyday and Ideal.

antistatic 99

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, Axis, 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 intelligence to the Sydney dance scene. Guests from the USA and Melbourne added bodies and dance cultures in perspective. As you'll 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' querying the cultural breadth of the event, he applies the word festival, which in fact might not fit the event model of *antistatic* with its focus on very particular dance issues, forms and, inherently, independents and their innovations (as opposed to, say, MAP's deliberate coverall approach in Melbourne in 1998). For all of its probing, essentialist leanings, *antistatic* nonetheless displayed some remarkable hybrids, artist and reviewer anxiety 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 dynamic counterpointing 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-floor meal and discussion shared by performers and audience on the penultimate evening of an intimate and open dance event.



Peter Trotman and Andrew Morrish, *Avalanche* Mark Rodgers

THE MORE THAN VISUAL

***Femur*: Jennifer Monson, *Keeper*; 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 entrance, I watched the tiny envelopes of ideas unfold in those first few seconds. Jennifer Monson made a racket climbing down a ladder in the dark, a hand-held light bouncing off chunky bare legs, strong feet; but also a feeling of precariousness, a rattling looseness, of missing her step. Ishmael Houston-Jones did not want us to see him at all, yelled to make the lights go out, sang a song in which he called a moth, "Here mothy, mothy, mothy." He calls our focus to his voice. Trotman and Morrish entered with all the subtlety that epic minimalists might muster, quietly opening doors onto soft cross-roads of light, their de rigeur portent and tracksuit pants making us immediately remember every dance workshop we've ever been to.

In *Keeper*, Monson extends physicality into sound: vocalising and resonances like slurping, blowing raspberries, whistling, laughing, breathing, stamping, humming, guttural and animal-like. Her movement often seems comical, burlesque. We wait for the punchline but there isn't one; the dance itself is that. Her sounds give her movement a feeling of clarity and form. At first, with a kind of childish simplicity and demand, she plays at the obvious, wanting grand gesture, practised physicality. A child's imagination might aspire to finding form, making sense of things that way; an adult might want innovation and breaking that form up in order to find sense. Monson has captured both these levels.

Her movement can be fast, powerful and complex, integrity without a falter. Sometimes she finds soft, peculiar muted sounds, odd archaic movement, more fantasy than animal. At one point she is dancing with her shadow on the wall, not with that abstracted visual artistry that we have seen before at The Performance Space, but with the kind of immediate, gutsy demand for attention, a foil for high art.

In the Dark, Houston-Jones' first work, gives us the sound and effort of movement, boots crashing round on the floor, uneven breathing, his voice telling us about Darryl who could only criticise dance in purely visual terms. We can't see his body, but the amount of distortion in his voice and breath shows what sort of energy there is. We know where he is; we have images; there are things going on. Rather than invisibility, the work seems more and more to be about exploring what is revealed.

Rougher is really softer. Wearing a blindfold, he sees only by the direction of light and the shadow of his hands in front of his eyes. He randomly switches a hand-held light off and on, illuminating parts of his body: palm, calf, chest, under-arm. He swings it around, shifting the shadows, creating lines, setting up images of flesh, fleeting art. In a spotlight, we watch as he lifts his long shirt to reveal his crutch, a peculiarly vulnerable gesture.

In *Without Hope* a heavy concrete brick becomes a tool with which Houston-Jones vividly illustrates a series of horrific injuries suffered by some fragile human. He speaks clinically, an autopsy report, but the weight and roughness of the concrete is real and felt. Sometimes it pins him down; it is cradled, kissed, drunk from, dropped. Sometimes he lies over it, as supplicant or penitent we're not sure.

Other no-win, no-choice stories: a New York law—if someone is dying, then doctors may prolong that life by mechanical means. But then, removing that mechanism amounts to manslaughter. Frida Kahlo's text provides the title, "Without Hope." Her suffering, while sometimes thought to be self-inflicted, is still real, both subject and impetus for her work.

As a subject of scrutiny, a body that is just itself, flesh, nerves, hormones, is defenceless in a way, open to whatever description an audience provides. To be scrutinised, to come face to face with mass judgment, does not seem to be a choice that 'people who do gigs for a living' can make. It is a heavy weight to bear if you know it can also destroy you.

Lastly, we see his eyes for the first time, looking up, engaging. His gestures are protective, indicating exposed jugular, glands, areas of fragility. It is then we know that this body, substantial, weighty, but full of the delicacy of nerves, breath and blood, is a vulnerable thing, capable of immense complexity, but easily damaged. The reality of humanity is not something one has a choice about.

The practice of 'reverend awe' and a sense of the 'moral high ground' have often been visible aesthetic qualities to which serious students of new dance apparently aspire. The wit of Trotman and Morrish lies in their expert physical capacity to reveal such idiocy, having an eye for every pretentious nuance and cliché in the new dance and theatre improvisation hand-books. Epic meaninglessness, vacuous intoning, deeply felt superficiality, or just standing round looking enigmatic, are faithfully reproduced in *Avalanche*, along with impeccable timing, flexible structure, compelling story telling, and some really good tricks with imagery, which make Trotman and Morrish's commentary priceless.

All deal with more than the visual. Images and ideas coming to the mind's eye give substance to the works. The tail ends of these pieces have brought us quite a way from their beginnings, but always with that palpable feeling of the body moving, causing, acting, creating.

Eleanor Brickhill

THE WORD DANCES

***Middle Ear*: Susan Leigh Foster, *Kinaesthetic Empathies & the Politics of Compassion*, The Performance Space, March 28**

I remember when I started as a lecturer at Macquarie Uni in 1990 coming across some research on the effectiveness of the lecture format which informed me that students on average retain around 10% of what is said in a lecture, more (around 30%) of how it is said (intonation patterns, delivery, timing...) and much more (around 60%) visuals (how the lecturer looked, their gestures, what images they presented etc). This underscored what I'd always thought about the lecture format, not just that it had to be performative, but that it was, in the eyes of its audience, already a type of performance and that those of us who were going to engage in lecturing as a mode of transmitting data were also (perhaps even more so) to be engaged in mobilising a perceptual framework about performing that we needed to take on board.

Jump forward 9 years to Susan Leigh Foster's 2 recent Sydney gigs (lecture performances or the other way around) and I found a thoroughly planned and impressive model which responds to this very dynamic. Anyone present at these events at TPS on March 28 and UNSW's School of Theatre Film and Dance on the 29th was forced to confront the lecture space as a kind of pedagogic mise en scene where the lecturer's words were interrupted by sudden though rehearsed movements and gestures which sometimes underscored a discursive point and sometimes undermined it, manifesting a playful irresponsibility of language to its objects and of the authority figure to their underlings in the crowd. Irresponsible because the response is not obvious, only a hybrid response will do justice to the performance. A simple registration of the data will not help in understanding what is at stake in this type of lecture. One must enact a creative response of one's own. I find this a very generous style of communication not least because the lecturer has placed their own physical capacities on display, but because a plurality of focus points emerges depending on the specific concerns of each spectator. There was plenty to look at and to think about even if you were losing the thread of the argument.

Other receptions of these pieces were not as enthusiastic. Some argued the obvious point that it was hard to just listen to the words, others said the words were too prescriptive of the moves she made (and presumably that she shouldn't have been speaking at all), others said it was comical, "like John Cleese lecturing on movement while doing his silly walks routine", others said the movement was too technically precise and that while the pieces were exploring a hybrid form their choreographic elements paradoxically served to reinforce traditional modes of moving which were unemotive, detached, purely formal displays of technique. In my view one shouldn't begrudge Professor Foster her training and in any case, the variety of moves she made suggested something other than pure formalism, eg moving through an audience and taking pens, bags and personal objects from the spectators then redistributing them throughout the space. Neither was the text purely discursive. Often language was used in an explicitly performative sense. In the TPS lecture the audience was asked to stand up, run on the spot, stand close to someone, stumble, stretch, duck, balance, pose, run stealthily and touch someone's hand...nor was it possible to ignore the generous spirit with which she engaged with the varying audience reactions to her work, reactions which sometimes verged on the bloody minded not to say bizarre.

In her 2 performed pieces in Sydney, she presented the performance of knowledge as something more than a bombastic parading of facts or a bewildering discharge of concepts; as an embodied array of learned and unlearned behaviours which seem to permit more freedoms than they constrain. In this model spectators can choose elements of the mise en scene to focus upon, and elements of the text to listen to, triggering a sense of lightness in the learning situation, rather than the weighty, dour 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 of Davis and Riverside. She is author of Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance, *and* Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire. *She is also editor of* Choreographing History and Corporealities.

HYBRID YIELD

***Clavicle*: Ros Warby, Shona Innes, Graeme Leak, *original home (returning to it)*; Helen Herbertson, Ben Cobham, *morphia series - Strike 1*; Lisa Nelson, *Memo to Dodo*; Rosalind Crisp, Ion Pearce, *proximity*, sections 4 and 5; Jude Walton, Ros Warby, Jackie Dunn, *Seam (silent mix)*, 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 *Clavicle*,

there's a real hybrid growth in the fusion of those elements with choreographic design, so that new things are being said. Particularly in the first 2 works, *original home* and *morphia series*, the collaborations produced a brilliantly intense language of action and imagery.

Inexplicably, I found myself describing *original home* as the *South Park* of dance, prompted by its oblique cartoonish humour, gangly truncated demeanour, randomised interruptions of gesture and dissipated gravitas. The performers seemed to have composed themselves accidentally in a hail of instruments, objects and events—a rock rolls off-centredly across the floor, small rattling gourds, snare drums, a bowling ball, a piece of rope, cymbal, a small one-stringed instrument, pieces of wood—all exquisite, self-made, found or outlived, dancing included, which spill over the stage with a tightly orchestrated nonchalance, into an endless array of both finely-tuned and careless disturbances of space.

In *morphia series*, there are sudden contrasts: black-out, yellow flames, black hair and fabric over white glowing skin, concentrated stillness and fast-forward flickering sequences. Ben Cobham uses the light source like a camera, producing grainy, black and white, film-like effects on the small framed stage, revealing Helen Herbertson's actions with textural variations, sometimes thin and stiff, too fast, not life-like, or else the image appears as if through a window, with small inexplicable, ambiguous gestures, but solid and 3 dimensional. Is she repeatedly washing her hands or warming them by a fire? Sound seemed elemental: a tinkle of bells, rain on a roof, a single light clicks on, tiny bird calls, the click of fingers, once, twice; you might see her eyelash flicker; the soft billowing light of wind-blown flames.

In Lisa Nelson's *Memo to Dodo*, it's the seeing, the visual sensing, the cycling of perception in and out through the eyes that holds your attention. The audience is implicated in her dance, you feel; a strong link, but just what that relationship is, it's hard to know. She is holding something firmly, placing it just right, sorting things, noticing in the periphery, perpetually catching sight of something in the light; small registers of awareness, working it like breathing. Not insubstantial space, but there's something solid she's making from what's around her. She sends it back in direct and exact parcels of energy.

Another section, a voice playing an old game, telling Nelson to halt, continue, reverse, repeat actions, while still carrying on that breathing in and out of light and shadow as she moves: small deliberations, holding, placing, delicately weighting a stick in hands and arms, making the windings of her body around it sometimes difficult to undo.

Compared to Nelson, Warby and Herbertson, Rosalind Crisp's dancing in *proximity* is fluid, romantic, with a softly restrained dramatic abandon. There's elegance in her physicality, and an emotional luxuriance more pronounced than in previous performances. Elegance too in Ion Pearce's rarefied soundscape, dry and windy at first, but in the second section, strident, piercing. Simplicity and measure settle over the work, with a single stream of light falling across the stage onto Crisp's moving hands as if they are in water. They seem close up, in focus. Later a handspan, 2 arms' lengths, the reach to feet and floor. Like Nelson, Crisp works with her eyes, encompassing the details of limbs and what they surround: side by side, near and far, measuring the course of her action before she's been there, and the traces she leaves behind.

Jude Walton's *Seam (silent mix)* is full of white and black, a heavy curtain and white screen side by side, and shocking red splashes in the fabric of costumes. It's full of text (Mallarme's notes on the poem *Les Noces d'Herodiade: Mystere*) which I read long after the rest of the work was seen, and an echoing English/French vocal mix; it seems not designed for immediacy. Now I don't recall the words. I recall how conscious I became of my own breathing as I watch a film of pinned paper seams pull and rip apart as my own ribs expanded, and edges reunited in relieved exhalation. I remember the luminous white foetus-like flesh of dancer Ros Warby, as she manipulated a tiny camera over her body, the image like an ultra-sound of something internal, soft and vulnerable, not quite formed. I remember her red dress against the black curtain, pulled back. I remember the ocean, washing over the screen in increments of flowing tide, rising higher and higher up the wall of the screen. We wait for the seam blending one wave into another, finally with a kind of inevitability, until the screen, and our minds, are somehow complete, the pieces put invisibly together.

Eleanor Brickhill

Rosalind Crisp, *proximity* Mark Rodgers

BOOSTING PERFORMANCE PRAXIS

Spur: Tess De Quincey, *Butoh Product #2 - 'Nerve'*; Stuart Lynch, *Without Nostalgia*; Alan Schacher with Rik Rue, *Kunstwerk (Trace Elements/Residual Effects - part 3*; Jeff Stein with Oren Ambarchi, *Aphikoman*; Yumi Umiumare & Tony Yap, *How could you even begin to understand? Version 2*, The Performance Space, April 4

Elements similar to Susan Leigh Foster's were at work in the set of events comprising *Spur* in which Tess de Quincey's *Butoh Product #2 - Nerve* showed how to stare down a crowded room while text effects splashed around her, courtesy of performance poet Amanda Stewart's textual montage and projection. In this as in other of Stewart's works the sounds and images of words are collapsed back on themselves and we have the bare material of language on display. De Quincey worked within a similar paradigm to return the performing body to its being on stage. Standing squarely, facing off the spectators, holding ground until the impulse to move took over…a more powerful performance presence is hard to imagine and even without locomotive movement the pulses of the body's capacities for movement are in evidence. Jeff Stein and Oren Ambarchi's *Aphikoman* re-staged the audience/performer dynamic with a dada style theft of the performative moment. Hidden beneath the seating Stein stole personal objects, then dumped them on the stage forcing the spectators to leave the darkness and claim their property. This was done with great humour and energy which carried the concept along though there wasn't much else to experience in this piece.

Alan Schacher's spasmic movement piece came with an industrial noise sound track by Rik Rue. This was not a harmonious technoshamanic ritual but a pulverising attack on the body. Schacher's body duly sought out dark spaces as if to hide from the technoscape which threatened it and emerged into the light only to express its crisis. This was a strong and unsettling piece which again revealed the capacities of body, light, sound to sustain an audience's interest without the supplementation of excess effects. Yumi Umiumare and Tony Yap provided an antidote to the harshness of the Schacher/Rik Rue collaboration in a lucid and meditative dance in the TPS studio space. Commencing in a chair seated on top of one another the pair slowly extended past the flickering laser beam guarding their resting place and into the audience. Yumi's laughter caught me by surprise but suggested that the human core in this work was at peace with itself. I noticed something I had missed in their earlier work which is that these 2 can control their movements and lyricise them at the same time in breathtakingly subtle ways.

Stuart Lynch closed the night with the equally breathtaking but totally unsubtle *Without Nostalgia*, a virtuoso piece staging, among other things, his concern with TBS (Total Body Speed) as the centre of the actions which determine his performance work. The notion comes from his connection (through De Quincey) with Mai Juku in Japan but also reflects the emphasis on speed in contemporary considerations of bodies (Deleuze) and culture (Virilio). It is spectacular to witness an artist engaging at this level with current theoretical debates in media and performance studies. I hope we get to see this piece in another context as it is packed with ideas that only a repeat viewing could adequately process. In a way this piece represents the opposite of Foster as a conceptual interrogation of cultural forms through movement and image rather than through text combining with gesture. Both are hybrid forms with a different emphasis but you wouldn't want to do without either of them. The praxis of performance, which ever way you receive it, got a real boost from these events.

Edward Scheer

ARCHITECTURE, BODY PARTS & LANGUAGE

Margie Medlin, Stephen Bram, Jacqueline Everitt, Ben Anderson, *Elasticity and Volume*, The Performance Space Gallery and surrounds, March 25 - April 4; Adrienne Doig, Rebecca Hilton, Peter Miller, *The Other Woman*, The Performance Space Gallery, April 1 - 11

***Atlas*: Tracie Mitchell, Adrienne Doig, *Surething*; Vikki Quill, Rosalyn Whiley, MaryAnne Henshaw, *LayLeisurelyLay*, The Performance Space, April 10**

The 2 installations presented at *antistatic* consisted predominantly of film screenings. Anderson, Bram and Doig's films were projected onto entire walls, Medlin's films were scattered throughout the space in conjunction with lighting features and sound, and Everitt's films were projected onto 3 screens as a triptych accompanied by a soundscape.

A common element across the works was architectural structures and space which interweaved tightly with the filmic dimension throughout. The situating of action within architecture, the projection of the work onto the walls of the building and the incorporation of structure as sculpture (including Doig's staircase and arch which fractured the projected images) created a striking theme. I thought about dancing bodies I have seen drawn into a purely filmic space and live dancing which rigorously reworks the body's surrounding space and the contrary tensions represented here—space and movement, volume and elasticity come up against each other in these works rather than integrate.

Medlin's *Choreography of Space* exemplified this effect with its multiple approaches. She managed to convert the entrance hall into a cinematic simulacrum, the flickering lights combined with the progression along the corridor mimicking the cinematic apparatus with the participants/spectators themselves becoming the 'moving image." Upstairs and in the foyer Medlin created encounters with oversized body parts; an arm that beckons, appearing on a dark wall like a miracle and writhing across it before retreating and repeating; huge feet that measure out the guttering above the foyer.

A beckoning arm (or is it shaking off?) again becomes an anticipated moment in Everitt's triptych, *A Simultaneous Retracing*. It reaches out of the dark centre screen towards the audience, disembodied and plastic, before withdrawing. Another theme emerges now—the representation of the dancing body. The dancer in this case is Rebecca Hilton who also almost appears in Doig's work. Libby Dempster is the dancer in Medlin's piece and Lucy Guerin features in Anderson's *Black and White* and *Animation*. In all these cases, the dancers are subsumed into a choreography of images, providing articulate body parts, singular gestures and abstracted dancing figures within fields of motion which cover structural and sculptural surfaces.

Bram's film, *Kuala Lumpar 1998*, is a landscape dancing with micro movements created through fast-motion. Anderson's Eisenstein-esque montage featuring stone statues brings a kind of impetus to the static through rhythm. Hilton turns a corner again and again in

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Everitt'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 *Clavicle* 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 determining 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 harshly 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 installation and the treatment of Hilton here brings to a head issues relating to 'the dancer' in such work.

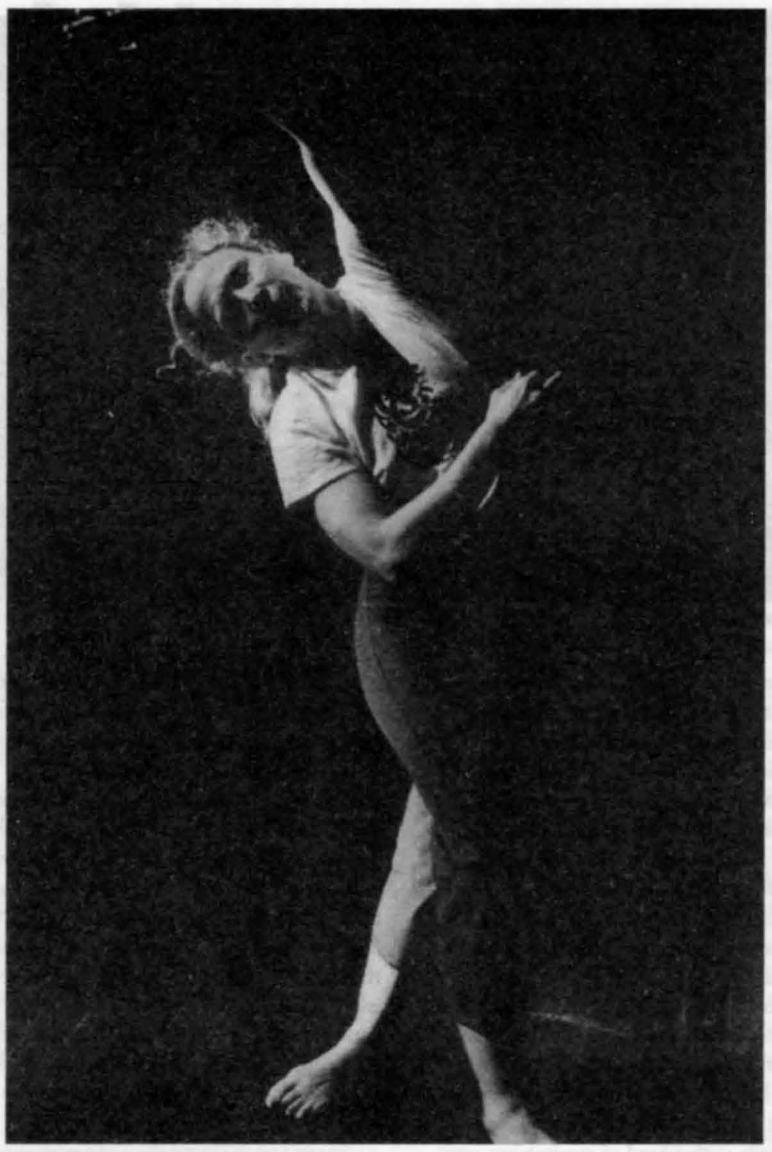
The dancer is removed in these installations from a live performance space but included in an investigation and reconstruction of a performance space, putting the dancing body into a kind of productive crisis. This results here in disembodiment, fragmentation and transformation, a play with appearance and disappearance and a dispersion of the figure to become one amongst other moving elements. These observations arise due to the context of the installations within a dance festival. The conscious play with motion, space and the choreography of bodies and images explains their inclusion in *antistatic* and they represent an important interdisciplinary area of development. My question—why dancers—is perhaps about the fascination of the figure in such work and what the skills of the dancer bring to that.

