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Open City Inc.

Editors
Keith Gallasch, Virginia Baker

Assistant Editor
Kirsten Krauth 02 9283 2723

OnScreen

Co-editing Editors
Annemarie Jonson, Alessio Cavallaro

OnScreen assistant
Needeya Islam

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Advertising
Gail Priest tel/fax 02 9518 1677 email sputnik@hutch.com.au

Design/Production
Gail Priest

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Chunky news
You can count on an evening of discombobulation when Chunky Move come to town with their suitecases full of Bodgitas, their new dance season at the Drama Theatre in August-September.

Gideon Obarzank gets his teeth stuck into Little Red in All the Better to Eat You With exploring "the complexities of power and abuse beneath the familiar fairytale" yeh, yeh but we know it's the "psychotic beauty and seriously sensitive" stuff we wanna see, "the surrealist tea party cum serial killer pantomime" yes! A delectable fairytale fit for the new millennium says The Melbourne Times, to which we say, yum-yum.

There's more discomfort in Lucy Guerin's Zero described by the choreographer as "an uneasy work that continually crosses itself, reinforcing its structural identity and the individuals within it." Using techniques of film camera operation and playback translated into a real time relationship with choreographer with Darm-Varga's electronic soundtrack creates close-ups, jump cuts and extreme shifts in focus. See it on a dark night.


TEE OFF with Vivienne leach
Though they entered at 1, I have always had a suspicion that Malcolm Fraser's "Life wasn't meant to be easy" was seen as not too far off course by many Australians. Witness the disgraceful outcry by Kosovo refugees daren to question the cold charity of an armed marauders in mid-Winter Singleton. It occurred to me as I lef of at Carnoule in Scotland last month that this might explain our presence in such numbers at this year's British Open. Hordes of Aussies surged into their hands as international pros chopped and hacked their way around unforgiving greens. They howled and pointed when the Frenchman rolled up his trousers and waded into the water trap. Gigging loudly was Olympics Minister Michael Knight as he toured the formidable bunkers and kne-High roughs. "I'll give 'em a bake trick" he muttered, referring to the tour of Barakat he recently tried to pass off as an international cycling circuit. Later in the clubhouse I spotted Mike swapping yarns with R & A Championship chairman Hugh Campbell who described his course as not "life-threatening, so get on with it." Cheering words for Knight whose mind is occupied these days with just how to enhance the Olympics experience for the international tourist when what he basically got, outside a bloody great stadium, is State Rail's western line, Parramatta Road, the M4 and environs. "Bugger 'em" he shouted from the tee. "Let them come to Carnoule!"
Editorial

Australian Perspectives 99, MAAP 99 and APT3 are all eagerly anticipated in this edition of RealTime. Jacqueline Milner and Alex Gawronski have commissioned a set of essays to explore the already contentious (as you'll soon read) theme of Perspectives 99—"living in the here and now: arts and politics." It would be heartening if Perspectives 99 triggered ongoing debate about art and politics in Australia._Artspace director Nicholas Toufas is keen to ensure that it does with a widely distributed provocation (see page 7 and interview page 9).

MAAP 99 is the innovative Brisbane-based Multimedia Art Asia Pacific festival that links the region online but also has a strong physical presence with a range of quirky and immersive events and a significant conference (See page 28). MAAP 99 overlaps with another Brisbane-based event, a major visual arts celebration, APT3 (Asia Pacific Triennial), which shares some events and a strong regional interest with MAAP. A feature of APT this year is its Virtual Triennial website (See page 38). For MAAP it's their second festival, a unique venture which should attract a big audience online and on the ground. APT's reputation is considerable, preferred by many over the Sydney festival's program. The Cassavetes screenings attracted a substantial audience of older devotees and the curious—many soon to become converts. It was a bracing experience to see again, on the big screen, film narrative addressed with such (carefully crafted) rough verge, such extremes of anger and laughter, and great ensemble performances that put you right on edge.

This edition of RealTime should last you a good 2 months. All being well, we hope to travel north to savour the pleasures of MAAP 99 and APT3. See you there.