Doig went some way towards answering this question in her discussion of *The Other Woman* as part of *Atlas*—a mixed programme of talks, screenings and the *antistatic* workshop showings. Doig said that she had brought Hilton into her project to develop a series of gestures for Doig's characters, gestures demanded by the melodramatic tone of the work. The links between melodrama, movement, gesture and dance are logical but Hilton's performance within the work sits outside this system. Doig explained that she wanted to keep Hilton anonymous so as not to complicate the already profuse collection of characters. All this amounts to an interesting and telling play within this work between drama and dance, face and body, character and movement.

Lisa Nelson, in discussion with Rosalind Crisp, 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 focus and frame 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 later that night, the "thought" involved in this "choice" became the focus as she spoke of a "mind-body-dance" and joked about the intelligence going on behind the "narcissistic 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 here (Nelson 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—settling on 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.

Erin Brannigan



Jennifer Monson, *Keeper* Mark Rodgers

DON'T FENCE ME IN

Russell Dumas, Dance Exchange, *Cassandra's Dance*, The Studio, Sydney Opera House; works by Herbertson, Brickhill, Schacher, The Performance Space

In Russell Dumas' *Cassandra's Dance*, at the Opera House Studio, one sensed the enormous discipline, focus and specificity. Dumas located this dancing in a visceral sound score by Paul Healey and in a provocative set of references—columns (suggesting Greek architecture), the walls and floor of the Opera Studio (a space which profiles high art) and in relation to the myth of Cassandra. Watching this dance I reflected on art as doomed prophecy, classicism as a relic and the frailty of the body, knowledge and history. Could performance be an intense, agitation that passes all too quickly? This was a rich offering.

In Helen Herbertson and Ben Cobham's work, *morphia series—Strike 1*, light partnered the dancer, at times barely 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. Cobham sat 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 terrors and 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 uber marionette.

In contrast, works by Ishmael Houston-Jones and Trotman and Morrish in the opening program 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 storytelling 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 conflation of these 2 places of interaction. I was reminded of the pleasures and discomforts of both settings and of how difficult it was to 'simply be' in either. However the text and dancing were arranged in such a way so as to allow my relationship to the event to keep shifting. I was glad never to feel that 'pinned against the mantelpiece' party feeling.

In *KunstWerk*, Alan Schacher searched as if hunted, feeling his way, fitting in, moving on to an industrial soundscape by Rik Rue. 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 be too specifically positioned by my, or the performer's, personal history. I don't seek nor trust '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.

Anne Thompson

Ishmael Houston-Jones, *Without Hope* Mark Rodgers

SHOWING THE WORKSHOPPING

***Atlas*: 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 Ishmael Houston-Jones—who we had seen in performance and had been the focus of much discussion. The showings unfolded for the audience like a game of charades we were invited to view but not participate in; 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' commands she had used in her performance, *Dance Light Sound*, were employed here en masse, dancers either participating in the "stop", "reverse", "play", "replace" commands or waiting and watching. The choice to participate or not became 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 exciting way Monson can in her performances. The display of energy and contrasting dynamics were relentless and the participants completely engrossed. It was difficult not to follow Monson here whose self-confessed attraction to the comic had her flitting about the space in pseudo-balletic hysteria. There was an energy-engagement between the dancers and an awareness of the observers that sparkled with possibilities.

Houston-Jones' group showing was an "almost-performance-piece" made up of a succession of ideas. Music was introduced to the proceedings (Ishmael giggled as he DJ'd behind us) and the dancers moved closer to the audience. Language was also introduced as something more than functional, introducing narrative and emotional registers, and was interrupted through yet another system of spoken commands ("shut-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

Axis: Susie Fraser, _Stories from the Interior_; Sally Gardner, "Can practice survive"; Julie Humphreys, _Involution_; Anne Thompson, "Rainer, Wilson and Bausch as markers in a mapping of the border terrain called dance theatre"; Helen Clarke-Lapin with Ion Pearce, 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 ongoing negotiation within dance between movement and words. This project has become central to new dance practices and is a significant area of investigation which dance is pioneering within the broader context of the performing arts. The relentless necessity to reveal dance—to provide commentary on the display—described by Lisa Nelson and the newer necessity for the community 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 eclectic event.

The last day of *antistatic*, *Atlas*, was like a culmination of this apparent, but perhaps implicit theme. A combination of performances (incorporating texts, choreography and or improvisation), presented papers and the less easily defined "performed commentary" by Julie-Anne Long and Virginia Baxter, exposed most lucidly the curators' task. How can dance remain the primary discipline, its conditions and knowledges the most influential forces, when combined with discourse and all this entails? To slide across types of language, methods and modes of performance 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 ideokinesis) 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 reductive terms: "innovative", "independent", "creativity", "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 terminologies 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 aritist 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 context 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 suggests an authority "elsewhere." Such assumptions stagnate 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. Unfortunately I missed Fraser's piece, *Stories From the Interior*. [In this work-in-progress, *Picking up the Threads*, Susie Fraser retraces a dancer's body changed by childbirth and motherhood. Her recorded voice 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.] Brickhill provided 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 know where that comes 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 the discussion Brickhill said she was "trying to 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; an attempted closing discussion was aborted after valiant attempts from the Masters of Ceremony, Trotman and Morrish, which were met with a request for alcohol. The irreverent tone and attitude of Long and Baxter was a welcome change from the earnest 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 intervention 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 aired 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" entails. Even Russell Dumas was rendered speechless.

Erin Brannigan

Graham Leak & Ros Warby, *Original Home* Mark Rodgers

DO REMEMBER THIS...

***Axis*: Julie-Anne Long & Virginia Baxter, *Rememberings on Dance*, April 11**

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 rest; 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 here. At one point she rolled up her sleeve to reveal more reminders scribbled in biro.

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 mastery 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 enter the frame 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 "Susans", we concocted a conversation which might have occurred following the performance of Ros Warby's *original home*. The conflicting memories of 2

antistatic 99

continues from page 13

women with almost the same name competed with Dionne Warwick's of *Always Something There to Remind Me*.

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

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

Later I confessed to a theory I'd started hatching 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.

VB When Shona 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—Rosalind Crisp's work *proximity*.

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

JAL Why would that shock you?...The audience watches the dancer...(VIRGINIA FEELS HERSELF ALL OVER)...feeling how her dancing body feels to her.

In the same program, Lisa Nelson's remarkable work *Memo to Dodo* produced more divergent memories.

JAL I couldn't work out whether this was Lisa Nelson or a personification of something else. Was she looking at us, was she seeing us as those eyes shifted in and out of focus...

VB This one added some more to my theory. So did Ros Crisp's "dead hand" as you call it. Lisa Nelson's body looks like it's asleep...it's alert, then barely conscious, forgetful. It moves to instructions from an invisible presence on a crackly recording.

JAL The movement is expert but it has no ulterior purpose.

VB Meaning bounces round the room, just out of grasp.

(Later in the week, Lisa Nelson said of this work "My dances are vision-guided, not eye guided. At first I saw this as a way to flex my visual muscles and to stimulate the imagination in my body. The muscles, the lens—it's the full orchestration. I just have tremendous sensation there. I always have had, ever since I was kid.")

Jude Walton's elegant *Seam* re-surfaced in slow stabs at memory—screen, film, pen, hand, writing, hysteria, translation, paper, pins, breathing, a body beneath, breathing, a curtain revealing, red, screams red, slip, screen, ocean, endless ending...

Whereas our memories of Helen Herbertson's *Morphia Series—Strike 1* tumbled over each other.

VB That sense of senses deprived. Forced to peer, squint into the dark, into the ghostly glow of the proscenium and...

JAL Love, love, LOVED the fire!

But when we tried to remember precisely—

VB Do you remember what Helen Herbertson was doing? How she was moving?

JAL (ATTEMPTS THE MOVEMENT BUT CAN'T CAPTURE IT). Whatever it was, I know I just loved it.

To elicit a bit more detail from our memories of the *Femur* program which featured highly memorable works by Ishmael Houston-Jones, Jennifer Monson and the improvising duo Trotman and Morrish we tried Lisa Nelson's workshop technique in which dancers create complex improvisations triggered by a set of instructions (Enter, Play, Reverse, Repeat, Exit) called from the sidelines. We improvised with a set of sentences, discovering our memories of these works were less conflicting.

JAL They take the space. Demand our attention.

VB Her body is charged, circuits kicking in, synapses snapping. Body at full stretch.

JAL Presentational. Acknowledge the audience. The dancers stood in front of us. I settle when I feel that.

VB She goes about her work, as we watch. Like that song, "Busy doing nothing working the whole day through, trying to find lots of things not to do." Occasionally she acknowledges us. Just enough. Dean Walsh swears she winked at him.

In the final sequence in the performance, "Butoh Memory", we substituted objects on the table for memories of the performances in *Spur*.

JAL Needles in eyes (scissors).
VB Speed contained (a book of matches).

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 Nelson talked about the dilemma 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 intelligence at work behind the movements. Dancers need to ask themselves, why do that? Why add another move? 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 but it's hard to say why. 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 tell about my friend who's dying. Suddenly one night I find myself talking instead about a picture I'd seen about what elephants do, how they 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 AND THE BEAST

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

I often feel like a member of a band of vagrant minstrels, criss-crossing the worldwide countryside of postmodern dance. We steal into a town, dance for our supper and a place to sleep, and then move on. Because the friendly villages are few and well-known to members of my merry band, we invariably run into each other at semi-regular intervals. I might see David Z in Havana, then David D in Glasgow; I'll have a dance with Jennifer M in London, and the other Jennifer M in Northern Venezuela; I'll watch a performance by Lisa in Arnhem, and she'll watch 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 cheques with a variety of postmarks come. It's a city that inspires and drains me. It is a city, however, that will never support me, nor the majority of my downtown dance compatriots. 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 over-stimulated 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 Performance Space was done with exacting professionalism combined with compassionate attention. The programs were well curated. While audience size varied, it was clear that the organisers had done a lot, through receptions, an attractive flyer and other publicity, to bring out the New Dance public in Sydney.

The workshop 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 the 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 taught. The 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 often found myself feeling tired and stretched (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 little sight-seeing and night life into my itinerary. Also suffering from this being my virgin voyage Down Under, is my ability to adequately critique the breadth of the local work. The program of which I was a part also featured pieces by fellow New Yorker, Jennifer Monson, and the Melbourne duo, Trotman and Morrish. This program was varied in its scope within the narrow frame of "new dance." The works evocatively contrasted one another, while they seemed to accidentally provide some complementary subtext for the evening.

The works on the following weekend were a different story. Although Lisa Nelson is from the United States and Ros Crisp is from Sydney, several of my students described the program as a "very Melbourne evening". While the works varied 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. Except with Nelson, the only non-Australian on the program, there seemed to be a determined effort to not acknowledge the audience through any overt eye contact. This lent an air of "art school lab experimentation" to several of the pieces. Again, I'm not sure if I've seen enough local work to justify even this stereotype, but this inward focus did seem to be a less refined echo of the performance personae of Russell Dumas' dancers, whom I saw as part of *antistatic* at The Studio at the Sydney Opera House.

What I found different about *antistatic*, as opposed to, say, The Movable Beast Festival in Chicago, was its lack of both artistic and ethnic diversity. In 1998, at *Movable Beast*—a small

Ishmael Houston-Jones, *Rougher* Mark Rodgers

festival of new dance in its second year—I performed 2 of the same pieces I did at *antistatic*. But while there was an emphasis on "pure movement" pieces, there were also works that veered toward performance art, multimedia spectacle, spoken word, drag, cabaret, and site specific. The latter 2 genres were encouraged by having multiple venues for the festival. While the main performances took place in a traditional black-box theatre, each festival participant was required to also present "something" on a tiny stage in a jazz club between sets, and also to make a site specific work for the Museum of Contemporary Art's 24 hour Summer Solstice celebration.

Another difference was that all performers taught, and there was a lot less teaching by each person: 2 days apiece for the visitors; one day for 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 *Movable 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 [Yumi Umiamare and Tony Yap were also *antistatic* participants. Eds.]. There were no international artists involved with *Movable Beast*, but besides myself, there were African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic artists teaching and performing. Several were gay. The teacher/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 place 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.

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antistatic 99...on the bone, *curatorial committee Rosalind Crisp, Sue-ellen Kohler, Zane Trow; production coordinator Michaela Coventry; production manager Mark Mitchell; The Studio, Sydney Opera House, The Performance Space; March 24 - April 11*

For more dance see Sophie Hansen on dance and technology in Arizona, page 35; and the Gelber, Gyger, Guerin installation at the Art Gallery of NSW, page 40.
Excerpts from *Rememberings on Dance* will appear in the next edition of Broadsheet (CACSA)

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 a protest about speed and repetition. Internet Relay Chat and email are fast and random. Channelling through the limited bandwidth of online communication text prevails in email, IRC, MOO/MUD or Website, shifting the vernacular of the 'written' word if not its preponderance. 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.va.com.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 to consider an electronic poetics. They presented 'lectures' and met regularly to discuss, participate in and produce writing. All of these activities took place online. Throughout the project an email list was maintained for ongoing discussion, investigation and writing. Running through the telephone lines connecting the machines at which we worked and mused, a writing nexus developed.

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 Benedickt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, 1992)

In Ircle, the command for entering a chatroom is 'join.' Meeting convened. Chat bounces between a half dozen or so writers: an extract from an *Ensemble Logic* Internet Relay Chat lecture/discussion:

Sue: do you think the web offers new opportunities...
Sue: for writers to experience fiction for real?
mez: makes for confused email pardners;-)
amerika: yes, definitely
amerika: without it I never meet any of you & that would be a much less interesting life!
tink: i agree...
ti: im wondering how some conceptual artists see this environment, clipper, got any ideas on this one?
mez: art m-ulating write m-ulating life m-ulating.....?
clipper: im thinking of 70s events and happenings
ti: yes, the connectivity is very important

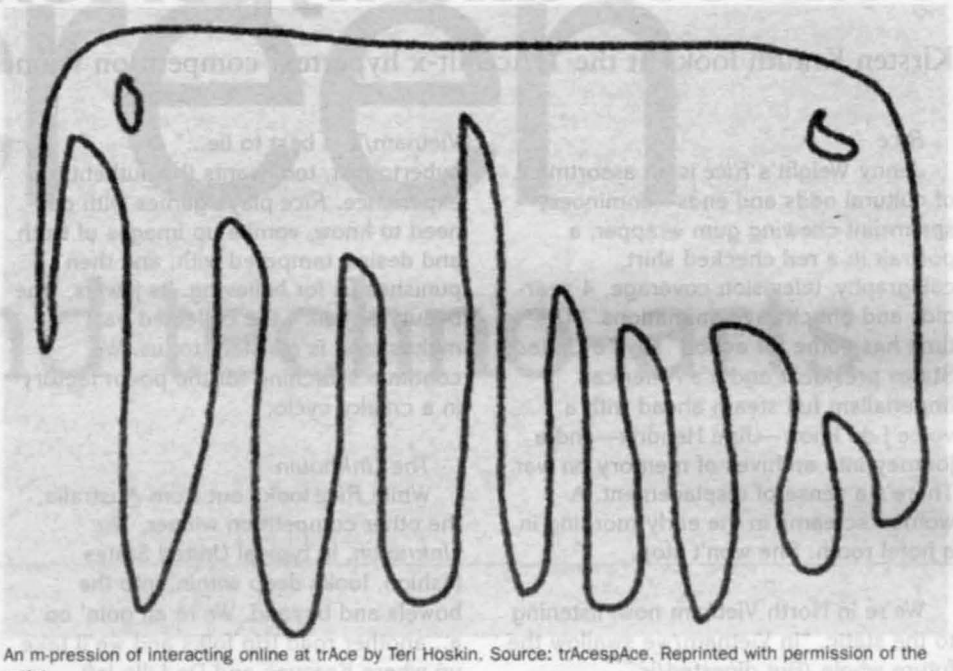
Writing. Community. Virtuality. Each word catalyses and interacts. Virtuality, as some kind of ontological register, seems to renegotiate traditional and generational ideas about both writing and community. Simultaneously, I am sympathetic, nostalgic and agonistic. I use the term 'community' sceptically 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 calcified myth of rational society which privileges and edifies the normative and unitary. An unnecessary tension exists between the individual and community. Virtuality 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 for writing with no horizon. For Donna Haraway, "this is a dream...of a powerful infidel heteroglossia (*Simians, 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" (Pluto 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.ufl.edu/writing/nwe.html*) at the University of Florida where Gregory Ulmer works and consults (*http://www.elf.ufl.edu/~gulmer*). Another example is the Hypermedia Research Centre (*http://www.hrc.wmin.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, R&D, open learning and flexible delivery. They are also driven by the promise of pedagogical 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 Nottingham 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 LambdaMOO since 1995. 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.



An m-pression of interacting online at trAce by Teri Hoskin. Source: trAcespAce. Reprinted with permission of the artist.

At trAce, interactive technologies are used for multiple purposes. While there are MOO rooms, hosted by LinguaMOO, 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 *frAme* and hosts webpages and projects including the *Noon Quilt* and the recently announced trAce/alt-x International Hypertext Award (see *WriteSites*, page 16). For the uninitiated a range of linked resources and instructions explaining MOO are a link away. *trAcespAce* at *http://crash.tig.com.au/~garu/ts.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 electrate too..."
dibbles says, "virtual disappeared faster.....almost faster than the eye can read"
teri says, "the transcience, the timeliness"
spawn 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 dibbles
You smile at dibbles.
teri says, "[Greg] ulmer writes that electracy is to the digital what literacy is to the book"
teri 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"
teri says, "and maybe learn to touch type:-)"
You say, "type on"

Emerging from these encounters are practices which are 'grammatological', which interrogate Writing, Community and Virtuality from within. It's so tempting to put some kind of mathematical symbol between these words which adds, subtracts, multiplies, divides or equals. It's 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

WriteSites
Starlets and hypertext dropouts

Kirsten Krauth looks at the TrAce/alt-x hypertext competition winners

Rice

Jenny Weight's *Rice* is an assortment of cultural odds and ends—dominoes, spearmint chewing gum wrapper, a portrait in a red checked shirt, calligraphy, television coverage, 4 year-olds and Shockwave animations. "The time has come for action" says a United States president and it's American imperialism full steam ahead with a voice I do know—Jimi Hendrix—and a journey into archives of memory on war. There's a sense of displacement. A woman screams in the early morning in a hotel room. She won't stop.

We're in North Vietnam now, listening to the static, "In Vietnam/we swallow the future whole./But digested/is different/from dead." The dominoes start to topple and we become "the supertourists. We stand outside, bigger than our own history." Vietnamese fighters and quick hopping doves. An endlessness of clicking, cameras, keyboards keys, dirt and heaven. Like a game of patience, surprises are turned up and over, yet framed in circles by distance. Images are ambiguous, nothing appears as it seems, but each link lays a brick, solidifying speculation.

"If 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, tampered 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 creaky cyclo.

The Unknown

While *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 publishing and promotion as well as a tough and funny look at the nature of creating hypertext: "the reader becomes a sort of satellite taking photographs of a huge and varied terrain."

Largely text based, the site cleverly uses audio of the 'writers' speaking at conferences, debates topics as crucial as *that criticism can be as much an artform as literature* (okay, so they are laughing hash-hysterically at this point). Hilarious shots of 3 suit-and-tongue-tied men dwarfed by huge public sculptures add to the rich subversive mix. They even criticise one of the trAce/alt-x competition judges Mark Amerika (they meet him at Tennis Home, a Rehab centre for Hollywood starlets and hypertext dropouts). The live readings with audience murmurings and applause which play throughout give the work a sense of movement and wit and, although this territory has been traversed before online, what Americans excel at is BIGness and this mammoth chunk of cyberspace defies, and plays with, expectation and The Dream: "I sat up and stared at an American landscape we had not yet named."

Rice *(Jenny Weight)* and The Unknown *(William Gillespie, Scott Rettberg, Dirk Stratton, Frank Marquardt) were joint winners of the trAce competition. Jenny Weight lives in Adelaide. She received a new media artist residency at Media Resource Centre to develop* Rice.

The trAce/alt-x hypertext competition prize is for 100 pounds. 152 entries were received including many from Australia. Submissions had to be web-based with high quality writing; excellent overall conceptual design and hyperlink structure; and ease of use for the average web surfer.

The above winners can be found on the trAce website http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/hypertext/ *with further information on the competition. Three sites also gained honourable mentions:* *water always writes in *plural *by Josephine Wilson & Linda Carroli, (Australia),* Kokura *by Mary-Kim Arnold (USA) and Michael Atavar's* calendar *(UK). The competition will re-open at the end of 1999.*

OnScreen

film, media and techno-arts

Interview

Anti-action filmmaking

Needeya Islam discusses adaptation, personal vision and place with *Praise* director John Curran

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 enervation 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 heartbreaking cycle of 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 ambition is not simply played for laughs. It is what lies behind this that is insightfully explored; the often painful human dimension of post-adolescent ennui rather than the all too familiar posturing.*

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.

Peter Fenton, John Curran and cast of *Praise*

NI Andrew 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 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.

NI So the producer had an immediate sense of its potential as a film?

JC Martha really thought it was a film when she read it, but I wouldn't have read that book and thought that this is a film I *have* to make. Maybe because at the time I was closer to it, I related to that guy and related even to the woman. Maybe if I read it now I would see it as cinema. But ultimately any story really comes down to the heart and humour of the character and if you empathise with the plight of that character. Whether it's going to be a film or not depends I guess on how you truncate it. To become a film every book has to be digested and truncated into something more specific, that has a different rhythm to it than a book would have.

NI Which filmmakers influenced you stylistically or in terms of subject matter? Praise *didn't strike me as a film that wore its influences on its sleeve, yet it seemed to be very conscious of the possibilities of 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 someone like Kubrick, because the tone of 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 that says look how beautiful she is' or 'here's her being emotive or something,' it was about the pain.

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

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Interview

Respecting the storyteller

Needeya Islam interviews screenwriter John Harding about the National Indigenous Feature Writers Program


John Harding & Wesley Enoch at The Writers Guild conference, Byron Bay

For me, the most important reason I'm 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 in 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 course. Following 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 AFTRS, 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. They were done as a request because the station was doing a season of Australian plays and they wanted some Aboriginal radio plays. There were none at the time, so I wrote a couple. That was in about 1987-88. That set me off on a path—I realised that I had a bit of a knack for it and it got rid of that cloud of mystery about playwrighting for me because I actually just did it and it got a positive response. And then a group of friends of mine who were Aboriginal 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 sat 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 (Bidjiri) 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 Akerholt 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 representation and 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 Bidjiri is still going and it just did *Stolen* directed by Wesley Enoch at Playbox last year and it's touring this year. So you never know what can happen when you set up a theatre company!

NI Your motivation for creating the Indigenous Feature 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 screaming that we want AFC policies on Indigenous representation but without writers we're kidding ourselves. The short films helped generate 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 it 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 minuter and then would 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 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 not so 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 rather than directing or writer-directors?

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.

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Anti-action filmmaking

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knew I would be shooting a film that predominantly takes place in a room. I knew that it was not going to be a documentation of a place. But every city ultimately becomes reduced to a cliché. And I'm interested in that because ultimately there is a reason why that cliché exists. I knew there were elements of Brisbane that I could work with even within a room—the heat, the quality of light, the birdsounds, the shadows of foliage, the kinds of plants that are up there. I found that a really fascinating, interesting kind of thing to do. The designer Michael Philips, the cinematographer Dion Beebe and I worked really closely trying to analyse what's different about a room in Brisbane and a room in Sydney. We came up with things like the clapboard siding for example. I wanted a feeling of age and decay—it was an opportunity to create an environment that's part of a passing era.

NI It's also interesting because you obviously don't have a local perspective.

JC I'm a foreigner here and I love a lot of what you take for granted like the Federation architecture. So I love that I could create colours and textures that to me are inherently Australian—there's that maroon, and mustard yellow that I used a lot in the film. That's very Australian to me. And that wintergreen that you see in pubs. I embraced those traditional graphic elements that I knew in 10 years time we wouldn't see anymore. I would have loved to have shot it in Brisbane, because I fell in love with street corners and angles that were so uniquely Brisbane. But what it came down to was that it wasn't really relevant to the script that we shot there—I could force an exterior view a bit but that wasn't in the script, which was essentially interiors. The room was Gordon's headspace.

Praise *director John Curran, writer Andrew McGahan, distributor Globe Film Co, currently screening nationally.*

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Editorial

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, some forms of screen work in the ongoing restructuring are looking like they'll suffer more than others, and, predictably 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 how 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 Barron told *The Australian* that the unit was 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 from $1.7m 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 (ICD) Branch, which supports screen culture organisations, publications, festivals and other screen events across Australia that guarantee a developing audience and the training of new generations of screen artists.

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 fallen steadily since 1994/95..." Jones goes on to remind 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 irretrievable 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, first 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 arts 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, experimenta@cs.art.rmit.edu.au)

In her letterto the AFC (with an impressive list of co-signatories), filmmaker Janet Merewether reminds the agency that many artists choose to work very effectively outside commercial filmmaking, and that funding options beyond the AFC are meagre. "Whilst more development funds 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 in 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 aftershock of the Gonski 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 changing makeup of the commission will be critical. In announcing 3 new commissioners, Minister for the Arts Peter McGauran 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).

KG

Experimenta 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."
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URL: http://www.experimenta.org

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info@afc.gov.au

Review

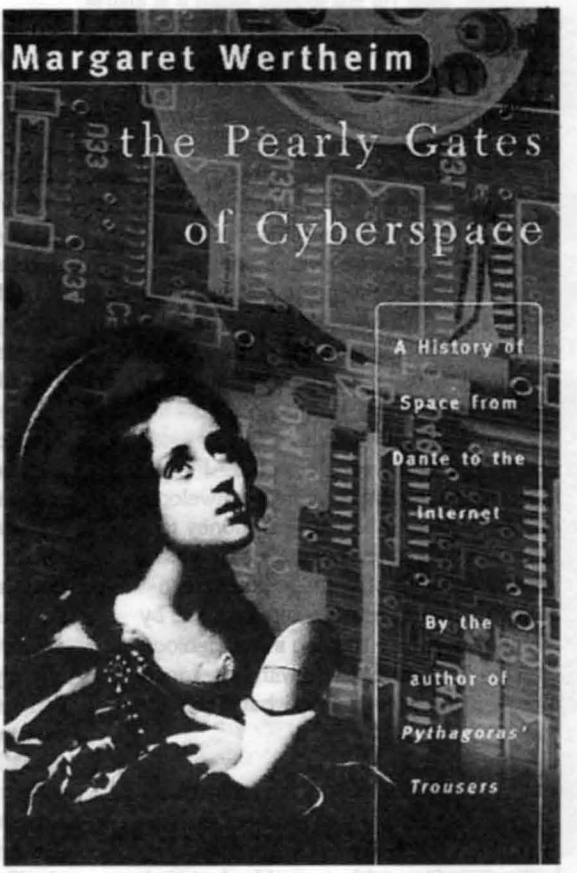
Okay, how is cyberspace like Heaven?

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 Wertheim has done an admirable 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 Vodou pantheon in *Count Zero*). What perhaps is new is the sociological spin Wertheim puts on the emergence of cyberspace at the end of the 20th century: "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 persona 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, which are telling, are not mine); Medieval thinker and theologian Roger Bacon was "the first champion of virtual reality." To be fair, such throwaway lines detract from what are otherwise interesting discussions of the ways in which the techniques of representation yielded to the pressures of verisimilitude and the desire to create in the Medieval viewer/worshipper a more vicarious sense of presence, of actually being in the scene or space being described. This is in itself a fascinating issue, for as writers such as Stephen Holtzman and Brenda Laurel have suggested, VR concepts such as immersion have a respectable ancestry and their logic has hardly changed. This doesn't 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. We can perhaps claim that there was something hypertextual in the way the narrative is presented in the Arena Chapel, but we have to evaluate this against the rigid, hierarchical manner in which the Medieval mind read the world. Wertheim is sensitive to this, but fails to account for it adequately. She also fails to note that just because we have hypertext it doesn't follow that it represents an episteme or way of seeing that residents of the late 20th century all share. Most visitors to the Arena Chapel today would more than likely read its narrative as a causal sequence of events. More to the point, they would presume that there was one.



The other major problem I have with Wertheim's argument is the contention that cyberspace is "ex nihilo", 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 Springfield, the hometown of the Simpsons, is a "virtual world"). In a book that attempts to synthesise such parallels and account for cyberspace as a return to a Medieval type of space, it is odd to read in the penultimate statement of the book that "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 sensible and articulate in her delineation of space as it has been figured throughout history, she is still caught up with the novelty not of cyberspace, but of cyberspeak. There is not enough analysis of what type of abstraction cyberspace involves and how we actually relate to it spiritually or any other way. Too many of the familiar themes of cybercultural discourse are simply recapitulated, such as the possibilities for identity and gender shifting in MUDs, the liberatory potential for "cybernautic man and woman", of avatars and interactive space and the hackneyed whimsy of downloading the mind into dataspace—et in arcadia ego. Any force that is generated by Wertheim's main theme is lost as a result of the book's straying off into the already said. How is data-space like the Christian concept of Heaven? This is an interesting question, but beyond the tropes of cyber-dualism and cyber-transcendentalism; nothing original in the way of a convincing answer is forthcoming.

The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace is consistent with much cyber-utopian criticism in its evaluation of cyberspace as a positive, therapeutic phenomenon: "There is a sense in which I believe it could contribute to our understanding of how to build better communities." Well, I suppose we are still waiting to see if this will be the case or not.

In the meantime, how do we account for the fact of this new space? In response to this question, Wertheim advances her least convincing argument. Unsupported by any research and reliant entirely on speculation, Wertheim suggests that at a time of global religious enthusiasm "the timing for something like cyberspace could hardly be better. It was perhaps inevitable that the appearance of a new immaterial space would precipitate a flood of techno-spiritual dreaming." As sociology *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace* just doesn't cut it. Despite the reservations I have with the book, it is nonetheless a useful study of the contemporary fascination with space and the historical legacy of Christianity, the history of ideas and the visual arts.

Margaret Wertheim, The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace, A History of Space from Dante to the Internet, *Doubleday, 1999, ISBN 0 86824 744 8, 336 pp.*

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

Feature

The taste of data

Jane Mills chews over the AFC's *Get The Picture*

Here is a metanarrative-free text which is seriously intertextual, 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 ecstasy of excess, an inferno of intergenericity, a nose for nostalgia, a quire of "quotations", a ream of repetitions, and a penchant for pastiche.

A Baudrillardian wetdream? 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 accustomed 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 bums 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 *Muriel's Wedding*, in Melbourne they sensibly opted for *Muriel* and the *Crown Casino Opening Ceremony* in preference to either Schwarzenegger on a bad day or Keanu 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 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 since mid-1994. The number of feature films produced in the 90s was almost double what it was in the 1970s. Screens and admissions have both steadily increased over the past years. On the whole, the data apparently provides cause for celebration.

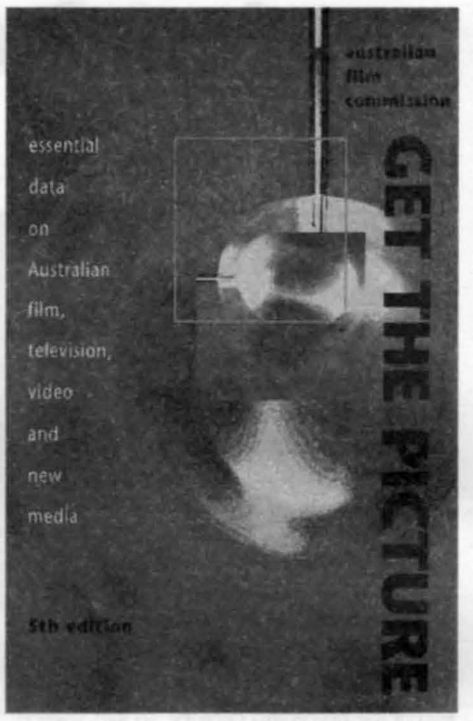
But we can't ignore what the data doesn't (or can't) reveal. Worrying tendencies or patterns are emerging. There may be more women employed in the screen industries than the average for all industries, but there are also more women earning less and more women working only part-time. Who knows if this is from choice? Feature film production may 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?

It may be precipitant to celebrate the increase in screens and admissions: in 1995 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 stasis 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 sell-through purchases? Might this lead to fewer video classics as some fear?

Nor does data alone shed light on Australian screen tastebuds 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 fast reaching maturity)—is part of the effort to develop methodologies for analysing and contextualising the data. She is clearly aware, by her use of the plural, that there is no single thought-frame for any industry or government body to adopt. It would be disastrous if we failed to espouse a pluralistic approach to either the production and funding processes or the analysis of our screen culture.



Get The Picture: essential data on Australian film, television, video and new media, *5th edition, Australian Film Commission, Sydney 1998.*

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Column

Cinesonic

Philip Brophy: *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and learning how to listen Japanese

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 melodrama—a 'woman's picture' from the 30s with Joan Crawford. I savour the soundtrack: the thickly compressed duco of its arcing violins, occasional sound effects and—most of all—the breathless dialogue. It's still the 30s: films are 'all-talking.' Not simply because dialogue is important due to cinema's centralisation of the script as a sanctioned authorial fountain, but more so because lip-synchronisation was the holy grail which film technology had sought since the end of the preceding century. To join speech seamlessly to the enunciation of the written word was and remains cinema's lofty enlightenment. This would be repulsive enough by itself, but fortunately the energy which fuelled this drive was the sound of the human voice. It is not unreasonable to claim that the Hollywood star system from the dawn of sound to the dawn of television feted the voice as much as the face. Garbo, Cagney, Monroe, Grant, Hepburn, Wayne—their voices are as readily recalled as their faces. The sexy sound of 'classic' Hollywood comes from erogenous larynxes which performed the wordy scripts hammered out on sterile typewriters manned by a thousand uptight Barton Finks.

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 the most popular trans-English form of cinema/television in the 90s: Japanese animation. How often have I recommended an anime I know in subtitled version to someone who then encounters it as an American or English dubbed version. Needless to say, most dismissive views of anime are founded on the atrocious use of bad American and English actors who sound worse than footballers and phone sex workers at an office Christmas party. Yet, I remain mystified as to why I think the original Japanese versions sound better. Am I a snob? Do I like practicing my Japanese? Can I speed-read subtitles? Well, yes to all of the above. But whilst watching a Ninja fly through trees and shifting dimensions as a nuclear ball hurls toward him, I hate the way I suddenly get the image of a San Francisco computer salesman at a basketball game. Never has the American voice sounded so prosaic, flat and dumb than in dubbed anime. And despite the deafening iconic presence of the American voice in so much media, never has it sounded so out of place as it does on the Japanese soundtrack.

Hideaki Anno's TV series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) has a soundtrack that 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) but there is a total logic to the sound design which both typifies its 'Japaneseness' and qualifies the role of the recorded voice within its aural netting. In fact, it should never be forgotten that 'sound design' is the creation of a sonic logic wherein all elements are orchestrated in accordance to our peculiar and precise understanding of how an imagined reality would acoustically operate and psychoacoustically resonate. To understand how any one element—a voice, for example—appears, happens and/or is

Neon Genesis Evangelion, screening on SBS

rendered in a narrative form, one must wholly investigate the narrative's sonic logic. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* exemplifies 4 primary categories of audiovisual narrativity which define the sense of its soundtrack: mecha design, musical eclecticism, spatio-temporal rupture, and emotional compaction.

The design of mechanical devices and machines—known as mecha design—is an important area of pre-production in Japanese entertainment. 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 DaVincian optics 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 motorbike to Sailor Moon's skirt. Most importantly, the 'look' of objects in Japanese design is accepted as a separate and auxiliary aspect of the object's purpose and function. Bank machines can be based on the look of tomatoes; skyscrapers on milk cartons; cars on deep sea crustaceans; perfume bottles on carburettors. They each will do what is required of them, so there is no real reason for them to speciously 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 futuristic scenarios wherein man and machine exist in a complexly modulated harmony. It is no surprise then that Japanese sound designers for anime obey the logic of the mecha design, carefully analysing issues of weight, density, 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 2 places: the city of Tokyo-3 (a spread of 'armament buildings' which retract underground when the Angel invasions occur) and the headquarters of NERV (based underground in a 'geo-front' complete with artificially maintained land, water, light and air). Simply, all preconceptions of difference between inside and outside, between stasis and motion, between base and apex, between form and ambience no longer operate in such a city of the future. Accordingly, acoustic ecology, industrial compression, noise pollution and aural atmosphere operate under new logics and codes. Secondly, each of the Angels (the diabolical threat to Earth) has their own look and an equally distinctive 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 sound effects accompany their terrible force, based on the power of violence they unleash on Tokyo-3. And despite the problem in designing sound for such impossible imaginings, an effective 'mismatching' of unexpected sounds with unexpected forms/shapes/beings runs throughout *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

And thirdly, Shinji and the other 'children' operate their Evas (giant 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. Japanese anime has consistently offered alternatives to the Wagnerian leitmotiv approach to serially repositioning a melodic refrain or theme throughout a film score. While this approach has typified both romantic and modernist film scoring, anime employs a string of motifs which effectively cancel each other out—or at least render their significance fluid and unfixed. Americans have often commented on how the Japanese place their music cues in the 'wrong' place—as if George Lucas and John Williams control the universal imagination. The use of New Jack Swing in *Blue Seed* (1995), Electro-Ambient in *Please Save My Earth* (1995) and Prog Rock in *La Filliette Revolutionaire* (1997) as *score* rather than sourced songs further typifies this seeming 'wrongness' about anime. The European orchestral machine is employed in anime for pure effect—not because 'that's how movie music should sound.' Further, there is usually no governing or determining style in any one anime. Shiroh Sagisu's score to *Evangelion* at varying times sounds like *The Thunderbirds*, FM-soft rock, Steve Reich and Ken Ishii but the result of this eclecticism is not arch, strained or postmodern: it simply mutates and evolves in response to the surges and pulsations in the location and dispersion of dramatic energy.

While the score to *Evangelion* seems to simulate a radio station programmed in a chaotic, random fashion, there is a purpose behind such chopping and changing. For the future in *Evangelion*—like the post-apocalyptic continuum which paves the way for Japan's unsettling existence—is on the brink of destruction, and all that is calm is merely the potential for radical destabilisation. *Spatio-temporal rupture* thus rages throughout *Evangelion*. Often we are caught in the claustrophobic mind of young Shinji as he grapples with an aching existential dilemma of how to live alone, divorced from social and human contact. The screen will go black, white, or assault the eye with *Pokemon*-style strobe-cutting; radical shifts in sound density will accompany these visual ruptures. Silence screams and pierces the soundtrack; detonations capitulate to a soft roar; all energies are continually inverted and reversed to complement and counterpoint their dramatic weight. Sometimes complete sections of plot disappear to convey Shinji's loss of consciousness inside an Eva. Sometimes his psychic sensitivity teleports him unexpectedly to ill-defined locales and spaces. The *musique concrète* collage of sounds and atmospheres which play with these spatio-temporal ruptures is never gratuitous. If the sound design—like the music—in Japanese anime sounds 'wrong' it is not simply because we aren't listening carefully enough, but that we are not cognisant of the way that Japanese sound *reflects* narrative, rather than *neutralising* it as does Western audiovisual entertainment.

A postwar cliché of the Japanese—in American eyes—holds them as being 'inscrutable', as if they are strange aliens who behave suspiciously in ways we do not understand. This, of course, is both their power and their continual threat to the hegemonic Euro-forces which have shaped our ways of thinking, seeing and hearing. And as their society is impenetrable, so is the very concept of 'drama'—pathetically universalised by the western intelligentsia as they lick the butts of Grecian philosophers—unworldly 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 acknowledged as the substance of a character's identity. In the West, we will crudely designate the hero, the buffoon, the cynic, the sage, etc; in the East, characters are founded upon their schizophrenia, established through their multiplicity, and defined by their inability to be grounded. *Evangelion*'s characters—especially the 3 'children' who complexly represent Japan's own problematised Generation X—are formed by means of *emotional compaction*. Joy harmonises grief; suffering prompts laughter; compassion folds violence; hatred suppresses innocence. *Evangelion*'s characters are quintessentially good, bad and ugly. Music, sound and voice dance in intricately orchestrated lines that map out these characters not as containers or vessels of emotion, but shimmering and shifting apparitions of emotional complexity—not 'rounded out' by authorial conceit, but *unrefined* as befits the prickly irrationality 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 very briefly outlined, consider the presence of an American voice in the midst of its non-Western sonorium. All the finely-tuned relationships between score, 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 enact and narrate a scenario which is beyond their comprehension, while the English voices pathologically expel a smarminess which polarises the worst clichés of nobility and decrepitude.

Even though SBS-TV has screened the embarrassing dubbed-version of *Evangelion*, there is an opportunity to encounter the complete cinesonic experience of the series thanks to the release of the subtitled edition by Siren Entertainment. Granted that most people probably hate reading subtitles, those who are intrigued by sound—and those who are genuinely interested in immersing themselves in the audiovisual 'inscrutability' of anime—are encouraged to experience *Evangelion* in its original format.

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 Dzenis wrote a comprehensive account of the event, for *RealTime* 27 ("Sounding cinema's depths," p26). Reading it again, I'm struck by the calibre of the guests, including composers Carter Burwell and Howard Shore, who conducted a performance of his electric guitar sextet for David Cronenbeg'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 *Satyricon*. 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 Grimonprez' *dialH-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, currently showing 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 *Nouvelle Vague* in 1992 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. Evan 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 Kojo 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 Psychedelic Parliament to Detroit techno...and all the offshoots. Eshun will talk about sound-image relationships in video clips. He's also written about blaxploitation 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 Orson Welles films and on the radio plays as well. He's written a book, *Citizen Kane*, 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 Proyas' *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, one 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.

Phil Brophy & Carl Priestly, *City Blood*, Next Wave — Angela Bailey

The other request was for single session tickets, allowing attendance at 'specialist' sessions. Brophy has met this but is nonetheless hopeful that conferees 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 filmworkers wanting to get into the area. 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 Dzenis 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, Storey Hall, RMIT, Melbourne, July 8 - 11. tel 03 9925 2193, emma@viscom.rmit.edu.au*

Report

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-serials or even the French term "feuilletons documentaires" (serial documentaries) and they have a different status. Whichever way you look at the world-wide boom in reality TV and other forms of factual programming, it does raise many questions about the documentary format. Is the increased demand for documentary causing the development of new forms or are the new forms a response to market demands? And where is documentary headed next? These were the issues facing panel members and delegates in the session, "Shapeshifters: New Forms & New Markets", at the 4th annual Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference held in Fremantle.

Jeremy Gibson, Head of Features at BBC Bristol, who was responsible for bringing to the world the acclaimed and groundbreaking *Video Diaries* series, explained that the doco-soap arose out of the BBC's requirement for sitcoms. The doco-soap provided low cost programs that were funny, with drama and real passion to engage an audience. The appeal of humour and strong characters was reiterated by Christoph Jörg, Commissioning Editor at La Sept/Arte and Rudy Buttignol, Creative Head of Documentaries, TV Ontario. Buttignol calls documentary serials or soaps "sit-docs." The successful 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. It's very difficult to say I want to make this documentary on something that's never been seen before. It's *all* been seen before, so what we've gone back to is the narrative."

New digital technologies have provided intimate access to previously inaccessible areas, lower production costs (and consequently cheaper shows) but the doco-soap form has taken hold also as a response to audience desire for tabloid and voyeuristic programming.