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Introducing the issues: Perspecta 99
Living Here Now: Art and Politics

Jacqueline Millner introduces the RealTime prelude to Perspecta 99—a collection of essays and interviews she commissioned with Alex Geworski.

This year, the contemporary art event Perspecta is again framed by a big issue. From Art and Nature we have moved to Art and Politics. For some, the choice of theme from one art generation to another art generation is, as art's political implicatons, is a misguided representation of art and politics as the favour of the past and present, the marginal or the fashionable curatorial era. But for others, the theme provides a welcome opportunity to focus on and debate this persistently important conjunction.

The choice of art and politics as the theme for this year's Perspecta is both long overdue and embarrassingly redundant. The conjunction of art and politics has not, so far, been removed from us: because it is taken for granted in the art of many other countries. The fact that politics is set up here in a context of a lack of political commitment in a great deal of Australian art of the past decades; it may even perpetrate a persistent dearth of content and political responsibility in criticism to date. Perspecta appears to hold up politics as one theme among many, implying that next year another theme, a different exigency will require our attention.

Although the curatorial axis may be well-intentioned, proposing politics as the latest main event betrays a myopia not unlike which has tainted official responses to the 'Aboriginal issue' in this country. The error is to think of the Aboriginal issue as a syndrome which can be cured and then forgotten, rather than as a matter which requires the institution of an ongoing and pervasive consciousness of dignity and respect. Perspecta 99 must wrestle with an analogous error: namely that focusing on the relationship between art and politics is suddenly rouse consciousness of the ways in which art penetrates the spheres of cultural instrumentality, ethics and change. The theme of Perspecta 99 is an attempt to sidestep the argument that all art in the western tradition at least since the mid 18th century has been political. Indeed, 'art and politics' may well be as tautological as 'art and art.'

Let me put an historical gloss on this. It was the events preceding and during the French Revolution that made the use of art for political purposes so conspicuous for the first time in western art. Previously, political content was either confined to the overt gestures of pamphlets and caricatures and therefore considered marginal, or it was deployed in the form of sanctifying members of the clergy or the aristocracy, hence covert. But during the French Revolution, images, at least in name, became the property of the people. Paintings were now used to celebrate revolutionary moments or to create people's heroes, such as David's painting of the revolutionary Marat executed in his bath. Napoleon then put art to service of the people's state, with innumerable portraits of himself and his generals in their endless processions, as disposable as an alter ego answerable to the king for one's identity.

Hegel, in his philosophy of self-realisation, characterised the political process in which pure spirit, as he called it, revealed itself. Art had undergone progressive stages of self-knowledge, and was moving inexorably toward its end, when its mission of revolution would be complete and it would no longer be necessary. Hegel understood art as serving the goals of the common good and truth. In this he was not so far removed from those Romantics from whom he wished to distinguish himself, who also argued that there was no division between art and politics when one matter turned one, art had a political register; it had a purpose. Indeed, both Hegel and the Romantics believed that frivolous 'art' did not merit the name.

And what of Courbet's Realism? By definition, the themes of Courbet's painting do not have the same political currency today as they had in their time. For to desire that art be Real was to desire that art have direct relevance to its immediate public and to the matters of the day. Courbet for instance was the first artist to deal with manual labour in art as manual labour and nothing else. What many in Courbet's time saw as the artist's indifference to beauty was actually his actuality to focus on the worth of everyday things and occurrences. Realism— and Realism in literature such as Zola— meant for art to have currency, to reflect the present accurately and to have some influence on it. It is with Courbet that we see the emergence of the avant-garde which is, after all, a term borrowed from the military to describe troops who were ahead of the main army and who could make trouble for the others. Indeed to trace the tribulations of the avant-garde since the middle of the 19th century is also to trace the transmutations of socialism. For example, it is frequently forgotten that Surrealism was originally conceived as a great deal more that a stylistic movement; it was to be a revolution. According to its most ardent advocates, Surrealism was intended to liberate the inner drives, to free the unconscious and thereby bring about the downfall of rational capitalism.

Even though in revolutionary aspirations remained but a pipe-dream, Surrealism crossed the Atlantic with those artists who managed to escape Europe in the 30s, and substantially infected Abstract Expressionism before this style ossified into the essence of art for art's sake in the 50s and 60s. The notorious advocate for Abstract Expressionism, the critic Clement Greenberg, was a Marxist. Moreover Abstract Expressionists kept to themselves (already a political act, whether one likes it or not) or perhaps we should say depravedly so, when one considers Barnett Newman's paintings for example at first to have no political intent at all. To a lay viewers, his monochrome fields punctuated with outsize vertical linear motifs is perhaps even obtuse or pretentious. But in the physical presence of these works, one feels an equally odd sense of mystical remembrance. For Newman, who wrote 'Instead of making...cathedrals of man, Christ, man or life, we are making them out of ourselves, out of our feelings,' art was to be all encompassing and salvational. Those who refer to the connection between this and politics have only to turn to the beginning of western philosophy, to Plato's Republic, and remember that Plato wasted poets and artists excluded from his ideal state, because art was considered to be deception and imitation. In effect what Newman was saying was that art had succeeded where the politics of the 1930s had failed.

What becomes clearer looking at these examples, but some among many, is that art and politics are not connected, but rather that art is a crucial component of the political. (Art is political but the aestheticisation of politics is banal.) It is with Courbet that we see the emergence of the avant-garde which is, after all, a term borrowed from the military to describe troops who were ahead of the main army and who could make trouble for the others. Indeed to trace the tribulations of the avant-garde since the middle of the 19th century is also to trace the transmutations of socialism. For example, it is frequently forgotten that Surrealism was originally conceived as a great deal more that a stylistic movement; it was to be a revolution. According to its most ardent advocates, Surrealism was intended to liberate the inner drives, to free the unconscious and thereby bring about the downfall of rational capitalism.

EVEN THOUGH IN REVOLUTIONARY ASPIRATIONS REMAINED BUT A PIPE-DREAM, SURREALISM CROSSED THE ATLANTIC WITH THOSE ARTISTS WHO MANAGED TO ESCAPE EUROPE IN THE 30S, AND SUBSTANTIALLY INFECTED ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM BEFORE THIS STYLE OSSIFIED INTO THE ESSENCE OF ART FOR ART'S SAKE IN THE 50S AND 60S. THE NOTORIOUS ADVOCATE FOR ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, THE CRITIC CLEMENT GREENBERG, WAS A MARXIST. MOREOVER ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS KEPT TO THEMSELVES (ALREADY A POLITICAL ACT, WHETHER ONE LIKES IT OR NOT) OR PERHAPS WE SHOULD SAY DEPRAVEDLY SO, WHEN ONE CONSIDERS BARNETT NEWMAN'S PAINTINGS FOR EXAMPLE AT FIRST TO HAVE NO POLITICAL INTENT AT ALL. TO A LAY VIEWERS, HIS MONOCHROME FIELDS PUNCTUATED WITH OUTSIZE VERTICAL LINEAR MOTIFS IS PERHAPS EVEN OBTUSE OR PRETENTIOUS. BUT IN THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THESE WORKS, ONE FEELS AN EQUALLY ODDE SENSE OF MYSTICAL REMEMBRANCE. FOR NEWMAN, WHO WROTE "INSTEAD OF MAKING..."
The arts, community and the decline in social capital

Catriona Moore in Queensland details a political context for Perspecta 99's Living Here Now

The curatorial chestnut of personal politics and political engagementg the last survey of contemporary Australian art of this century. Unlike the edition of Living Here Now: Art and Politics, Perspecta 1999 will canvass artistic responses to the interwoven issues of racial and cultural diversity, love and sexuality and animism, and our changing experience of the private and the public domains, the personal and the political.