Jeremy Gibson maintained that the quality programs have universal themes. *Driving School* was so popular because the driving test is a contemporary rite of passage. Viewers related to attempts to pass the test and the associated highs and lows. "It's about the heart and soul of what you watch. If you sense that someone is pressing all the voyeuristic buttons, yes, it may bring on the audience, but you have to decide where the quality lies. A lot of the reality programming is what do you do when disaster strikes; disaster programming is getting huge audiences on commercial channels. The BBC doesn't touch that stuff at the moment. BBC tries to put stuff on the screen which has an inherent quality to it."

The ratings winners and most successful documentaries on the US commercial channels are the 'shockumentaries' such as 'when good pets go bad' or 'the storms that ripped up your neighbourhood' etc. But quality is still the number one consideration for broadcasters represented by the speakers on the panel, whose channels are not ratings driven.

Christophe Jörg explained that government funded Arte Channel, one of Europe's major producers and distributors of documentary, requires 4-5% market share but critical reviews are the primary method of assessing quality performance. With no entertainment programs, no sport shows, no talk shows, there is great flexibility in their programming which comprises 50% documentaries. The rest is divided between feature films, telemovies and news.

Ratings seem to be more of an issue in the US where the cultural imperative for TV programming is less apparent. Buttignol maintains that with the advent of prolific cabling, market fragmentation is greater in US and Canada than in the less commercially competitive UK.

Changes in TV distribution technology are having an impact with expansion in the number of channels from 70 to 200 (with digital). The TV screen will become like a magazine store where there are hundreds of choices. In this environment branding becomes rigorous and is not just a question of the icon at the bottom of the TV screen. Viewers scan through 70 channels, so when they stop at a particular channel they must know from the look and feel where they are in the electronic landscape. As a result programmers become rigidly narrow in their choices.

While the multi-channel environment means audiences fragment, it can also allow a certain freedom for filmmakers to find particular audiences instead of producing for the mysterious mass.

Audience accessibility (and reaching the widest audience) has been one of TV's driving ideologies. John Hughes, filmmaker and Commissioning Editor for Documentaries at SBS Independent, proffered another opinion: "If you want to get to the widest audience to disseminate a conversation in the culture, that work can be done at least as productively by speaking directly to certain receptive sets within the culture, so my work as filmmaker has not been in reaching the widest possible audience but in making the closest possible contact."

SBS, like Arte, is not driven by ratings and is seen as complementary to other more mainstream services. SBS is interested in the possibilities in genre shifts that are occurring, and how they feed into new work. Says Hughes, "It's always about the creative possibilities that filmmakers can bring to subject matter in transforming form in interesting ways that brings new engagement with audiences."

Hughes feels that the docu-soap movement is having interesting influences on audience reception. There are all kinds of traditions that filmmakers are drawing on and playing with. He cited as an example that it is no longer possible for a viewer to listen to the familiar BBC presenter (used in the entertaining doco-soap excerpt shown by Gibson) without perceiving it as ironic.

When audiences become sated with certain documentary forms, when the doco-soaps, disaster docs and shockumentaries don't thrill any more, where to next? How much deeper into voyeurism are audiences and broadcasters willing to go? The nastier edge of voyeurism can already 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 heavyweight or 'high impact' documentary? According to Rudy Buttignol, "the percentage of serious documentaries is probably the same, the same percentage of a much bigger pie." The panel maintained this form still has a place, particularly with broadcasters who make their niche an alternative to the exploitative genre documentaries of commercial broadcasters.

There is no shortcut for the high impact documentary just as there is no shortcut 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, 4th annual Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference, ScreenWest Fremantle, Western Australia, Feb 18 - 20

Melissa Hasluck is a Perth based independent producer who was Media Liaison Officer for the 1999 Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference

Global rewards

Sydney Film Festival previewed

The Sydney Film Festival opens in just a few days with a new Artistic Director Gayle Lake, additional venues (Dendy Martin Place, the Academy) and a program which includes an eagerly awaited Cassavetes retrospective—a rare chance to see his films on the big screen: *Shadows*; *Husbands*; *Woman Under the Influence*; *Gloria*; *Faces*; *A Child is Waiting*; *Love Streams* and *Mickey and Nicky*.

As usual the Dendy Awards showcases the best Australian short films, offering a rich assortment of fiction and documentary not often seen in other short festivals. Last year's Dendy winner *Two/Out* by Kriv Stenders 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 Rayns has selected from Asia for the Brisbane Film Festival. Nonetheless, as subtitled international films increasingly 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 Whistle* (winner at Sundance) is a futuristic tale set in Havana; the timely *Rehearsal for War* is an Italian film about an actor and director in Naples rehearsing a play to be staged in Sarajevo; *The Powder Keg* explores life in contemporary Belgrade over one hectic night; *Run Lola Run* from Germany plays with real-and-film time: a woman has exactly 20 minutes to save her lover from death. There are also films from Iran (Majid Majidi's award winning *The Children of Heaven*), Russia, Sweden (*Fucking Amal*—debut for 20 year old poet Luka Moodysson) and India (*Fire*—the second in Deepa Mehta's trilogy). Then there's the better known directors: the eagerly awaited *Another Day in Paradise* from Larry Clark (director of the extraordinary *Kids*), Neil Jordan's *In Dreams* and Ken Loach's *My Name is Joe*. *Soft Fruit* and *Two Hands*, 2 Australian premieres by Sydney filmmakers Christina Andreef and Gregor Jordan are also screening.

Documentaries will be screening at Dendy Martin Place and include reels for nostalgia buffs: a personal memoir by John Huston; a look at 2 of Hollywood's greats, Selznick and Hitchcock; and the life and career of composer Leonard Bernstein. *Speak To Me My Sisters* (tales of apartheid by 25 South African women), *Windhorse* (shot secretly in Tibet about Chinese cultural imperialism), and a homage to disco in Singapore, *Forever Fever*, look worth catching politically and cross-culturally.

Then there's happenings and retrospectives. To celebrate the State Theatre's 70th birthday, Dorothy Azner's *The Wild Party* (featuring Clara Bow) will be screened and, 100 years after the birth of director Alfred Hitchcock, the silent version of *Blackmail* will feature with live accompaniment 20s style by pianist Max Lambert. Retrospectives include the classics of James Whale (*Frankenstein* and *The Invisible Man*) who also features as a character in the festival opener *Gods and Monsters*, and *Future Shock*, a millennium-induced look into the next century and beyond. dLux media's d.art which screened to packed houses last year will again present the best Australian experimental digital and video art.

In recent years the great strength of the Sydney Film Festival has been in its documentary programming, often comfortably outshining the feature films. One sign of this has been the often packed-to-overflowing Pitt St Cinema 3 (now closed). How the Dendy will handle these crowds, especially for the documentaries on screen culture subjects, will be interesting to see. Let's hope for multiple screenings. This year's program from a new director will certainly be a test to see if the slowly declining fortunes of the festival can be reversed. With the ever-declining prospect of an MCA Cinematheque, Sydney-siders rely heavily on the festival to keep in touch with both the past (the John Cassavetes and James Whale screenings this year, Hitchcock's *Blackmail*) and the international present. RT

For details of the Sydney Film Festival,see advertisemnt on page 19 website www.sydfilm-fest.com.au

Jill Carter-Hansen, *Songs of the Immigrant Bride*

Sitting in the Globe Cinema watching the *Can't Buy Me Love* animation screenings, guzzling champagne and grasping for the popcorn, it occurred to me that this culinary effrontery perfectly reflected the essence of animation. You take the champagne—our ability as educated adults to deal with subtle symbolism, 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 bubbly stimulation and light and fluffy joy that is animation. This collection presented in conjunction with the *Can't Buy Me Love* exhibition at Silicon Pulp Gallery presented works such as *Arthur! The Square Knights of the Round Table* (1968), a spoof for children on the old myth; *Dr Amoeba Does Sex* (1995), a *Ren and Stimpy* style tale of an hermaphrodite amoeba courting himself; and an animated version of Dr Karl Kruszelnicki'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 computer animation of a very raggedy rat attempting to woo a cat featuring the voice of Flacco, and the works of Bruce Petty and Jill Carter-Hansen.

In his introduction to the screenings Andrew Traucki 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 work of Petty and Hansen shine. Petty's work dates from 1970. His two pieces, *Australian History* and *Leisure* (which won the Academy Award for Animation in 1976) are incisively written, documenting the errors and follies of humanity overtime. He uses the interplay between the complexity of the text, delivered as a documentative voice over, and the simplicity of the animation consisting of pen drawings and collage, to create a multilayered political commentary that is both thought provoking and highly amusing. Stylistically, Jill Carter-Hansen's works, *Song of the Immigrant Bride* and *The Messenger*, offer the visual as script. Using heavily layered graphics in startling colours, the compression of images creates a mythic visual poetry that is breathtakingly beautiful and savage. Cel-set ups, print collages, acrylics and cartoons by Bruce Petty and Jill Carter-Hansen are on display at the Silicon Pulp Gallery. Impressed by the success of the evening, Silicon Pulp are contemplating making the event a regular feature of the gallery's activities. Gail Priest

Can't Buy Me Love , *presented by Silicon Pulp Animation Gallery and The Globe Cinema, Stanmore May 12*

Report

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 "travelling package" of 17 films curated by the 1999 Margaret Mead Film & Video Festival, an annual event presented by the American Museum of Natural History, and secondly, a selection of 6 films which participated in the most recent Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. *Real life on film* also marked the first time the travelling Margaret Mead Festival had screened 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", *Real* 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* (Pirtis) 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, reminiscing about the past and bewildered by possibilities of a bleak future. From Belgium, *Skin's Sorrow* (Peaux de Chagrin) explored the deliciously Gothic terrain of taxidermy. A journey into the internal and external landscape of this strange art, the film intercut interviews from various taxidermists with several lonely women who "naturalise" their deceased pets to keep their memory alive. With visual stylings reminiscent of *Psycho*, gentle humour and insightful interviews gave this film grace.

Bread Day was my favourite film from the festival. At 56 minutes and with only 16 edits (an extremely important detail), *Bread 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 staunchly observational film transported us into the timeless, banal 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.

Moon Children

Special mentions must also go to *Moon Children*, a public television documentary about the stigma of Albinism—"white-haired babies"—in Taiwan; *Dear Dr. Spencer—Abortion In A Small Town*, an historical portrait of renegade doctor Robert Spencer; and *Gerry and Louise*, a film which explored the human casualties of Apartheid and the relationship between a former member of the South African Security Police, Col. Gerry Hugo, and his wife Louise Flanagan, a journalist devoted to exposing such men and their past atrocities. Part-confessional, part-exposé, part-observational drama, I can't remember the last time a documentary made me so tense and afraid of what I was going to hear next.

So *World's Worst Drivers* this certainly wasn't. Nor for that matter *Race Around The World*, nor a showcase of white-bread, badly-made, easy-to-market-and-digest Australian TV documentaries which so often saturate our broadcast landscape. Hmm, unfamiliar territory.

Beyond the lofty ideological objectives splashed all over its promotional material, despite its shrewd political alliances (Cinemedia and Museum Victoria, principal sponsors) which will no doubt sustain its future, and above all, of interest to anyone observing the machinations within Australia's non-fiction terrain...as a film culture entity, *Real life on film* presented itself unwittingly as a fascinating anomaly.

Aimed squarely at members of the local documentary filmmaking community and those amongst us "politically and socially" aware, *Real life* was—in its marketing strategy at least—a throwback to a documentary generation of days gone by, where today's black outfits would be gleefully traded for circa 1972 combat greens. Touting documentaries for their social and political worth in our "enlightened" times would be unofficially acknowledged as a marketing kiss of death by today's minders of our documentary culture, film distributors, funding bodies and broadcasters (whose commissioning editors' own fatigues are no doubt gathering dust at the bottom of their wardrobes). It is of course the very desperation to avoid such ignominious tags which has, among other 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—an 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 practice...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.

Review

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 manifestation of *bergbau*, a 4-part series of chance-based art events held at the Lion Arts Centre in Adelaide's west end. Presented by elendil, MRC's new media coordinator, *bergbau* and its ensemble of local sound engineers, filmmakers and artists set out to experiment with the synergism of sight and sound through developmental combinations of old and new media technology.

Throughout the performance I felt myself shifting restlessly from anthropologist to engaged participant. The dexterous display of geekery from the technical crew hunkering around elaborate consoles in the shadows beneath the screen, was often far more captivating than the hypnotic streams of light and sound resulting from their adroit manoeuvres. After attempting to consciously collude with the gaudiness of the techno-wizardry going on around me, I began to grow weary, reaching for 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 mind. To wilfully partake in this hoaxing of consciousness we require the complete collaboration of the senses. Theatres harbour the ritual grafting of external narratives to the individual experience of self through the acquiescence 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-bag) it is impossible to attain that state of lethargy required to really 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 web-cam grabs and DJ'd 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. I felt it may have been interesting, 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 performative 'means of production' of sound 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 r a d i o q u a l i a. As often is the case with art 'happenings', fixed and catalogued documentation will hard-wire the forms our memories seek to recreate them. The documentation of *bergbau* (*http://www.va.radioqualia.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.

bergbau, *Mercury Cinema, April 11, online at* <www.radioqualia.va.com.au/bergbau>

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 wasn't touring 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 timetabling. 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.

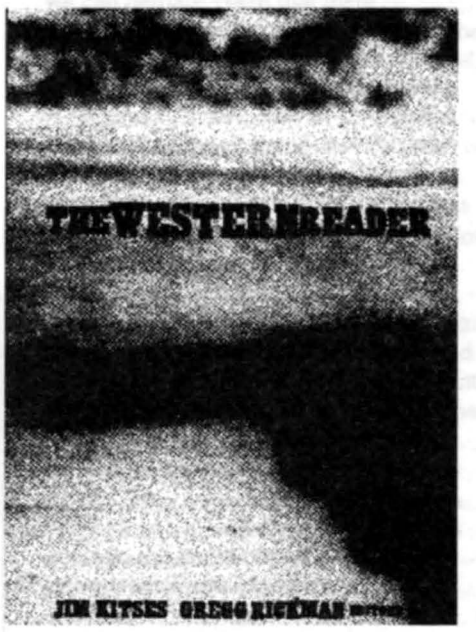
Gun Crazy is one of the BFI's terrific little book series, otherwise known as the BFI Film Classics. Some have already been reviewed in *RealTime* (Adrian Martin's *Once Upon A Time In The West* see RealTime 28), and others, such as Edward Buscombe's *Stagecoach* and Richard Schickel's *Double Indemnity*, 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 praises have been sung before, sometimes to excess. But Kitses is systematic as he works through the narrative charting the demise of the young fools, Bart and Laurie, from the high pantomime of their meeting through their gun-crazy spree to the foggy hillside of their doom.

It is a testament to the authority of Kitses' research, and of his prose, that his explication 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 and 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' own encyclopedic knowledge of the movies provides our key for understanding why this particular noir shines so brightly.

Kitses 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 Warshow's 1954 *Partisan Review* essay, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner", to essays written specifically for this collection. They are arranged into 3 sections: The Western Genre; The Classic Western; Revisionism, Race and Gender. Of the 7 essays for the genre section, there are 2, Doug Williams' "Pilgrims and the Promised Land" and Edward Buscombe'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 sad irony 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.



Apart from recalling past works, new writings are saved from the ephemera of today. Kenneth Turan's "A Fistful of Memories: Interview with Clint Eastwood" is reprinted from the *Los Angeles Times* and gives great insight into a figure who is second only to John Wayne in his association with the Western and American cinema in general. The final section comprises works mainly from the past decade. And it is in this section that the contemporary Western more clearly gets a run. There are 2 strains here, identity and postmodernism. Questions of identity circulate around the roles of Native Americans and women in the Western. The issue of postmodernism is picked up by Kitses in his essay on Maggie Greenwald's *The Ballad of Little Jo*. He also raises the issue of postmodernism in his introduction to the collection, attempting to construct the contemporary Western as both a continuation of and reflection upon its own past. His final essay, on Greenwald's gender reversal Western, presents a film which he sees as dramatising the task with flair and poetry. Indeed, it is testimony to the selection of the essays by Kitses and Rickman that they constantly provoke the reader to watch or rewatch the films that are mentioned throughout the book.

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 reconfigurations 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.

Jim Kitses, Gun Crazy *(BFI Publishing, 1996); Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman*, The Western Reader *(Limelight Editions, 1998)*

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 reinforced steel whose fortresses are protected by the famous red and blue knights? Why not enter *The Shoot Out*, a new event aiming to encourage the work of creative, emerging filmmakers. Organised by PAN (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 a 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.

To enter, contact The Shoot Out *for an entry form: PO Box 982, Newcastle NSW 2300. Entries must be submitted by June 25.*
Enquiries 02 4962 1855, eao@hunterlink.net.au *or visit* www.eon.hl.com.au/Shootout

For more new media and multimedia see
Dance and film installations at antistatic, p11
Gelber, Guerin & Gyger at AGNSW, p40
Haines & Hinterding on Bruny Island, p38
Salamanca Theatre's. *Still Life* p.34

Report

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 complete retrospective of the films of Robert Bresson. To accompany the retrospective, the Cinematheque published a comprehensive monograph, the first 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 and so increase the awareness and appreciation of this masterful filmmaker.

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, textured soundscape and graceful, deadpan 'models'—creates the feeling and experience that this is the first time one is really watching cinema. As Jonathan Rosenbaum states in the monograph, Bresson's cinema transforms one's "understanding of what the art of film can be and do."

The retrospective provided the rare opportunity to view Bresson's entire body of work and to trace the development of this style from the early films (*Les Anges du Peche* and *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne*) to the 'classic' stage (*Journal d'un cure de campagne, Un condamne a mort s'est echappe ou le vent souffle ou il veut, Pickpocket, Proces de Jeanne d'Arc, Au hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*) through to the colour films (*Une femme douce, Quatre nuits d'un reveur, Lancelot du Lac, Le Diable probablement* and *L'Argent*).

It is during the 'classic' stage that Bresson's formalism begins to fully flourish. Here emerges "a powerful and wholly material eroticism" (Rosenbaum). Bresson reveals the dimension of the spiritual through a careful and calculated attention to the material and concrete. Narrative becomes distilled and reduced to a series of gestures, looks, objects and physical actions that are charged and inscribed with the search for fulfilment and completeness. Bresson strips away dramatic and theatrical modes of expression (character psychology, narrative cause and effect) to reveal physical, material reality in all its essence and truth. It is through a precise and careful attention to the surface of things—the materiality of objects and actions—that Bresson accesses the realm of the spiritual.

Ultimately, Bresson's cinema is one of both purity, and paradox. Bresson's essentialism and minimalism, his attention to the materiality of things (objects, actions, gestures, sounds) as that which bears and reveals the essence, the truth and the spiritual, creates a moving and intense cinema. Despite Bresson's economical, minimal method and complete lack of conventional codes of drama and expression, his films are highly engaging and contain a great depth of emotion.

Maria Casares in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, 1945, courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art, NY

Bresson's films are dominated by themes of suicide, despair, solitude and crime. Yet one finds extended shots of hands, legs and doors. It is on the surface and texture of physical reality that his stories take place, for example, the extended sequences in *Pickpocket* of men skilfully and discreetly stealing personal objects from other bodies and pockets. The orchestration of bodies and movement evokes a pure fascination with physicality and surface.

The greatest moments in Bresson's films are those where the concrete and the material become the ineffable, for example, the ending of *Pickpocket* where the 2 main protagonists, Michel and Jeanne, declare their love for one another. There is a nice juxtaposition here, as the moment of 2 souls connecting takes place through prison bars that Michel is locked behind.

Bresson's cinema evokes awe and wonder in the viewer through its revealing of the abstract in the specific and the general in the particular. His formal balance elevates the act of revelation in cinema to a dimension that is profound. It is only through retrospectives such this that the achievements of such a filmmaker are not lost or forgotten.

Robert Bresson—a complete retrospective of Bresson's work, *Museum of Modern Art, New York City, in association with the Cinematheque Ontario, Jan 22 - Feb 7*

Fiona A Villella is a Melbourne-based writer who was in New York at the time of the Bresson retrospective.

Eyeing the interface

Teri Hoskin tries out diagnostic tools for anxiety & love in the new millennium

Working between the 'physical' space of the gallery and the 'virtual' space of online environments is something I expect we will see more of as visual artists seek to inject some of the differences and possibilities of online environments back into the gallery. As a website Diagnostic Tools Corp.™ effectively utilises the now familiar corporate interface to offer the user an array of well plotted paths. The critical intent is quite literally stated with all the hyperbole of intrusive and marginalising www advertising. Autocratic questionnaires construct consumer profiles for your future shopping ease; banner ads flash their banal messages begging you to 'up' their 'hit' counter; the promise of all—the return of little.

The much vaunted 'interactive interface' (ie a form) invites the user to 'input' a paranoid episode to the Paranoid Poetry Generator. Text gleaned from user submissions return in the gallery as sound bytes emanating from the Paranoid Interface. This imposing black edifice reminiscent of large machines built to view small things (or Darth Varda perhaps) is replete with conspiratorial surveillance theories. The viewer climbs the black rubber clad steps and looks through a distressed-metal framed slit and beholds an eye. One could hope that this horribly beautiful eye in the centre of the inky black was actually winking, but I think it is a little more sinister than that.

Four large light box panoramas (*Blueprints for Diagnostic Tools for the New Millennium*) are mounted on the gallery wall. The composite images aptly summon what Paul Mann in "Stupid Undergrounds" calls the "whole dumb hollow of culture." Online they exist on a smaller scale as Quicktime VR files (Quicktime VR places the viewer [by dint of their mouse] at the pivotal point of the picture. The pivot is central). Each panorama has a sales pitch, for example "'Technologize' nature and 'Naturalize' technology with this bi-directional consciousness filter. Blur the boundaries between the two, collapse the categories and profit from the undifferentiated mess."