The feminist slogan 'the personal is political'(and vice versa) remains useful. Thirty years after its formulation as a slogan-of-Women's Liberation, it is perceived to feel dated, hollow and, while the political self has become far more privatised than anyone had thought possible. The problem social analyses of feminism and related New Left social movements have been fairly accurate; however, private life has been shaped more by the "invisible hand" of electronic media markets than by the long arm of the State. Nonetheless, the politics of the New Left informed the most socially and aesthetically speculative aspects of postmodern art. Today we see their offspring on the web, on the airwaves and on the web at the AGNSW, the National Trust's S H Ervin Gallery, the Casula Powerhouse, Artspace and other Perspecta venues.

The exhibition's decentralised format welcomes a relative diversity of audiences. This is a digital echo of an earlier search for new audiences. Everything is seen as the potential of the human and the current art of the Cultural Community Development Unit of the Australia Council, Deborah Mills, links the cracks which quickly appeared in the Council's charter by the early 1980s. Until then, the central paradox of Access and Excellence had been resolved through understanding cultural difference as cultural deprivation. The 'Consumer' arts project of Viva took the regions, writers' workshops went to Wagga Wagga and muralists painted prison exercise yards. Under pressure, our flagship institutions were forced to let go of the idea of a single dominant culture. "One culture became many. The task became one of creating the conditions in which these cultures could flourish... Cultural development became both an objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal process... a political act..."

Artists and audiences are possibly better served by talking with today's version of St Simon's 'scientists and industrialists'"-our progressive civil servants. Just what can active learn from the bureaucrats for a start, it's worth remembering how both Labor and Liberal governments used to talk about the State as a mirror, reflecting and serving the needs of the community. Now the cleverer ones acknowledge that this failed community no longer exists, if it ever really did. Up here in Queensland, for instance, civil servants and A P L buckled under the weight of the State and the need for real or imaginary dialogues outside the work world. For instance, I find I can learn more about "Living here now" from a short trip to the Office of the Government Printer than from the back to the Modern Masters' columnist's vision of our cultural mandarins. The latter have become the guardians of yesterday's public, and have abstained themselves from the coalface of civic life.

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Cultural policy is the current hot topic, and it's worth remembering how both Labor and Liberal governments used to talk about the State as a mirror, reflecting and serving the needs of the community. Now the cleverer ones acknowledge that this failed community no longer exists, if it ever really did. Up here in Queensland, for instance, civil servants and ALP buckled under the weight of the State and the need for real or imaginary dialogues outside the work world. For instance, I find I can learn more about "Living here now" from a short trip to the Office of the Government Printer than from the back to the Modern Masters' columnist's vision of our cultural mandarins. The latter have become the guardians of yesterday's public, and have abstained themselves from the coalface of civic life.

Feminist cultural policy is a consequence of the broader cultural policy of New Labour's "partnership" or "social capital" rhetoric. "Cultural" was conceived to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, communal objective and a methodology and was understood to mean a collective, commun
Elusive exigenes: art and social change

Jacqueline Millner surveys ways of looking at the relationship between art and social change

How does art affect social change? While thinking about the theme for this year's Perspectives, I was reminded that this question has troubled me much of my adult life. From high school fascination with the role of the Russian avant-garde in achieving revolutionary objectives, to an undergraduate attempt to understand how it was that social change could come about other than through economic determinism, and on to later concerns with feminism, post-structuralism, the politics of difference, and third culture, in many respects this question has framed and provided an often unconscious coherence to my intellectual inquiry. I am sure I am not alone here in this last respect, in which, which will never really recede from cultural debate, and which has been argued furiously throughout the century.

John Robert's erudite and polemical examination of the relationship between art, especially photography, realism and the everyday, The Art of Intervention (Manchester 1988, Manchester University Press), recently placed some of my early frustrating attempts to understand how politics and art were connected in interventionary work on my own call to account. Along with Bill Hinchy's attempt to argue for a particular understanding of the Marxist notion of ideology which allowed this connection, 'relative autonomy', within the economic conditions of a society, so as to theoretically wrangle a central position for artists and cultural critics. Roberts reminded me that there were in fact other breakthroughs which British cultural critic John Tagg hailed as "making cultural politics possible" (cited in Roberts).

My attraction to poststructuralism and its critiques of representation, as well as my enduring loyalty to the everyday, to photography and its realist attempts to enlighten, are also caught in Roberts' historical sweep. From the government sponsored photographs of the American depression of the 30s, to the complex interactive art-text collaborations of John Berger and Jean Mohr, to Nan Goldin's warts and all identity politics, documentary photography has continued its attempts to negotiate a bridge between art and politics. More traditional documentary approaches however receded from the limelight with the advent of the rediscovery of Russian avant-garde, photography à la Focaspol. With representation now as the locus of reality-creation, artists took centre stage, effectively becoming guerrillas at the level of the sign, challenging politics and its ideological form, the likes of Arthur Boyd and Albert Tucker. As Jameson points out, political art of the social realist type is often assimilated to

Into the Spiderweb

continued from page 7

politics of my work in the sense that I, like many other Australian artists of mixed parentage, experienced as a result of the White Australia trends of the 50s and 60s. It was during this very time that my grandmother sent me to the local Orthodox school for Jews and Armenians. This seemed strange to me because as a Ukrainian she had quite a distinct cultural and political outlook.

AG In the work to which you have just referred, you reconstructed your old classroom, 'reversing' the normal version of an art history; how do you think it's possible to make politically effective art in a museum like the Art Gallery of NSW?

AD Of course! Australian artists of the 30s and 40s, like The Angry Penguins, were highly politicised. They also happened to exhibit at the Art Gallery of NSW. I suppose ultimately I am interested in the degree to which my work has the capacity to subvert pre-existing meanings while avoiding being absorbed entirely by the institution. I think such a

associated with ACT UR, and arguably key to understanding the workings of much prominent art of the 80s and early 90s such as Barbara Kruger's billboards or Jenny Holzer's LEDs.

And yet, it is possible to contextualise the search for a meaningful model of the relationship between art and social change more broadly still (as Roberts also does), for arguably cultural politics were not in effect enabled in the 1960s by Altshuler but much earlier. Frederic Jameson has written his afterword to a collection of writings from the 1920s and 30s entitled Aesthetics and Politics, notes the enduring relevance of the different inflections of the realism/modernism debate which was concerned with this very search. It was a debate perhaps best articulated in the exchanges between 2 giants of German art and political philosophy, Berlhus Brecht and Georg Lukacs, although in Australia the debate was also passionately argued between the social realist painters, such as Noel Counihan and the group of expressionists associated with the Angry Penguins, such as Albert Tucker.

Lukacs insisted on the fundamental importance of culture to revolutionary politics, developing a theory designed to reveal the ideological moment within which the social realist position appeared to be purely formal aesthetic phenomenon. Moreover, he argued that in the practice of realism, as opposed to avant-garde modernism, there existed the possibility of some complete or truthful representation of reality, not captive to false consciousness but rather free of ideology and emancipatory: the credo of the traditional documentary photographers.

Brecht on the other hand sought to restore to reality the "principle of play" which vaguely aesthetic, or decorative, or passive in character. The aesthetic gratification which the relatively more passive and cognitive aesthetic of Lukacs seemed to replace with the grim duty of a proper representation (Jameson). Moreover, Brecht's principle of 'alienation', whereby the historical contingency of various aesthetic phenomena are foregrounded, provided a crucial insight as an evidence for much political art since his time.

As for the Australian response to these debates, Brecht and modernism appear to have won out, for who became the undoubted heroes of Australian painting but those who sought to escape politics and authorship. However, this is an unlikely manifesto for cultural activists, an essential accommodation reportedly often spied in the hip pockets of New York AIDS activists

question refers as much to the curator's responsibility, which in this case I believe to be utterly clear, as well as the responsibility of the artist.

AG Do you think you have any political responsibility as an artist?

AD Once again I think that political responsibility is a necessary condition of being an artist today. However I believe the question is far too complex ever to be clear-cut. In my own work I seek to address the political themes as an instance of what is called "subjectivity" or "hegemony", and avoid either for approaches to art making. Through doing so I hope to allow viewers a sense of participation and authorship. However and satire are also indispensable components of my practice. It is primarily through these that I hope to entice viewers. Of course it is always a question of degree and the nature of the work is to provoke further debate about what happens when we look at art.