"FUZZY LOVE DIAGNOSTICS...confirming that technologically enhanced love is logical and data dating is the future love vector." The *Fuzzy Love* dating service for both gallery and website visitors (dis)functions differently in both spaces. Details can be entered in either environment. The gallery interface is more complex and entertaining. The prospective client can devise their own 'image' (depending upon their imagination as to how best to meet the eye in the eye so to speak). The snapshot then joins an array of flickering portraits of other fuzzy clients. Within firmly set paradigms (the quintessential being the assumption that net users are chiefly in search of love) one can construct an identity based on values and sexual preference. Without a net connection the gallery service fails to deliver a result. This is by design but perhaps this intention is a little overstated and unnecessary.

As an indication of how quickly things change in the domain of internet parlance, the 1997 work comes across as slightly dated. The artists' intent in the gallery was to isolate the user and stress the solitary nature of these love match pursuits. It becomes instead a site for light relief and chat (of the flesh kind) amongst those who wish to break with the dead-end narratives of humanism's losses represented by the other works. It is quite likely that new networks amongst gallery goers would actually be made if, charged with a wine or 2 and the encouragement of flesh world friends, you could follow up on your perfect match immediately. Perhaps now *Diagnostic Tools* has finished its round of gallery tours (Adelaide was its last stop after Berlin, Canada and Sydney) *Fuzzy* could be developed into a fully functional web dating service.

In the realm of utility *Diagnostic Tools for the New Millennium* could be very useful for teaching. The hands-on critical approach to the colonising of the web by the corporate apparatus is unique. Here every component of the monstrous culture machine is a device or a tool. The project revels in the bipartite realms of private/public (inside/outside); original/copy (intellectual property/information wants to be free); flesh world/virtual world (innocence/culpability). Binaries are always a good place to leave from.

Diagnostic Tools for the New Millennium, *Josephine Starrs and Leon Cmielewski, Experimental Art Foundation, March 25 - April 4, online at* http://starrs.banff.org

Teri Hoskin is an artist and writer. She lectures at the School of Information and Communication Studies, University of South Australia. She is the site editor and assembler for the Electronic Writing Research Ensemble. <ensemble.va.com.au>

Feature

Terror as nostalgia?

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

The raw material of *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*—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 demand that seems to defy exchange value (hence its hip stature to 80s leather theorists). The hijacker is Don DeLillo's ultimate "lethal believer", one who is almost sure to fail yet dares to stand outside the hijacking of history by the media and its fanatic 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 'baddies' 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 representation of hijacking is an ideological defence of a constructed Western ('free world') innocence—figured in the archetypal hostage, the young girl. Pop-psychological readings of the sexually frustrated "skyjacker type" are cut with scenes of saucy nylon air hostesses. This transatlantic fabric is undermined by footage of Palestinian Leila Khaled, spliced with air-safety instruction videos, and scenes from the introduction of airport security measures in the 60s. All this against a background of simmering Cold War revolutionary politics (always *en route* "to Cuba"), the stateless Palestinians' ongoing struggle for territory, the Black Panthers, etc. The usual political suspects make an appearance: Castro and Guevara, Mao, Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev, Arafat, Nixon, Reagan (under fire), and, as an eerie aftertaste, Yeltsin and Clinton's uncontrollable cackling.

It's now a commonplace of fashionable media criticism to reject the passive epistemology of the couch potato. Grimonprez celebrates the living room experience, and offers a textbook elaboration of the 'active media consumer'—embodied participants in news reality and themselves televisual hijackers. The difference is that Grimonprez (and his researchers) have gained access to the commodified electronic media archives of public history (with its attendant copyright questions). He's not just symbolically 'zapping' but laboriously recontextualising the media real, literally appropriating it for his own art spectacle. This is his spectator-turned-curator strategy, which revels in the blurring of art-documentary, video-film categories.

J. Grimonprez dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y, then, is less a political recoding than a transcoding into a media sublime. Alternative narrative lines collapse under the weight of its excess baggage. Indirection rather than indeterminacy sometimes seem to rule. But despite the potential for a cool, enlightened, cynical response in the Australian context, where for most of us terrorism is only an info-tourist experience, the criticism that *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* merely aesthetically repeats the sensational, or trivialises suffering, under the opportunistic guise of a media-art intervention is, I think, misguided. It misses the regard Grimonprez pays to the unrepresentable.

With TV, and especially since satellite, all the complex and contradictory alterity of the world is now part of our everyday experience. Part of *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*'s interest lies in its exploration of what these shared media histories mean for our sense of belonging. Its poetic condensation of video and film off-cuts, interspersed cartoons, photographs, fragile personal camcorder footage, is self-reflexive and media savvy. Its surrealist juxtapositions, tones, and rhythms are as crucial as its soundtrack, which along with evocative sampling consists of a deadpan American voice reading excerpts from DeLillo. Suggested links between the role of the writer and the terrorist remain obscure, but flickering between the kitsch humour and the banal and sublime horror is an effort to make intimate public media history.

TV loves the uncanny. The traumatised body is certainly the mute subject of this bio-archival footage. Death escapes representation, but violent death is the media universal. In the procession of serial repetition of the hijackers, 2 key scenes stay with me: the mopping, in slow motion, of an airport flooded with blood (and a legless cowboy boot), and the cleaning of blood ingrained in an aeroplane'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 Hustle*), nostalgia is at the core of the project. Not just for a more radical period of history, or for 70s fashions, but for the media index of that 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 form 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 indexicality. And, as many of the images are so familiar, their historicity is intense. *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* thereby gives to television a memory that it otherwise structurally lacks, or at least a more nuanced one than we're likely to get in the millennial TV specials this Christmas.

Johan Grimonprez, dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y *(1997), 68 minute colour Betacam video, with excerpts from the novels* Mao II *and* White Noise *by Don DeLillo, music and sample collage by David Shea, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, March 20 - May 2*

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

The centre shifts

Keith Gallasch talks to Norie Neumark about bodies and computers

Dead Centre, Maria Miranda

If the installation *Shock in the Ear* (Artspace, 1997) and the subsequent CD-ROM of the same name are anything to go by, *Dead Centre: the body with organs*, a new installation from Norie Neumark and collaborators should entertain, disturb and certainly make you think—re-think, that is, your relationship with your body and with computers. The usual analogy between brain and computer is out. Norie Neumark thinks that scientist often get the analogies wrong. What if we thought of the computer as a body instead of a brain—we feed it, it ingests, digests, processes, absorbs, erupts, excretes. What if we re-thought our bodies instead of living out the Anglo model of bodily experience. As Lynn Payer in *Culture and Medicine* has described it, the British are bowel centred, the French look to their livers, the Germans to the heart and the circulatory system, the Americans see the body as a machine, the East is elsewhere altogether. As for Australians, that's something to reflect on, but it's not surprising that Neumark has invoked the Dead Centre. She has written: "I first understood my body as cultural one day when, after overeating in Italy, I complained of a stomach ache, but my Italian friends bemoaned their livers. How did they know where their livers were? I wondered...a decade later and thanks to acupuncture, I not only know where my liver is but experience its symptoms and can even track it to various tender points on my feet and legs." Historically and culturally our organs travel about. And therefore one of the key figures in *Dead Centre* is travelling, the other is the computer as an organ of digestion and transmission.

To encourage this reconfiguring of our metaphorical habits, Neumark works through stories she's collected, performances, sounds, still images and projected animations, "that fracture the 'natural' body." The images by digital visual artist Maria Miranda entail X-Rays, scans, the skeleta of the computer and body organs, but avoid the literalness of western images of the body. The vocal track (pre-recorded by sound artist/performer Amanda Stewart to text by Neumark but also performed live improvising with herself on several occasions during the installation's gallery life) also fragments and transforms. Stewart, a distinctive poet, reports that she's enjoyed the rare process of working to someone else's text and is looking forward, says Neumark, "to reacting in a lateral way to a mixture of memory systems." Composer and programmer Greg White, writes Neumark, "creates the pulses which hold the room/machine together and has designed special software to enable the complex sound design." Neil Simpson lights the space in which Miranda's image-printed sheets of copper and silk will hang. Six loud speakers will "express the organs", drawing on Stewart's performance and sounds from the *Dead Centre* sound art piece Neumark produced earlier for ABC FM's *The Listening Room*.

I ask if the radio work forms the template for the installation. Neumark says yes and no, a lot of other things happen as the work transforms 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* and *Dead Centre* it is sound which is at the heart of these works. The voice too is of the body and carries its own cultural baggage. 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, a Senior Lecturer in Media Arts Production, University of Technology Sydney, will return to the United States for a year on 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 grandfather invented the device and also the envelope with window—and the genealogy 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 8 - 22. Live performances with Amanda Stewart July 8, 11 & 18. Enquiries tel 9698 7235*

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Comment

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 Lucca. Tuscany is traditionally a 'red' region with a proud history of partisan resistance to fascism. The 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 table tennis and always for the favourite Italian sport 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 impersonations of popular 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 first to address me, and the silent city, 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 had a petty 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 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 Tuscan settings 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 legitimate, in the monk's view, the "belly laughs of the simple" and thus annul the "timor Dei", the fear of God without which no motivation remains for moral conduct.

Similarly, we cultivate a "timor Holocausti", 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 extreme human capacity for savagery that demands no slacking of our historical memory and admits no tampering 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 and that the true details of the experience have been glossed over, averted by Benigni.

But I, (trying to recognise friends amongst the extras), have always been disquieted by thoughts other than those inspired by the true details of the experience. It is the Holocaust as 'normal' that causes my vacillation, the Holocaust as industry, with its production process, allied professions and technologies, opportunities 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. Wasn't the Holocaust contiguous and continuous with the daily toils of the simple man with all his virtues, including his timor Dei? And where is that human 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 the limit where knowledge of the disaster becomes impossible, where the disaster takes care of everything including its forgetting. The forgetting has already happened, it happened with the disaster and left the disaster 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 horrible to be known or too ordinary to be memorable.

Life is Beautiful is effective because it acts in this gap between the ordinary and the extraordinary of the events, and touches on the uncanniness of their reversibility. In the most dramatic scene, Guido is summoned secretively to the drinks table by the German Nazi officer he had known in Italy, who could save his family. The officer, it turns out, is obsessed with their old sport of solving riddles and a riddle is the only thing he has to offer. An abyss opens where meaning falls and Guido's game of scoring points for a tank finds a tragic counterpart.

Benigni's film is centred on a game and on the power it has to seduce death and to deflect meaning from hitting a child. After all, we learn at the end, the story is the memory of this child and is therefore the real prize of the game, a memory where death in the camp has already been seduced; it is soft, it is blue, it is absent.

My father, when I was a child, used to buy bails of "rags", he used them to clean up engines, they were called "the Jewish clothes" and I was allowed to play dress-ups before they went to the workshop...life goes on...it is beautiful...and children are protected from the meaning of clothes.

Maybe the German girl in Pisa, whose name I have forgotten—and with whom I cried in rage against the violence of those who can forever claim they had no part to play (nor their ancestors or countries or neighbours, nor names they knew to be tarnished by suspicion), forever innocent—maybe the German girl was daughter to the officer obsessed by the riddles.

Life is Beautiful, *written and directed by Roberto Benigni, screening nationally. Grand Jury Prize, Cannes 1998 and 8 David di Donatello (Italian Oscar) awards including Best Picture, Actor, Director and Screenplay.*

Cira La Gioia is a freelance writer living in Melbourne.

Reviews

Bedrooms and Hallways
director Rose Troche
writer Robert Ferrar
distributor New Vision
July release

You never like the things you should. Take heed geneticists.
As suddenly I develop an aversion to this homo boy with dirty blonde hair, and the BBC funded movie turns into a *Friends* episode.
Just because the straight slow-burn Irishman gave you an extra row of pickled gherkin on your bread-roll, well bully for you.
Though, in some frames when he's wearing a rough-hewn jumper, and there's that imperfect bump on the ridge 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 maybe you remind me of my highschool 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 sit back in my seat, comfortable with the irony, mis-identification over with.

& there's the gorgeous (now bi) Irishman holding a Guinness in one hand
& the "truth stone" in the other, fielding questions from the group about anal sex
& how it (paradoxically) helps a man understand women better...
While his blonde assboy, too scruffy by far, is out chasing some Amy of his own.

*Keri Glastonbury is a poet who saw Rose Troche's (*Go Fish*) latest movie* Bedrooms and Hallways *and wrote a poem to mask the fact that she thought the film, a queer romantic comedy, was full of too many narrative conveniences to allow much real empathy with the characters in their sexual roundelay.*

*Kevin McKidd (*Trainspotting*) plays Leo, a gay man who falls in love with Brendan (James Purefoy), a straight boy from his men's group. In one of many happy accidents Brendan just happens to have recently broken up with Leo's first girlfriend. Also see Hugo Weaving play a kinky real estate agent with a penchant for fucking his perky fashion victim lover (Tom Hollander) in eccentrically English houses before they go to sale.*

Nadine Garner in *Fresh Air*

Keri Glastonbury's first poetry book Hygienic Lily *will be published by Five Islands Press in July 1999.*

Fresh Air
writer/director Neil Mansfield
distributor R.B. Films
Release: Sydney

The first of the Million Dollar Movies (SBS and AFC), *Fresh Air* plonks you into inner-city Sydney and becomes as organic as an alfalfa maker, sprouting zines, painters, debates between aesthetics and athletics, band nights, Marrickville moments—conversations drowned out by aeroplanes—and too many coffees.

Inspired by Godard's *Breathless*—jumpcuts and cute short hairdos (Nadine Garner as Kit)—and an engaging easy charm and dialogue that grows out of the everyday—Rohmer's *Boyfriends and Girlfriends*—*Fresh Air* is about lifestyle and community, where twentysomethings are at, especially those unable to conform to the economic rationalist ideals of the Howard government. Inspired cinematography by Toby Oliver means shifting between styles to make a point: when Kit meets up with an old art-school friend who is now an advertising exec, the visuals change to the saturated blues, yellows and greens in advertising and video clip vogue, highlighting her feeling that she is standing at the end of the longest queue, goin' nowhere, outside the mainstream.

What's good about *Fresh Air* is its injection of small realities, chucking out the wacky outback characters that have become so tiresome in Oz film (see *Paperback Hero*) for urbanites who speak—even if I cringed as I heard them—words that hold some truth. Doesn't everyone these days want to be a filmmaker? Doesn't everyone have trouble explaining to their parents (and even more so, grandparents) what it is exactly they do? Also successful is the establishment of multiculturalism as part of Australian life rather than an 'issue' to be resolved in some way. In a gently ironic scene, an amateur theatre company (of actors from a range of cultural backgrounds) do a play consisting entirely of worn-out Oz cliches (see *Paperback Hero*): "I'm as dry as a dead dingo's donger."

Fresh Air has the look'n'feel of being low fi and handmade but, unlike the woeful *Redball* (a load of old cop—see *RealTime* 29), the downbeat style suits the pace of the characters and their hodge podge lives. The performances by Nadine Garner and Bridie Carter (as e) are terrific but what's missing is bite, flesh on the bones of the issues it tackles—spirituality, art, career, racism, politics, relationships and fidelity—for an audience eager for intellectual stimulation. A hawker on the streets, shot from behind, is speaking to a group of teenage girls. When he mentions God, the group walk away, wor(l)d weary. He repeats his lament to an empty frame.

Kirsten Krauth

Fresh Air *is currently screening at Dendy Cinemas in Sydney but negotiations are under way for it to screen nationally.*

Paperback Hero
writer-director Andrew J Bowman
distributor Polygram
March release

There is an aussified land, I don't know where, maybe Uncle Ray can take us, it's somewhere *out there*. We've all been a thousand times before JEESUS sometimes it feels like the only place we ever ever go BUGGER IT has trucks and tracks and dogs, campfires where we can sit around feeling all preambly with our mates and then lie back and look up at the stars MY OATH. There's even a city which looks a lot like Sydney where a bloke can still park his rig in front of a skyscraper YOU BEAUTY and the folk are all shiny and silly—insincere, you know—but a bit of bluff charm soon wins them over SHIT I haven't had this much fun since Mick Dundee came to town (the City gazes upon itself lovingly, loathingly, through Country eyes). There are HEAPS of Export Quality characters here *barpppp*, fartin & vomitin, and it's all so TIMELESS—you know what's going to happen *ages* before it actually does. Sure, there's a bit of anxiety about the nature of masculine identity and so on, but don't let that spoil it for you—the blokes all manage to work it out in the end SHE'LL BE RIGHT no faking it tonight. Anyway, you can always just lose yourself in the true blue of the singlets, the golden dust, sweet cinematic perspiration STRUTH it's the kind of place where no-one would ever make a film about a writer or an artist (not unless they also happened to be a truckie). I'm only glad I don't live there.

Simon Enticknap

The best of the best

Suzanne Spunner on the Keene-Taylor project

This season of 6 short works in 2 programs brings together the best of The Keene-Taylor project, a collaboration between playwright Daniel Keene and director Ariette Taylor. Since November 1997 in 6 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 actors, Greg Stone and newcomer Dan Spielman, being nominated for Green Room Awards. In their own words, "what began as an experiment, has become a commitment" and even without having see 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 older, and each program has clear though 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 old woman who was given to look after the possessions, and has done so ever since, sorts and resorts them, sieving for meaning and understanding. In between, there is the family made to board a train, not the same train but maybe the same train, and the violin that represents everything that is precious, fragile and human. There is an accumulation of objects and one sees that, at death, all that is left is a few things in a plastic bag or a suitcase and the knowledge that music was made and lives lived and lost.

The works in program 2 were all first staged in the warehouse of the BSL full of discarded furniture and the set recreates that clutter in The Malthouse making 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.

If the world of things was more about Europe and possibly the past (though events in Kosovo made it dreadfully current) this world of aloneness 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 unemployed, the boy facing aggravated rape charges. When we see them we shun them, afraid of contact and the infection of chaos and despair.

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 privileged 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.

In Night, A Wall, Two Men a similarly transcendent motif is there from the beginning and seems incongruous. A boy, 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 about—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 full 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 Australian work. It is wonderful to see theatre that has had enough time with the right people, to settle and keep on finding itself anew.

Patricia Kennedy, *The Rain* Zoe Burton

If I was to carp I would say Keene could cut some of the false endings from *A Night*. It seems to reach a natural ending but is then prolonged in ways that stand out markedly as derivative of other writers—it loses its individual voice and starts to seem Godot-ish and Monk O'Neill-ish, and this is quite a shock because while it might be said to traverse their joint territory, you don't even think of Beckett or Hibberd till this lapse at the end. But really I don't want to carp, I just want it to be perfect.

Keene/Taylor Project: The Best of Seasons 1-6; writer Daniel Keene, director Ariette Taylor; Program 1: Kaddish, *Robin Cuming;* The Violin, *Anni Finsterer, Paul English & Chloe Armstrong;* The Rain, *Patricia Kennedy; Program 2:* A Glass of Twilight, *Paul English, Greg Stone;* Untitled Monologue, *Dan Spielman;* Night, A Wall, Two Men, *Greg Stone, Malcolm Robertson, The Malthouse, May 4 - 15*

Incidental music

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 void, a dark surrealism, shivering in a baroque hall…as Brink Productions perform their version of *Roberto Zucco*. There's a continuous loop of ambiguities, touches of noir, constant shifts in time, of place, persona, objects, walls. The protagonist/antagonist (Zucco) speeding, escaping, leading us on, getting away with murder. A young girl sells herself for the love of this (alleged) killer. Her sister, in black, repulsed by men, a house warden. Their brother, policing his younger sister, a series of exploitations. Parisian guttersnipes in back alleys where our anti-hero falls, makes a call for help on a broken telephone. Identities, morphed, in parallel, sometimes it was like watching my friend fumbling his way through most PlayStation games. War games. Horror on the streets. Witness to the gradual attrition. All these characters…all these actors playing "dead", acting "concerned." When I laughed I wasn't laughing with them. I couldn't help but often feel distracted by the ornate ceiling of this performance space, the vastness in which Mary Moore's moveable set framing this work sat, shifted around, a sequence of illusions, adjusting to the light. Trapdoors, escape routes, the whole world, a prison. A cold, metallic box, a boundary, sharp-edged, locking me out. Each scene in Bernard-Marie Koltes' text (translated brilliantly by Martin Crimp) was mesmerising, poetic, beautiful, disturbing. The execution by the ensemble in this performance seemed disinterested, all these profound words spoken as if from the mouths of ghosts, empty gestures. I dunno, maybe I was expecting a resurrection. Something actively political. To get beyond beauty. To expose a few stains. Some sort of engagement, a sense of the work's incredible voice, the enormity of what was being said. There wasn't. Everything was too clean. All these "dramatic" moments, compensated for with 'incidental' sonic abstractions/noises/sounds, intricate compositions by Jeremy Rowney, which had an eerie life of their own, removed (unfortunately) from their supposed role as soundscape. It's like no-one bothered to communicate with the musician exactly why or how his music was going to be used. This bothered me. It happens too often. Why these essential elements, laying disparate, as 'second thought', or so it seems. I wanted to close my eyes. However…there is a moment, a scene where a row of prison inmates lie on their backs, looking up at Zucco in jail-break mode, making commentary, enjoying the moment in unison. This was near the end. It was a moment where (finally) everything/everyone tuned in, worked through the static, cleared things up. Intense white searchlights blind the audience in random flashes. This jolted me. I felt engaged. Invigorated. I was drawn to variable voices, completing layers of sounds, like an agreement, a point at which an understanding is struck, where audience, performer, director, performance space, sound artist, designers…actually collaborate. For over an hour I witnessed a play of disappearing acts, trained acting, a lot of shouting, vocal inflections, carrying reverb, words, bloodied, trickling down walls. We applaud.

Colleen Cross & David Mealor, *Roberto Zucco* David Wilson

Roberto Zucco, *Brink Productions, April 17 - May 1, The Balcony Theatre*

Jason Sweeney is an Adelaide-based writer, sound/performance artist and co-director of Safe Chamber. He will be undertaking an Australia Council New Media Arts International Residency at Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada in October.

Beyond the black and white

Grisha Dolgopolov 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 yet 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.

Melodie Reynolds & Sher Williams-Hood, *King for This Place* Ashley de Prazer

This is the first play by Neil Murray, who is better known as a singer-song writer (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 classical '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 he knows not what and going he knows not where. Drink-driving in the middle of the night somewhere in the central desert, Lenny hits a flying kangaroo, bursts a tyre and passes out.

Lenny (well played by newcomer Phillip McInness) is found by 3 Aboriginal men of the Luritja language group, the imperious Ted (Stephen 'Baamba' Albert), the smooth and sexy Don (Trevor Jamieson) and the obstreperous Peter (Kelton Pell) who rescue him, but steal his beer. In a lively scene of macho 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 enervation 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 *Bran Nue Dae* and *Corrugation Road* fame said that creating the feel of the outback, the heat, the way to move and the timing was the city-bound 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 Betts) 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 commissioned 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 resonant) hand 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 somewhat at odds with 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, fragmentary, fluid and incomplete 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 smooth and subtle approach to engaging 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

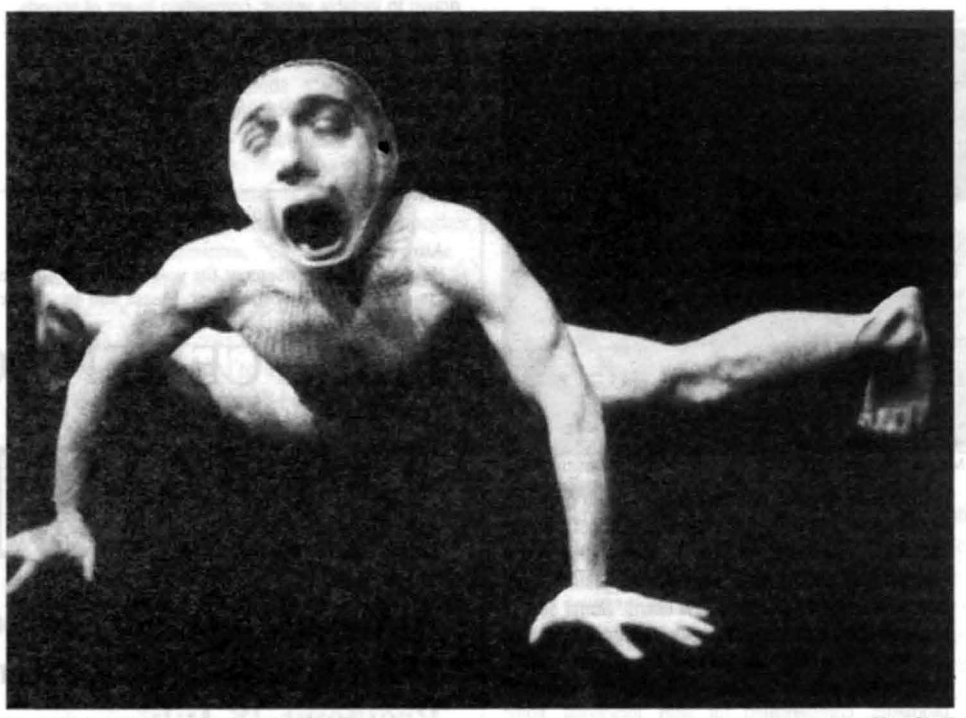
How do you make bodies speak? How do you use 'tricks' to convey narrative? You don't, if that's the sole intention. These clunky questions arise if the concept in performance is privileged over the doing of performance. When it's divided in this way, then messages are driven by text through a vehicle/body/actor, to be perceived again as concept: 'I get it.' Forms of theatre that don't do this have to be re-named 'physical.'

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—streaming fluid into each other's mouths, or finger up the arse, as she carts him around the space like a rag doll, or wrapped together, balancing, acrobatic and beautifully inelegant. These are supremely fit, 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 hers, she puts on his, and they're off: sex as driving force, bodies animated and moved by genital bits and pieces, "the plaything of a committee of self-interested genes."

Along with the positivist, scientific account of human bodies—sharing 98.4% DNA sequencing with a chimpanzee, explanations, genome projects—social organisation of bodies is also performed through the decorations and carriage of human form, the expressions of gender and civilisation written on the body.



Daniel Witton, desoxy Theatre, *98.4% DNA* Lisa Saad

Sounds were snorty, growling things, one of those TV series where invasive medical technologies inquire into the pulsing insides and display them as if they exist outside in the light. From this techno-soup of sound emerge ideas, information and, occasionally, beautiful soppy music. She plays cello. He sings.

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 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 dorky, dumb body as a story, putting 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 get it', the work steered away. A car accident, a limp dying body, suspended in a sling, has a little dialogue with a monkey-ancestor. You see the tiny, irrational twists of the self-aware but dying cerebral cortex, seeming to make sense, knowing 'the tragedy' of its own death as it happens. You watch the mad idea move in the still body.

Moving aspects of this performance, for me, were not romantic images or big effects, although there were plenty of these. It was bodily detail—speaking through the ongoing struggle with breath, description of tears, reference to fat (verbal only—no fat on these 2) and odd little stories.

Moments of revelation are not about being told new things ('I get it') or shown new tricks ('Wow!') but about being reminded of what you knew 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.

98.4% DNA (being human), desoxy Theatre, David Williamson Theatre, Swinburne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, April 13 - May 1

Training: personal and spectacular

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

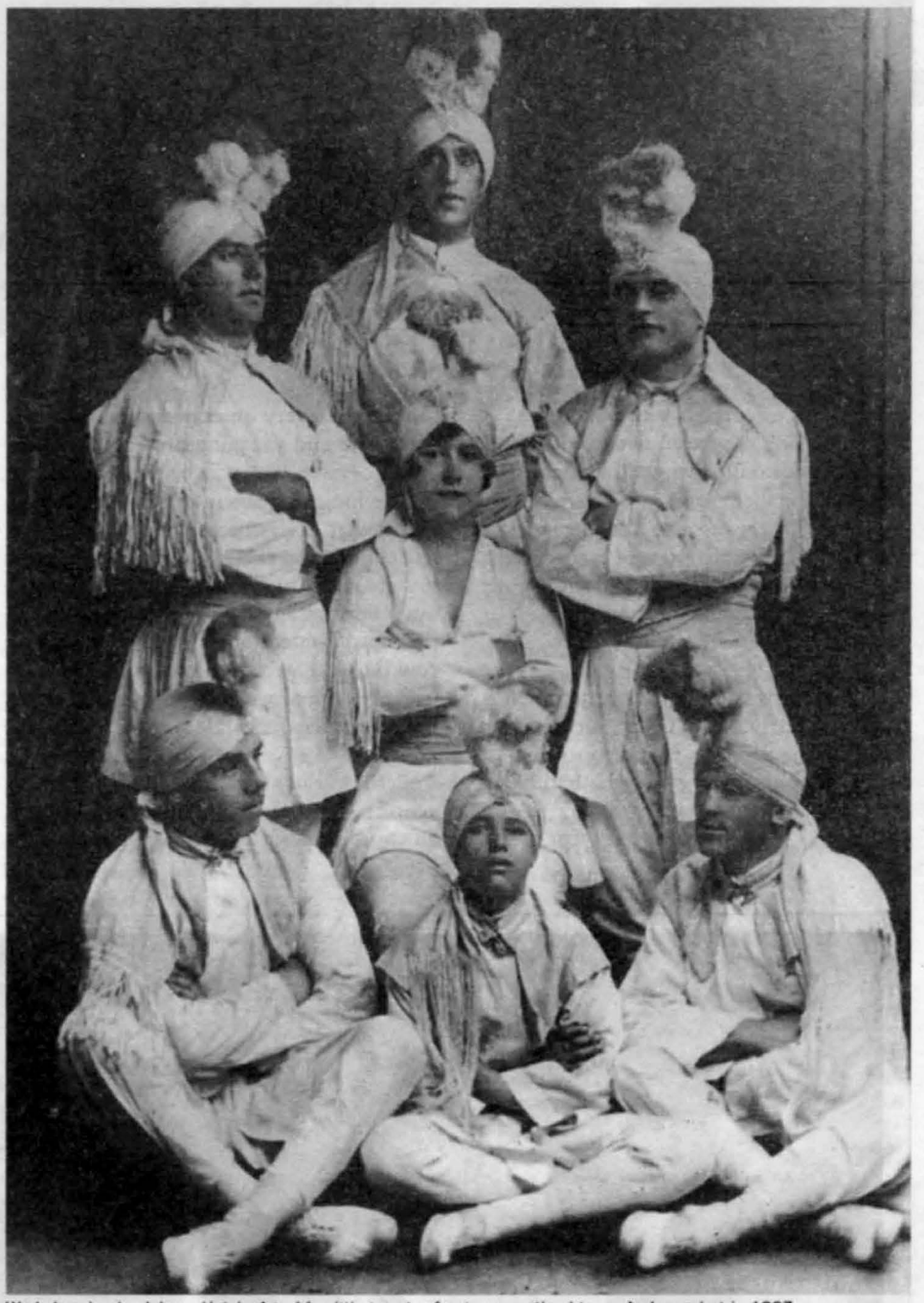
Nigel Jamieson set up the International Workshop Festival in the UK in 1998 and has established it in Australia, first in Adelaide and now in Melbourne in collaboration with Monash University and presented at the Victorian College of the Arts. Jamieson is a well known director of theatre-based works (Legs on the Wall's All of Me*) and large scale outdoor events (*Flamma Flamma, *Adelaide Festival 1998). He is artistic director of the ABC TV's Millennium Broadcast part of a millennial television event involving 55 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 iconographic 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, designer, 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 onstage, making the sets and props and masks out of paper and cellotape there in front of you, right through to—well he made a lot of the big stuff for Welfare State. Like his collaborator, Phelin McDermett, 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 sellotape 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 Kennett is saying this time we're gonna outdo you... Then there's the Olympics and the build up to that. Then there's Federation happening all over Australia. I think there's always the risk of that work being crass but I think in Australia it's a fantastic form. And for a whole lot of 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 a fantastic way of bringing people together for a public collective experience of what our culture is and what our icons are.



Workshop leader Johnny Hutch, Age 11, sitting centre front, apprenticed to an Arab acrobat in 1927

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 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 multicultural society 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 earning 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 Fruitfly 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 days 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 Lecoq back in the early 80s that had a huge influence on me...

KG You don't emerge after 5 days with a total discipline but if you did the Deborah Hay/Margaret Cameron workshop you might end up with a different attitude to your body or with Enrique Pardo from France it might be the relationship between voice and body that might shift seriously for you.

NJ In 1988 when we did the big Lecoq focus in London, 3 years later, half the students at the Lecoq School were from England. Five years later we had all these people coming out of the school and coming back to home to create work. That had a profound effect on the theatre in England.

KG So it needn't be a one-off experience. For an experienced performer I suppose working with Waguri Yukio even though they'd never done anything akin to Butoh before, it might be an initiation into something they want to follow up.

NJ They might get an Asialink grant to go off to Japan or Germaine Acogny has a school in Senegal. Certainly a number of people have gone on. Suraya Hilal runs schools.

KG Compared to some of the other artists in your program, she seems relatively exotic because hers is a mixture of classic and traditional Egyptian dance forms.

NJ She is the most phenomenally wonderful dancer to watch and to study with. She is sublime. But also that Egyptian dance tradition has been really interesting. Partly because as a form it was appropriated by men and Egyptian belly dance. I think there has been a process in which Suraya has been hugely influential on a world scale. She has the Suraya Hilal teachers here in Australia. And she has been involved in not only returning the dance to its classical roots and the beauty of its traditional form but also in a sense, returning it to women. It's a form of dance which is absolutely about the pelvis and women's power of fertility and women's exploration of their own sexuality and sensuality. It's fundamentally about the sorts of cultural changes that the festival is about. We had Suraya here 6-7 years ago and the workshop sold out in about 17 seconds.

KG And when you use the word "festival", obviously there are the workshops and forums and the 'togetherness' of a festival, especially for people who enrol in 2 consecutive weeks of workshops. Are there any showings?

NJ Every night there is at least one person presenting their work in some form or other. So if you come for the 2 weeks of the festival you'll get to see a demonstration-performance, a film, a slide presentation. You'll get to rub up against everybody's work. Everyone gets together first thing in the morning, 100 or so people, then everyone goes off to their workshops and they meet again in the evening. I know there are accusations that the term "festival" is over-used but this event does have that intense festival feeling.

1999 Australian International Workshop Festival; *Victorian College for the Arts, June 26 - July 11. Other tutors include Gennadi Bogdanov (Russia), Andrew Wade (UK), Ibrahim Minyawi (Egypt), Lindy Davies and Legs on the Wall (Australia)*
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New media yield

Diana Klaosen on a multimedia performance in a Tasmanian wheat mill

Salamanca Theatre Company, *Still Life* Nils Crompton

Still Life is a project co-ordinated by the Salamanca Theatre Company working with Hobart-based new media artists Sean Bacon, Sally Rees and Matt Warren and members of the rural community of Oatlands including students from the local school. The STC's brief is to work with school-age audiences. Happily, given Tasmania's current lack of any full-time adult-oriented theatre company, their productions appeal to older audiences as well.

Oatlands is a country town full of heritage architecture. During March, the STC's team worked intensively with Oatlands residents on an integrated program of performance, music, video, slides, photography and soundscape presented for one night at Callington Mill, an historic wheatmill complex in the town centre. Themes explored were the history of the Oatlands community, the essence of the present-day town and the residents' aspirations for the district's future.

The event fired the imagination of the Hobart arts community, many of whom made the one-hour pilgrimage to the town, so that black-clad culture aficionados mingled happily with almost the entire Oatlands community out for a night's high-tech entertainment. CAST's Sean Kelly was not alone in expressing a particular interest in seeing the show's special drawcard—it featured as their logo—slide and video projections screened onto a *cow*...

The mill complex is an ideal venue for this kind of production. There are stables (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-lumière 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.

Salamanca Theatre Company, Still Life, *co-directors Deborah Pollard and Chris Murphy, multimedia artists Matt Warren, Sally Rees, Sean Bacon, web artist Stephen Poljansek; performance installation, Callington Mill, Oatlands, Tasmania, March 27.*
<www.oatlands.tco.asn.au/stilllife>

Tess Masters, Kris Bidenko and Beth Buchanan, *Features of Blown Youth*

"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 Blown Youth,* opens in Sydney this month. The cast includes musician Kim Salmon (ex Beasts of Bourbon) who sits perched on a burnt-out car wreck throughout the play. The production by Ranters Theatre, the company formed by Raimondo Cortese, brother Adriano 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."

Raimondo Cortese, Features of Blown Youth, *Ranters Theatre presented by Performing Lines, The Performance Space, June 2 - July 13. Bookings: 9698 7235*

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 ducked in and out of a transparent dressing room to merge in a variety of loose impersonations with famous movies projected in fragments on the screens. While we watched unawares, the enigmatic Denis Beaubois quietly caught us on videotape, projecting our image into the night on a tiny screen in the wall facing Clevelend Street. Meanwhile, "a heinous assault on the common perceptions of theatre" is promised in a new work, *Russel,* 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, Q Theatre, PACT, The Performance Space's *Open 97* as well as various pubs and non-theatrical spaces. *Russel* mixes multimedia and absurdist humour, the performance skating round and eventually breaking the ice between 2 worlds—the "assumed real" 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.

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

Fibre Cement, Russel, *The Performance Space. July 27 - August 7, 9698 7235*

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 international 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 dramatic vitriol from far-flung 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 woken up to new media 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 those with an aversion to semiotics were able to busy 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 seminal demonstrations of their patented MidiDancer suit, which alters images and effects in live performance, to the work-in-progress sharings of emerging artists, such as Trajal Harell, dabbling with gadgets in their relation to his mature choreography. There was overwhelming poetry in *The Secret Project*, a text and movement solo in a Big-Eye environment created by Jools Gilson-Ellis and Richard Povall. The quirky Geishas and Ballerinas of Die Audio Gruppe from Berlin struggled onto a bare stage, to interpret the deafening feedback created by their interaction with Benoit Maubrey's home-made electro-acoustic suits.

Isabelle Choiniere from Canada offered a terrifying neon-lit Kali figure in her full evening performance, *Communion*, which scored high for sound and fury but low for the slightest discernable meaning. Local hero, Seth Riskin, took his *Star Wars* styled sabres to their logical conclusions in *Light Dance*, an Oskar Schlemmer styled series of tableaux vivants which traced an instructive attention loss curve, where the decline of audience engagement was predicated on the initial impact made by each newly introduced effect. The more we saw, and the more dazzling it at first appeared, the more quickly we grew bored. Jennifer Predock-Linnell had a crack at the good old partnership of dance and film, with strong imagery provided by Rogulja Wolf, and Sean Curran made a small concession to technology by tripping his virtuoso solo in front of some projections. Ellen Bromberg provided the choreography in a collaboration with Douglas Rosenberg and John D Mitchell, and yet her production suffered for its 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 impression 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 (Thecla Schiphorst's enquiries into touch and "skin-consciousness" through interactive installations) and the religious (Stelarc's shamanistic 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 eulogies 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.

Company in Space, *Escape Velocity* Jeff Busby

At the round table titled "The Theoretical-Critical-Creative Loop", British artist Sarah Rubidge nailed her struggle to make work and theorise simultaneously by inventing the phrase "work-in-process." 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 'inflatory' 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, dissected 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 critic from the fiery final panel. Her double-edged sword summarises the conference experience, by provoking exasperation 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 Sheedy 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 *II.(two)* New to Canberra, they brought a keen eye for the strange quality of the place—the beauty, the linear/circular nature, and even the sterility. Choosing sites of interest, they worked with composer Ben Walsh and video artist Bridget Lafferty.

Peter Sheedy & Csaba Buday, *II (two)* video capture

Airport. A visitor's first impression, the Canberra Airport is captured here by night in an opening video. From a static vantage point, the camera picks up the blurry lights of the runway and the distant trucks and cars as they move slowly across the screen.

Railway. They sit, backs to each other, on 2 standard railway platform benches, waiting, fidgeting, thinking, never making eye contact. When movement begins, it is small but rapid, startling in the scene. Balancing on the back rim of the chair, suspending the moment, before flying into each other. As they confront each other through increasingly daring eye contact and physical closeness, it's athletic, aggressive even. Their heavy breathing carries through the tiny space, hanging over the stillnesses in between the energy.

Brickworks. The film projected on the back scrim shows one of the many caverns in the disused Canberra Brickworks. Buday and Sheedy appear, sweeping the sand with their feet. The pace escalates 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 the space, in reality, with the projected image of the Brickworks hovering behind. They use contact work that progresses to visual contact only, with Buday's shadow playfully exposing and covering Sheedy.

Sculpture Garden. Projections of the Fiona Hall garden in the National Gallery of Australia illuminate the space. Sheedy'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, Sheedy and Buday are filmed from within the Olympic Pool at the National Institute of Sport. It's a playful, absurd moment: they run in a distorted slow motion, move about ridiculously, Sheedy checks the time on his wristwatch, and it all happens to a remix of Elvis' *Suspicious Minds*. *II (two)* works well for these unique choreographers, in many ways thanks to the rare luxury of research and development provided by the Choreographic Fellowship.

Peter, Sheedy and Csaba Buday, II (two), *The Choreographic Centre, Canberra, March 18 - 20*

Site steps

Indija Mahjoeddin traverses Cherry Herrings' *Cityscapes*

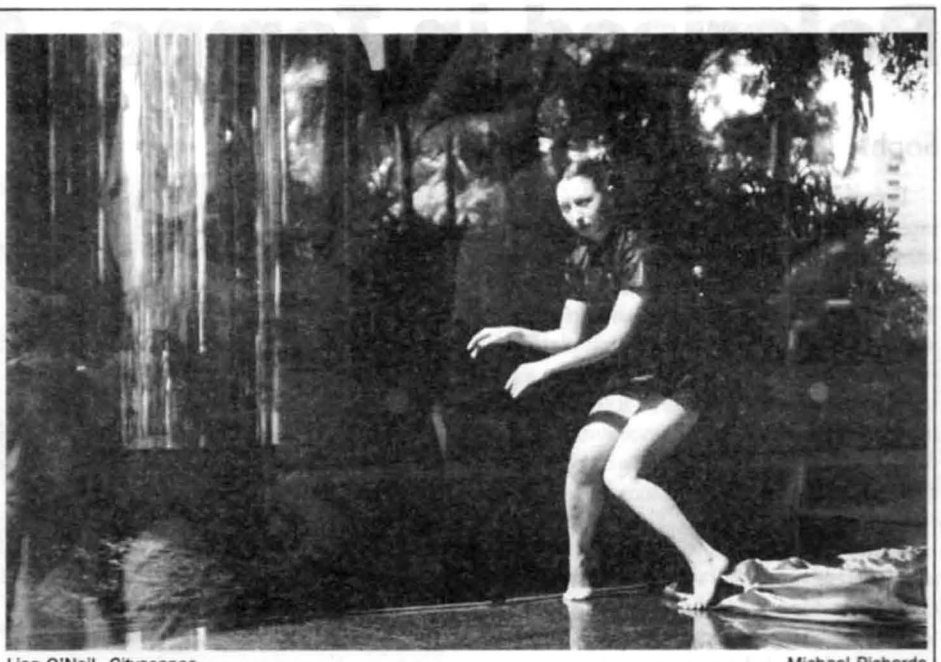
Brisbane Riverside development—a maze of boardwalk, white cement, grey bollards, busy eateries and granite steps. A deep melancholic note like a foghorn at world's end draws my attention to a phantasmic pair of Gothic characters (incongruous in the midday bustle). With a hauntingly lyrical flourish from vocalist Christine Johnston and a desolate jangle of her beckoning bell, 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 crannies of this unlikely habitat, thanks to Cherry Herring's 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 gropes, 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 now on the river bank, Golum moves, Golum dances, Golum even points its toes. Now something gets lost; the piece 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 towards the water from whence he came, to face his audience, to dance to us, before stalking off, away from us, into the city…This crepuscular being, who might have emerged from the Paris sewers, is glimpsed again later, more sustained, haunting the tour, still capable of invoking a chill spinal response despite the executive workaday atmosphere.

Jean Tally and John Utans use contemporary vocabulary in more conservative ways. Tally utilises a shallow moat of ankle deep water in a beautifully lyrical, if safe, formalist expression of the aesthetics of wind and water. Less dancerly and self conscious, Utans' *Boardwalk* proves memorable 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.

Katie Joel abandons technique for comedy. Her Cinderella-cum-luxury car ad gone wrong certainly amuses, amongst others, a black suited tableaux preset on the steps of the Brisbane Polo Club—4 matching executives who, a theatrical setting in themselves, become implicated by chance into Joel's choreography. After all, we are outside the lobby of Brisbane's most prestigious corporate address.

Around the corner Lisa O'Neil emerges from her ultramarine satin hoop-skirt and threatens to dive into the lobby fountain. With signature Suzuki physical control, she advances toward the glass exterior wall. Facing us from the inside, her staccato duet with the window uses contrasts, repetition and a strong sense of rhythm and playfulness to evoke desire, frustration, and resistance until, stalled in her repetitions, swamp-man reappears to carry her limp body away. A brilliant sense of drama inherent in 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 trombone and voice from our Gothic hosts.



Lisa O'Neil, *Cityscapes* Michael Richards

Except for O'Neil's *Foyer*, 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 great beige equalisers of performing arts.

Cityscapes, *The Cherry Herring, curator Shaaron Boughen, choreographers Brian Lucas, Jean Tally, John Utans, Katie Joel, Lisa O'Neil; performers Christine Johnston, Lorne Gerlach, Brian Lucas, Joseph Lau, Michelle Spearman, Danae Rhees, Glen McCurley, Sara Toso, Samara Skubij, Katie Joel, Phil Knight, Helen Prideaux, Lisa O'Neil, Riverside Centre and environs, Brisbane, April 23 & 30*

Indija N Mahjoeddin writes and directs randai folk opera for her Brisbane-based company, MusiK KabaU SATI which produced The Horned Matriarch: Story of Reno Nilam *Sydney, 1998 (Carnivale, A Sea Change). She is working on* The Butterfly Seer *for randai, and touring schools with her bilingual folk play,* Mr Stupid.

Body think

Rachel Fensham on Philipa Rothfield's *Pensive* and desoxy's *DNA 98.4%*

The primacy of the body as matter for thought has become a tenet of poststructuralism. Likewise the notion that embodiment is a form of knowing. Philipa Rothfield's 'thought experiment' at Dancehouse was to bodily explore these ideas, by allowing a little 'Pensive' reflection to take place in performance. She and dancer Elizabeth Keen began with a right turn logic that marked out a progression of squares on the floor—their soft footfalls diminishing lines to perimeters. Keen speaks of Descartes, who else? For isn't he the man who caused the problems…He asks "what then am I?" Keen watches. Rothfield is an arm/arc/archipelago. She is more beautiful than Descartes in her shimmering shot fabric, fake fur and leopard spots. She is a lioness while 'he' observes and speaks—utterance seems to defy movement.

Soon the 2 find moments of overlap. There is a licking, sliding, pawing—they become a conjoined 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? The dancers are locked and knotted through and around until their heads appear to rest, one against the other. They are like-in-like with a certain coyness about their private discoveries. Their gaze is direct and beyond reach but not far away. I am struck by an intentionality in their looking which suggests a certain kinesphere—a thought realm that can be held in and around the body. It stays quite constant throughout, the way that thoughts venture forth only so far and then return.

Dancing separately, there begins greater variation—thoughts exist in contradistinction, thinking like no other, thought in a hand held up or thought holding itself in a cupping at the back of the head. The body and mind we are told is a 'fissure', a word-sound. Possibly a wound, or possibly something to be filled. Their final duet is a reply to this gap in thought—but it is filled with ugly words that end with -ity or -acy or -ility and -ation. They hook toes and elbows, they investigate 'incorporation.'

The piece was like a hieroglyphic—sketches of women, eagles and crescents drawn in sandstone 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 delirium 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 'hallucinate' the dialogue between an I and a body. The conclusion with its postmodern emphasis—an incantatory resolution drawing the binaries of bodies and thought together—arrived too soon, historically and artistically, to shift the influence of Descartes from this self-conscious dance work.

Philipa Rothfield & Elizabeth Keen, *Pensive* Hellen Sky

Another approach to the problems of the cogito, the defining of the human subject by the thinking I, is evident in desoxy Theatre's *DNA 98.4% (being human)*. This major work asks the questions '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 disturbing, if also funny peculiar, as Teresa Blake and Dan Whitton become ape, reptile, bird and transhuman. This project has been reworked over 4 years and the complexity of the research shows in the extraordinary bodies of the artists, androgynous but even less than sexual, andromorphic. What they do on the horizontal and vertical planes of movement confounds categories—climbing walls as a body of upper or lower legs or looping over themselves in a spiral of links in the chain between DNA and the exoskeleton. At one point they put on genitalia to distinguish man from woman, with their converse heights presenting a further confusion of sexual roles. They enact a courtship dance—the fundamentals of mating are necessary after all to further the species but the distance between our socialistion of those needs and their function is immense. The more disturbing reality is that it could be dispensed with altogether if the scientists of the human genome project advance their supremacist biological thinking. Suspended in cocoons, desoxy await 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 played to small audiences was pitted 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 Disorientations: Cultural Praxis in Theatre, *Monash Theatre Papers 1.*

For more on 98.4%DNA, *see Mary-Ann Robinson, "Double helix of tricks and ideas", page 32*

Pensive, *Writer/deviser/performer Philipa Rothfield, performer Elizabeth Keen, designer Like Pither, costume design Heidi Wharton, Dancehouse, April 23 -25;* 98.4% DNA (being human), *desoxy Theatre, David Williamson Theatre, Swinburne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, April 13 - May 1*

Georgia Carter, Jennifer Newman-Preston in *Young woman glass soul* Debbie Taylor

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 Doidge; music by Alexander Nettelbeck with vocal harmonics by Joseph 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 women's ritual; the German folk tale of Aschenputtel or Ash Girl; Charles Perrault's "The Little Glass Slipper"—commissioned by Louis XV—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 *Liquidl@accsoft.com.au*

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 1999. 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.

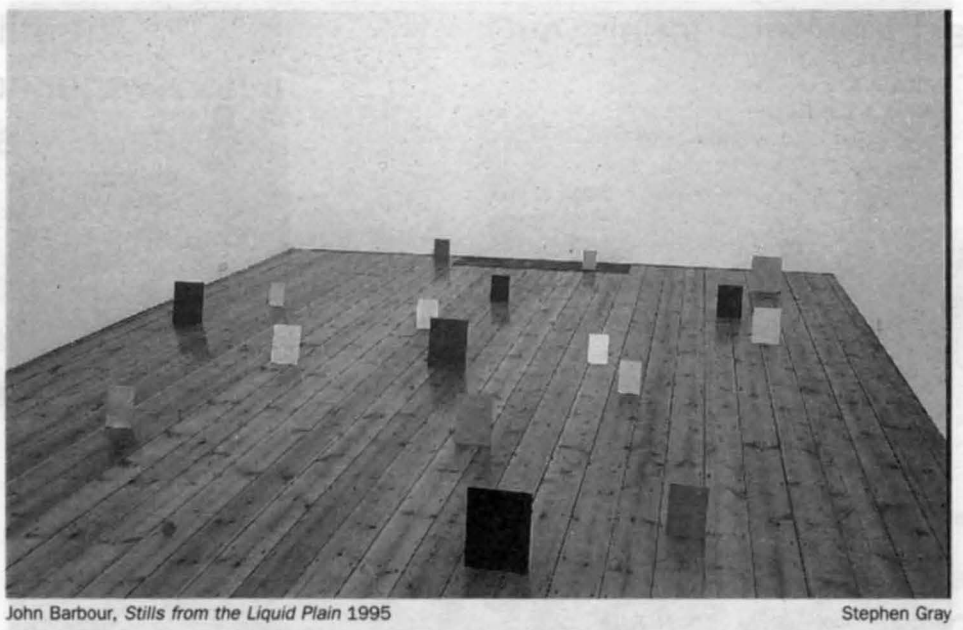
The exhibition was one element of a larger project. At the Top Floor gallery in the city, Barbour reinstalled his important 1995 work *Stills from the Liquid Plain*, previously exhibited in various versions at yuill/crowley gallery, Sydney, and at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide. In addition 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



John Barbour, *Stills from the Liquid Plain* 1995 Stephen Gray

to be comprehended. This aspect of Barbour's work was highlighted in the forum that accompanied the exhibition, "Figure falls flat in field: Beckett, 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 recent 'sculptures', constructed from cardboard and tape, and painted with gouache, are titled *The Hours of Anonymous Object*. They suggest boxes or blocks or, when they grow extended 'limbs', 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—details of empty and cold 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 and painted objects might be considered 'remedial. 'They don't refuse human touch, rather they incorporate bodies and corporeal sensations through the performatism 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 *Stain, Smear, Drop, Run* 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 misshapen, and yet shaped by being lived in." I quote Felix Guattari in suggesting that Barbour's works occupy a space that is "atmospheric, pathic, fusional, transitivist."

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.

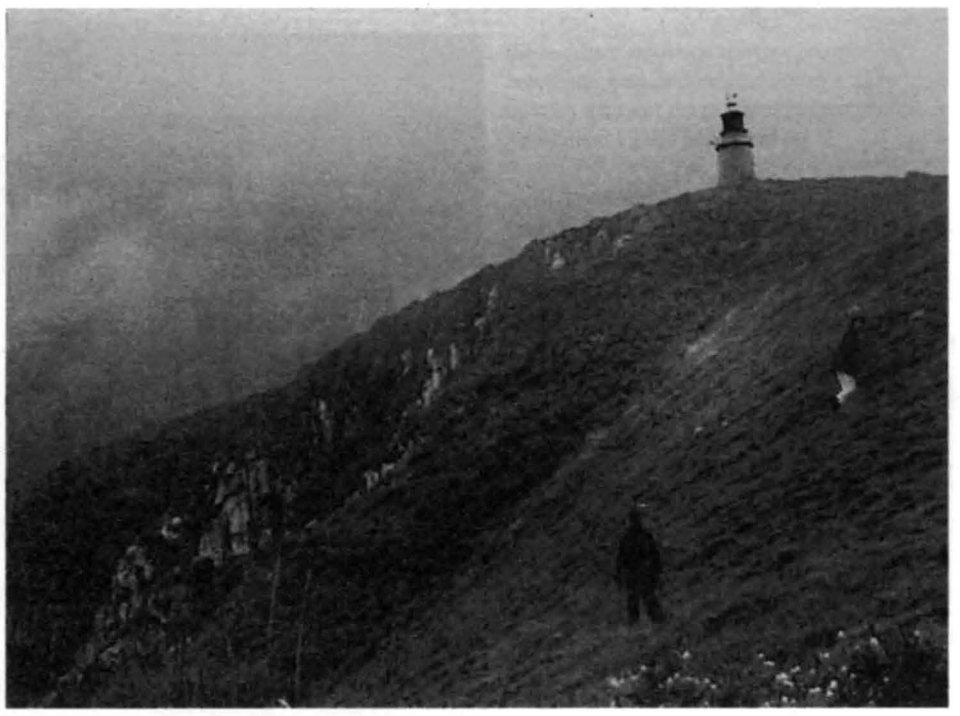
Accrued Losses, *John Barbour, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, February 5 - March 14*

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 aerials which render visible innate 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.



Joyce Hinterding and David Haines, Bruny Island

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. Like the entire southern coast of Tasmania, Bruny is often described as being "as far south as you can go—the last stop before Antarctica..." Haines and Hinterding share a passion 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 mixing desk, wind monitoring and radio scanning equipment, a digital video camera and editing system plus assorted microphones, modems, data and antennae. 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 composited 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 lighthouse 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, expound 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

Sue and Ben Ford, *Faces*, 1976-96, film installation

In his catalogue essay for the exhibition *Persona*—works addressing the portrait and identity in film media—curator Michael Snelling makes a curious admission. He is more interested in the idea of 'persona' as a Jungian construct of the public personality rather than the film-media which frames these artworks. It is a tension within this exhibition for which works are presented as installation, purposely resistant to normative screening practice.

In this era of celebrity, the media is awash with 'personae.' Celebrities, personalities and identities are one and the same: they are well known for being well known, familiar faces repeatedly impressed on the collective consciousness. Throughout *Persona* we contend with the faciality of our world. In Izuru Kasahara and Craig Walsh's installation, *Mutations*, superimposed portraits of the artists' faces are projected between duelling televisions, facing each other, blasting Australian and Japanese programs. I walked in during *Beauty and the Beast* when the compere was delivering a redneck speech about immigration. Confronted by such commentary, what appeared to be a Japanese fishing program seemed more appealing. I dither between the familiar and unfamiliar language domains of these televisual worlds.

In Sue Ford and Ben Ford's *Faces*, and Merilyn Fairskye's *After Image*, portraits are presented larger than life. Like the images of countless celebrities in other media, these giant close-up portraits are also unavoidable and imposing. In the case of Fairskye's *After Image*, I am sceptical, finding the assertion that artists empower individuals by taking photos of them with their eyes closed somehow outlandish. Nevertheless, I am drawn into an intimate encounter, quiet and pensive. Similarly in *Faces*, faces (eyes open) filmed 20 years apart for 25 seconds present an opportunity. Aging (and the movement of time and technology against body) is not morbid but glorious. Again I am drawn into an intimate exchange. These 2 works provide a space to stand face to face with strangers and to examine and search them in documentary detail.

For Justine Cooper and George Pinn, the intimacies of body (rather than face) are mapped. Cooper's *Rapt* is imaged from her own body using medical imaging technology which charts water content, revealing and interrogating the body's interior. Though the interior is intensely scrutinised, we are no more aware of how an individual forms her public. Pinn's work stands in contrast to this corporeal intimacy. Sex in this work replaces and shifts desire and intimacy. In this triptych of manipulated porn, she casts both a censor's and a voyeur's eye over frenetic fucking. Pinn is re-making porn as a cultural politic, producing highly charged image-soundscapes which emphasise fast and furious videographic sex as well as encouraging a creative and critical reading of them.

The prevalence of (celebrity-populated) media and their forays through public and private worlds, displaces those historical and myopic definitions of spaces and bodies as public or private. By creating some distance between this exhibition of artwork and the media phenomenon of persona/lity, Snelling marks a tenuous shoreline across which the processes of publics and personae in art and media ebb and flow. Both art and media have ways of forming and being informed by the public, and artists and celebrities engage with that public via whatever vectors are heading that way. In a fragmented world of images and virtuality, the persona is a challenge. Clearly, there is not just one public. Our practices and representations of persona are complex, fractious and multiplied.

Linda Carroli

Persona, *curator Michael Snelling, artists: Justine Cooper, Merilyn Fairskye, Sue Ford & Ben Ford, Izuru Kasahara & Craig Walsh, George Pinn, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane April 1 - May 1*

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-efacts that drew my gaze. The space itself was constantly changing in shape and definition, never quite fitting into itself, never quite sure what was wanted. Columns of newsprint were consumed in discussion of what the square should be and generations of architects drew up plans for generations of city councils. The village green had come a long way but no one seemed quite sure of what it was now.

In another place and another time, I've been reflecting again on the creature called—in this instance—public art. In mid-March the Queensland Government released a policy called Art Built-in. The policy, with the cautious subtitle "Creating 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 up 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 'fit', 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 pitches itself accordingly.

Art Built-in's success in Cabinet may be in part attributed 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 Artsworkers 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 of 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

Far 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 ie $15 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 5 Northern Peninsula Area Communities—New Mapoon, Injinoo, Umagico, Seisa and Bamaga—where artworks will be commissioned from local communities; the Community Justice Centre in Kowanyama where residents will contribute to the final design; Innisfail Courthouse; Cairns Esplanade Redevelopment—waterfront artworks will celebrate the cultural diversity of Cairns with 7 Tropical North Queensland and 2 New Zealand artists (representing Pacific cultures) collaborating with architects and historians to develop public art that reflects local history and character; 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

Mutating contradictions

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

Glimpsed 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 tendril-like ends left untrimmed. As light as spinifex, 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 first of *Three Mountains, 1998*. The other 2 comprise lightly washed plinths with transparent supporting glass boxes. One contains a lidless jar decorated with lotus flowers. It sits 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 to achieve as 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 most recent projects include curating the furniture component of the University of South Australia's Frances Burke and Mambo exhibition, and writing "Innovation and Imitation: post-war Australian design", the accompanying catalogue essay.

Paul Saint, *Three Vases and a Ball* (installation detail)

Lucy Guerin in *25 Songs on 25 Lines of Words and Art Statement for Seven Voices and Dance*

Described by Felber as "a music/theatrical installation for seven voices" this work explores the liminal zones at the edges of sculpture, painting, dance, sound art through a playful reinscription of Ad Reinhardt's *25 Lines Of Words On Art: Statement* of 1958 into a late 20th century hybrid aesthetic combining retro fit design invoking both earlier avant gardes and contemporary cutting edge graphics. The audience enters a Futurist mise en scene of huge swinging steel rods with light bulbs at the end of them and 7 steel tubes suspended from the ceiling each broadcasting one of the voices from Elliott Gyger's composition. But one of the most effective elements is the video projection of Lucy Guerin's 3 movement pieces which haunt the space silently, interrogating the audience from the floor beneath their feet.

The opening of the event featured a live performance from Guerin, one of Australia's most sought after dancers, whose choreography also echoed elements of the Reinhardt text (*#16 verticality and horizontality, rectilinearity, parallelism, stasis*). The space (not designed for live arts) was absolutely packed which meant that for most of the performance parts of the audience were unsighted. This resulted in a strange theatre of frustration where members of the audience shrugged their shoulders, huffed and puffed, rolled their eyes, unconsciously entering the piece as they unexpectedly reacquired their bodies in the absence of a line of sight. Reinhardt would have loved it...*#24 the completest control for the purest spontaneity.*

Though all the disparate elements of the work arise from a reading of the Reinhardt text, no attempt has been made to force them into a hokey mimetic relationship. They simply accompany each other and gaze at each other disinterestedly, allowing room for an audience to move, at least in an intellectual sense...The piece is accompanied by a beautifully finished book which features interviews with the artists and reproductions of Felber's images, stills from Guerin's dances and the musical scores for the 25 songs with a CD. Credit Suisse (among others) sponsored this piece and you can see where the money went! Thankfully it has been put to good use.

Edward Scheer

25 Songs On 25 Lines Of Words On Art Statement For Seven Voices And Dance, *artist Joe Felber, composer Elliott Gyger, dancer/choreographer Lucy Guerin, curator Victoria Lynn, AGNSW, March 28 - May 2. The work will tour other galleries throughout 1999 and 2000.*

Male icons at the Melbourne Fashion Festival

Andrew McQualter 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 their field of practice. *Male Order* and *Look at Me* set out to assess the value of their subjects in both historical and practical terms. From an historical viewpoint, the work of Grainger and Bowery brackets the Modernist period, Grainger reflecting the conceptual optimism of early Modernism and foreshadowing experiments in the field of ambient and electronic music; and Bowery as an exemplary practitioner of the nihilistic approaches of punk and postmodernism. These exhibitions make a timely contribution toward the assessment of the Modernist period in Australian art.

World

In the context of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, *Look at Me* demonstrates the practical influence of Bowery's career on contemporary fashion design—his eclecticism 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 the Grainger Museum, notably a series of exquisite watercolours by Grainger of designs for his "free music" machines and studies of traditional Zulu beadwork, displayed on the first floor of The Ian Potter Museum of Art. In the second component of the exhibition, 12 designers exhibited garments made in response to the curator's brief, producing work which displayed the influence of Grainger.

The problem that *Male Order* presents is the manner in which the legacy of Grainger as thinker, inventor and visionary might be applied to contemporary menswear design, or to design and the arts in general. As curator Robyn Healy notes "Grainger is neither a fashion visionary, or a dress reformer. He desired clothes that expressed his personality and met his lifestyle requirements." What this implies is that inspiration may be gained from Grainger's life and work in his approach to realising his ideas, looking outside convention to materialise the objects, sounds or sensations that he desired. Whilst many of the designers did look outside convention for materials or forms, their approach to the project has been to focus on aspects of Grainger's character, such as his eccentricity or taste for sadomasochistic sexual practices. This approach runs counter to the ethos of Grainger's life and work, reducing the figure of the composer to a caricature, and his innovative ideas to mere reactionary gestures.

Where some designers in *Male Order* strike a chord with Grainger is in their sensitivity to his motives for making the clothing that he did. Todd Robinson's *Leaf print tunic and jacket*, Scott Norris' knitwear, and World's jumper and breeches ensemble—featuring Argyle socks and Polynesian grass corset—succeed in their combination of innovation and practicality, whilst expressing a sense of style peculiar to the individual designers.

What these exhibitions convincingly display, through the works of Grainger and Bowery, is the power of fashion as a material expression of ideas. Although they practised to very different ends both evoke the Heideggarian 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 Robyn Healy, featuring designs by Jenny Banister, Fool, Martin Grant, Mark McDean, Queen, Kitten Reinhardt, Todd Robinson, Glen Rollason, S!X, t'art, Vixen, World and Percy Grainger; The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, February 16 - April 4*

Andrew McQualter is an artist and writer living in Melbourne.

Cultural transport

Keith Gallasch interviews David Young, composer and artistic director of Melbourne's Aphid 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 Pirie and Rosie Joy, working with 4 musicians (Yasutaka Hemmi, Pete Humble, Natasha Anderson, Deborah Kayser), lighting designer Lisa Trewin and sound designer Michael 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.*

Yasutaka Hemmi, *Ricefields*

DY The project began when I was in Matsue in 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 Pirie mainly works 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 miked 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 Pirie making the sort of things handed to the audience?

DY Some were made with sea sponges and kitchen scourers and then coated in paper pulp. They ended up looking like enormous sushis...obviously you see the futility of attempting to describe....

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 picked 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 that 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 improvisation 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 veer everyone away from some of the notated stuff in some ways, whereas the other 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 invitation 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, what will 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 Inland Sea which isn't industrialised. For me in a way it will be a homecoming. 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 now spanned some 5 or 6 years.

KG It was interesting at the Adelaide Festival in 1998 to hear Heiner Goebbels present himself as a postmodern composer. In other words, his collaborators were as important as him. His music would stop sometimes and other musics 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 yourself in a similar realm here or do you see yourself as the composer, the auteur 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 think it's simply out of a desire to be involved in other artforms. 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 and not only that. I 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 Arhus Visonlines Conference (*RealTimes* 29 & 30). You'll remember Julianna Hodkinson?

KG 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 each of us, but for an ensemble made up of 2 musicians from each country. We're looking at issues of cartography, representation and 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 projection artist in Melbourne. So while it has a strong conceptual core and the ensemble will be the same, there are these other prongs 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: Ciurlionis, *an evening of traditional Lithuanian food & drink, music, folk dance & film projection with guest composer Yu Wakao from Hiroshima University; Lithuanian House, Errol St, North Melbourne, June 11, 8pm*

Radio 1: Samuel Beckett's Radio 1 *and Richard Rijnvos' (Netherlands) Zahgurin,* 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 9328 2248 aphids@bigfoot.com

David Young spoke at the Visionlines conference, Arhus Festival,Denmark 1998. His panel contribution is reported on the RealTime *website*
http://www.rtimearts.com/~opencity/

Old, new, borrowed, blue

Gretchen Miller and Kaye Mortley discuss The Wedding Photo workshop

A Ravlich family wedding, Sydney 1948, courtesy Robyn Ravlich, The Listening Room

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 Arts—any of whom married these different roles in their individual practices. Then there was Kaye Mortley, winner of the 1998 Prix Europa and an Australian radio-maker now living in Paris, who joined us for the 2 weeks in, if not holy, then certainly a matrimony of sorts, and who also functioned as a kind of celebrant, guiding the process. The offspring 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," Mortley 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 acoustical equivalent."

We had no pre-recorded material, no structure, no conclusion to come to (except the hope of producing a program), no radiophonic grammar. Mortley 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 acoustical material to go with it. But…I never have more than an idea. Even if I know where I can go and 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 to feel something in what you've got and then find a structure which is appropriate."

Ah 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," Mortley says.

We talked about the things we had brought to give us a springboard—something old, new, borrowed and blue. We talked about marriage, 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 overtly the voices of authority, of authentication, on top of being the radio makers. We listened back to the tapes, begged to be spliced out, had fits of bridal pique. 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 workshop it didn't have any sound, in particular, you were the sound, the people in the workshop were the sound, and you agreed to letting your voices 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 beyond our egos 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 developed an intimacy of working with our own 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 keenly. There's another program that we're going to do in English—called *Under the Wing* (about a pair of women who rescue injured pigeons and keep hundreds of them in a flat)—and I couldn't have written a word of it, not a word, they said so much already, much better than I could say—all I had to do was to deconstruct and to reconstruct their words."

Her 'voice' when it does appear, is rarely in the form of her own writing, but in the way she generates material other than location recordings. For *On Naxos*, she had been holidaying on the Greek island and made some casual location recordings. "They were special but they weren't great, because I'd recorded them with small, light equipment and not a grandiose microphone, and I trailed around this small tape recorder and small microphone in the bottom of my 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 text, one line drawn from each postcard. Then I had an idea of asking these male writers, friends, but they all had to be male, just to write a card as from Naxos. And I was really generating material partly because it seemed to me the acoustic 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 learn to see the sparkle in our own material, where it existed.

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

"You have to find what to do with it, the ways in which you can use it," says Mortley, who mostly uses a mixture of recorded sound (including interviews) and especially written texts, or texts which have been found to suit the work. "But I have done a certain number of programs in which there was no text at all, so it had to just be the recordings, crafted into some sort of fictional form…and that is very, very hard. The interviews I count as sound, and with written text it's very hard to find the right text, or to write it, because radio texts are terribly radio specific.

"If you start from (written) text it's much easier, because if you start from sound or a desire to work from sound you can never ever be sure that you will find what you want—you always have to be changing, it's so mobile…you can't be sure people will say what you want them to say either and as soon as they don't say what you want them to say you have to find another way of treating the form."

The workshop participants also got a taste of the highly precise and detailed way Mortley structures the process of making her own work. "I don't actually have a script as such. I have a plan, written in a certain way which is very precise. It tells me what is in each cut, how long it is, how it starts and ends, and how it associates with the next things and it takes me a very long time to write one of these little things…it takes me as long as it takes to mix a program properly, say 40 hours (for a 90 minute program). But once I've gone through this slightly painful exercise of putting it on paper, it's okay, and I know it'll more or less work. It doesn't mean the program will be good, but I know how to mix it and I do the same thing wherever I work. continued pg 43

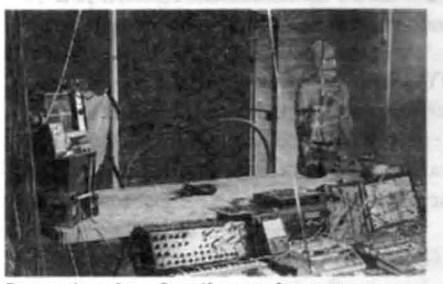
Sounding the city

Naomi Black surveys Canberra's electronic music culture

Time perceptions are fluid in a music whose pace divulges the workings of a city. Canberra 1999: spacious, hill-rimmed and not in any hurry. The music made here is made of here. Whether it's the preponderance of nature in the city, or the chilliness of almost 60% of Canberra's year, underground electronic musicians in Canberra feel moved to make slower, more deliberate sounds. The audiences are small so the creation of electronic music in Canberra hasn't been a population based process, it is art driven. Using analogue based instruments, home made synths and sometimes live instruments, the music is created in an organic way, using multiple contributors moving in and out of the driver's seat, each adding to a slow unfolding that makes for an evening of performance for interested Canberrans. During these you will find no obvious peaks and no tried and true mechanisms of crowd pleasing. According to 2 prominent figures in Canberra's scene, Ben Tindale and Tim O'Loghlin (a.k.a. Mit, Baron, Centrifuge etc.), within this situation lies a definition of 'the Canberra sound.'

"The uniqueness of the place means the sounds coming out of it are sure to be unique," says Tindale, who is infamous in Canberra for his out-there experimental beats. As a rule Tindale never records. Conversely, members of Canberra's Clan Analogue do. Dark Network, a duo consisting of O'Loghlin and one of the founders of Clan Canberra, Bo Daley, has released tracks on the nationally launched Clan Analogue CD compilations *Cognition 1* (1997), *Jaunt 1* (1996) with the track "Sliding Windows", and *Cog* (1994). This year Dark Network will appear on the new release *Cognition 2: Twenty Disco Greats* as well as their debut Australian album *Lostime*. Dark Network already have LPs out in the USA and The Netherlands.

Hovering at the edge of dance music, Clan Analogue collects composers from the forefront of Australian electronic music with recordings and performances. The array of sound is impressive: the Jaunt compilations carry the more thoughtful sounds of dub, drum 'n' bass and 'abstract beats' whereas the Cognition series is more 'upbeat' with a techno/dance orientation, says Clan Analogue Label Manager, Gordon Finlayson. Clan Analogue releases the sounds that others follow.



Preparations for a Centrifuge performance
Tim O'Loghlin.

Canberra's infamous Panopticon forest parties came into the world around 1995. These parties live on in an evolved form today. There are over 30 musicians making their own computer and machine based music in Canberra in 1999. The peak days of the Clan Analogue forest performances featured the likes of Nicole Skeltys and Kate Crawford as Bi(f)tek, Jon Wicks and Bo and Mit, as well as Clan guests from around Australia. Local permeations and natural collaboration saw the formation of such bands as Clone (Bi(f)tek and Dark Network together) and a Canberra super group, Stoat, which was created for the 1996 Big Day Out.

Canberra is a bit of a "breeding ground" for electronic music says O'Loghlin who has recently returned from an excursion to the United States. He says: "In Washington I had a look around for live (electronic) musicians who were doing anything other than house or jungle. Not that I am particularly opposed to either of those mediums. It was pretty weird being in such a big city and not having that same common thread of music to plug into." Canberra electronic artists, working in an unusual environment, naturally gravitate towards one another and together create a sound which possesses a timelessness and undoubtedly possesses "Canberra."

Naomi Black is a freelance writer and weekly music columnist and feature writer for the Canberra Times. *Since 1996 she has been a dance music presenter involved with raves and club nights and in 1998 founded the Canberra Dance Music Industry Group (CDMIG).*

Scaling 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 Ingrid Bergman, Billy Bragg also includes one entitled *Eisler on the Go*. While one suspects that he probably needed to provide a gloss on the name for most of his audience at the live concerts, 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 on CD of LPs 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 Modern, with singer H.K. 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 highpoint in the recorded Eisler repertoire, but quite simply some of the finest, most penetrating and moving *Lieder* singing I have heard in over a decade.

Baritone Matthias Goerne, though still young, sings with the intelligence and sensitivity to every shift and nuance of text and music of a Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, with whom he has studied. Yet the singer he more closely resembles is the peerless Fritz Wunderlich, whose tenor was unmatched for colour, warmth, lyrical ease and sheer beauty of sound.

It may seem incongruous to associate such qualities with songs which are (mostly) settings of texts by Brecht, and which address the listener sardonically, satirically, sometimes cynically, yet always with an unflinching ear for the incongruities and daily adversities of life in exile. Listen to Goerne's effortless negotiation of the vocal line in *The Last Elegy* where, while never ignoring the metaphorical import of Brecht's picture of the fighter planes hovering like vultures over a Los Angles landscape whose dubious attractions keep even them at a distance, he makes the complicated and awkward intervals sound as straightforward and approachable as if they belonged in a neo-Schubertian *Volkslied*.

It is this combination of vocal refinement and textual illumination which is precisely what this great cycle of 46 songs (here recorded complete for the first time) requires of the singer. Only 6 of the songs last for more than 2 minutes, with the shortest running for just 34 seconds. Yet in their individual and cumulative impact they resemble not so much the piano pieces and shorter songs of Eisler's teacher Arnold Schoenberg, but the conciseness, elliptical complexity and emotional range of the orchestral works of his co-pupil Anton Webern.

A number of the songs feature on a 1988 Teldec disc with Fischer-Dieskau and pianist Aribert Reimann. But in every instance, Goerne's and his—at least to this reviewer, who with Robyn Archer has performed many of these songs—depressingly responsive and technically impeccable accompanist Eric Schneider's interpretation is superior to his teacher's. Fischer-Dieskau tends, as he did towards the latter stage of his career, to over-colour the words, to rely on conventional dramatic and rhetorical gestures. Goerne, on the other hand, follows exactly Brecht's often unexpected juxtapositions, the application of that extension of the theatrical alienation effect where a carefully established mood is suddenly disrupted by a word, a line, a musical affect.

There is no better instance in the recital than in Goerne's heart-stopping account of *On Suicide*, a short poem from *The Good Person of Sezuan*. In just 50 words, the poet paints a picture in which the depressing effect on the socially and psychologically alienated of a landscape of grey evenings, lofty bridges and that dark hour between night and dawn, is seen both as paradoxically understandable and as a reproach to nature and society.

Eisler's setting, with the hushed pianissimo vocal line floating over gently tolling chords is extraordinary enough. But Goerne's (and Schneider's) rendition lasts over a minute longer than Fischer-Dieskau's, achieving an effect close to that of a mini-scene from a Noh Drama. The singer barely whispers the words "das ist gefahrlich" ("that is dangerous"), sustains the stretched legato line almost past what the voice should be capable of, and, with his pianist, virtually explodes the song with the final word "fort" ("away"), following exactly Eisler's totally unexpected dynamics marking of triple *forte* in the score.

This disc should be compulsory listening for anyone interested in 20th century music and the art of song; it effortlessly stands comparison with such peaks of vocal artistry as Wunderlich's *Dichterliebe*, Fischer-Dieskau's early *Liederkreis*, Britten and Pears' *Winter Words*.

Hans Eisler, The Hollywood Song Book/Hollywood Liederbuch, *Matthias Goerne, baritone; Eric Schneider, piano, Decca 460 582 - 2*

Michael Morley is Professor of Drama at Flinders University, and has appeared in recital with Robyn Archer in their program of Weimar cabaret songs in Lismore (NORPA October 1998) and Melbourne (November 1998).

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 onto the tape."

In the photograph people are looking in different directions. They are standing out of order, the groom is hidden behind the best man, the bride's smile is too broad to be becoming, 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 said and done.

Gretchen Miller was one of the participants in The Wedding Photo workshop last December, alongside Russell Stapleton, Sherre De Lys, Sophea Lerner, Lucia Barera, Kate Bochner, Brent Clough and sound engineer Andrei Chubanov. The Wedding Photo *will be broadcast again in August on Radio Eye. Kaye Mortley's Exilio will be presented in the Listening Room on June 7*

Never quite the same again

Jim Denley inspired by Australian on CD

minit: music
sigma 003
sigmaed@ibm.net

Ambachi/Avenaim
The Alter Rebbe's Nigun
Tzadik 7131

Two 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 culture means. One is happy to just be itself, to have no attached context; the other is so full of cultural baggage that you feel that in other less skilful and less knowledgable hands it would have crashed into a sea of pomposity.

The *minit* CD is entirely constructed of loops that subtly overlap and weave around each other to create groove/atmospheres that are strangely song form, all imbued with soft focus tonalities. The last track "V111" is the only one where this tendency is clearly defined (there is even the hint of a voice over the groove), and it's over with as soon as its begun, no boring endless recapitulation here. This is surprising. The thing that delights me most about this music is its playfulness with duration. Just as you settle into the obvious, it exits. The grooves have metric solidity but they are never bombastic or obvious. The only track with any driving insistency ascribable to dance is track 6, "111", but in its brief life (2minutes) it's really a rhythmic foil for a seething warren of distant electronic snorts and snuffles. There is often ambiguity and polyrhythmic complexity as the loops overlap transform and mutate. The sonic material is carefully and austerely chosen (there are lots of reversed sounds densely treated), so that nothing is recognisable but much is vaguely and reassuringly familiar. Track 4, "ŒV11", includes some distant chattering electronic bell birds that never had me looking out the window except to mix in the real currawongs that were joining in on my Sydney Sunday morning. Track 3, "ŒX", starts with sounds that suggest what a soft "Oldenburg" gamelan might sound like. You can't then say this music is abstract, but its sonic origins and implications are entirely ambiguous. Like its cover art and track titles this work stands outside of any implied context or meaning.

The purity, gentleness warmth and roundness of the resulting music is extraordinary. This is electronica with no hard edges, gently massaging your listening with trance tracks that are rich in detail and stimulating in a formal and sonic sense.

The *Alter Rebbe's Nigun* (on John Zorn's US label Tzadik) couldn't be more different. Context and meaning is what this document is all about. I wouldn't begin to believe that I understand the full implications of the music and texts 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 imagine what this power conjures or implies, but shit its exciting.

Avenaim and Ambachi play a rich palette of instruments to realise the 4 "worlds", or tracks, "Asiyah", "Yetzirah", "Beriah" and "Atzilut" on this CD. But at the heart of everything is their distinctive and accomplished free/punk guitar and percussion. The opening track "Asiyah? Action" starts with Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi's (the Alter Rebbe) melody from the 18th century intoned 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 high-energy, free jazz guitar and drum impro, imbued with melody, which at 6 minutes extends further into wilder, noise-based explosions before returning to a mystical melody at the end. This is an extraordinary fusion of free jazz/noise with Jewish religious composition, the like of which has never been heard. Liner notes explain that here "the spiritual actually interacts with the physical dimension, bringing the entire continuum of the four worlds to its intended fulfilment."

Track 2, "Yetzirah ? Formation," starts subdued but quickly assumes the same level of drama, with crashing gongs, screeching double reed instruments and huge drones, that enter once and leave. Left is an eerie slow guitar melody. Track 3, "Beriah ? Creation." Back come the double reed instruments, multi-tracked with what sounds like both musicians in a double drum kit duo. Scratched gongs and bass brass and string drones take over and then morph into the guitar drum dialogue again with the Alter Rebbe's melody always running in counterpoint. Track 4, "Atzilut? Emanation," is the major section of this work. The liner notes explain that Atzilut "Is the highest of the four worlds, still in a state of infinity." The term is also derived from the Hebrew word "etzel", meaning nearby, ie nearest to the source of creation. Rabbi Yankel Lieder is featured here reading text in Hebrew; he intones from left to right speaker of my stereo and then suddenly appears multi-tracked, with a host of backward tape sounds accompanying. Here the CD moves into new territory, suddenly more akin to radio art than what has preceded. A huge sprawling choir melody with bass drum is parallelled to noise and percussion impro/collisions. In conclusion back comes the rabbi and the melody on guitar for one delightful statement.

This is religious music. You feel the musicians are passionate and knowledgable about their esoteric subject matter; they speak to us in a current musical language about mystical and philosophical knowledge in a way that is immediate and moving. In my book this is a major achievement.

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

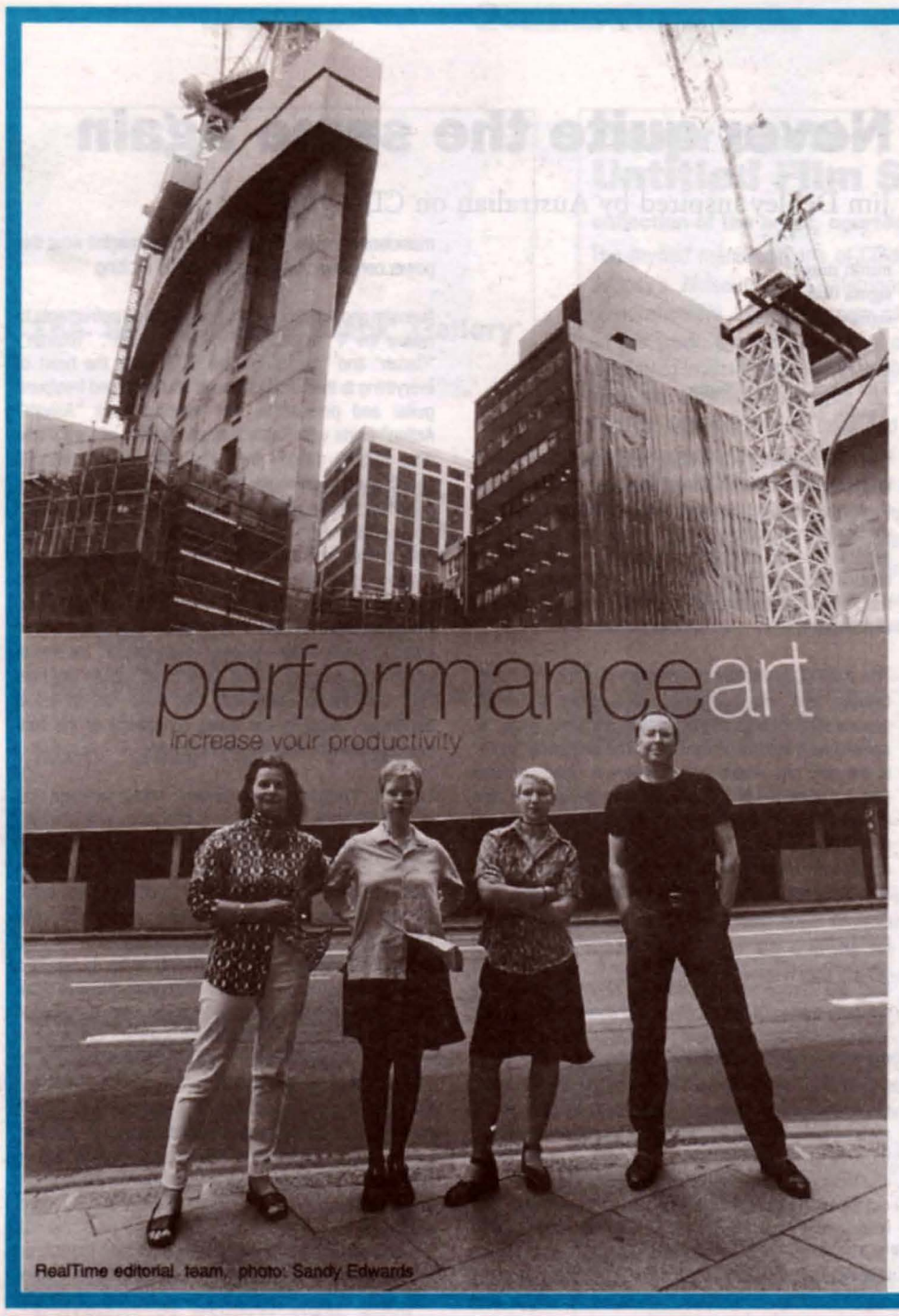
Jim Denley, is a Sydney-based musician, producer of Split Records and a member of the Machine for Making Sense.

Fancy spending a few days listening to the sounds of Barcelona? The Symposium En Red 0 1999 (organised by the Centre de Cultura Contemporania de Barcelona in Spain) is calling for sound art and music works. The Symposium will take place November 10 - 12.

Selected works will be programmed in chill out sessions devoted to the Soundscapes of Barcelona and the World (other cities and environments). Works "of all aesthetic tendencies" are welcome. The results of chilling-out will be made into an audio CD-ROM including theoretical contributions and extracts from works programmed and featured online (from early October) at *www.cccb.es/caos/soundscape.*

Entries can be in the following formats, data CD-ROM with AIFF, SND (Mac) or Wave (PC) files - 16 bit, 44.1 KHz, CD-Audio and DAT, deadline is September 30, and should be posted to: Orquestra del Caos/En Red 0, CCCB, Montalegre 5, E-08001 Barcelona.

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



RealTime editorial team, photo: Sandy Edwards

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