It is Roberts' proposition, for example, that experiencing art is less about decoding, a process which relies on learnt codes of communication, than about "ordinary human cognition". He goes on: "Interpreting pictures is not just a
classical ideologies of representation, while even bourgeois modernism is said to be revolutionary precisely to the degree that it questions old formal values. Charles Merewether has remarked on the relative institutional influence to the Australian social realists, compared to the status granted the expressionists of the period. Ultimately, it seems, the radicality of the world-view and political commitment of the artists are rendered redundant in favour of experiments in modernism's formal language; in an unfettered scramble for "the cool", the once-great names of the '20s triumphed over grass-roots involvement in workers' struggles and marginalised communities (activities which characterised the social realist approach).

Indeed it is a scenario which plays itself out again and again, including much later in the community arts and art in working life projects of the 1970s, where aesthetics were consciously sacrificed for the sake of participation, where decision-making was decentralised often to the point of obliterating the artist altogether, where the emphasis was on process and not on finished product. Institutional memory is imparted with such strategies, so that other than representation as social history, little survives of such experiments in art and politics, let alone much positive assessment of what was possible.

The Art of Intervention by John Roberts (Manchester University Press), recently placed on my shelf, is an important and timely contribution to the debate.

It is a scenario which plays itself out again and again, including much later in the community arts and art in working life projects of the 1970s, where aesthetics were consciously sacrificed for the sake of participation, where decision-making was decentralised often to the point of obliterating the artist altogether, where the emphasis was on process and not on finished product. Institutional memory is imparted with such strategies, so that other than representation as social history, little survives of such experiments in art and politics, let alone much positive assessment of what was possible.

A useful model to describe the way that art might contest social change remains as elusive as ever, but the historical consideration of this problem is a rich source of ideas for contemporary practitioners. What I think we must be thankful for to Perspectives 99 is the opportunity to focus on this problematic, which, on account of its very ubiquity, is often nebulous to the point of invisibility.

Radio art and politics in Australian Perspectives 99

Bringing them Home, the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Children from their Families took evidence from more than 530 Indigenous people throughout Australia. I Walked Into My Mother (April 30) by composer Mya Henderson with Keen Smith and Pamela Young is a musical setting of the evidence presented by one witness. "It recognizes the anguish suffered by a child whose only meeting with her mother was on and tantalizing, the memory of it all, with yarning."

Henderson's work is one of 4 radio compositions to be presented by The Listening Room on ABC Classic FM during Perspectives 99.

Robert John's Marking Time (August 23) uses directed musical improvisations to explore "The anguish and banality of mental illness." The work includes performances by Jim Dentley, Phillip Ma, Michelle Morgan and Amanda Stewart. Stay tuned for Amanda Stewart's The War Poem, sound and sense, n.a.m on the same night.

In Revolutions in September (June 30) Ian Pace ironically invokes past revolutionary art "to poke a serious and very personal finger under a regime of economic rationalism."

Cathy Peters The 20th Century and the Dream (September 13) is "a musical weave of recorded connections from the dreams and nightmares of our century."

The Listening Room is broadcast Mondays, 9 pm on Classic FM. For further information visit The Space www.abc.net.au/space.
We live in strange times. We live in an age of anxiety and a world in constant crisis. Ideology seems to be evaporating before our very eyes. Culture is in crisis and political systems seem to be in a state of permanent flux. In the 90s we cannot seem to rely on old political values, old ideologies & old systems of class structure. The political conditions of the 90s are unstable, and are impacting on and transforming every aspect of contemporary culture. Art after postmodernity also appears to be in a state of unconditional and nervous crisis. All art has been fragmented, deconstructed and post-postmodernised. Nothing is stable. Everything is indeterminate. All ideology seems to have been effaced, neutralised and made impossible. In the new world orders of globalisation, structures themselves, along with national borders, ecologies and economies, are balanced precariously. When the history of critical thought so incessantly urges the debunking of illusions and simultaneously elevates the simulacra, we are forced all the more to consider the locations of where power and authority rest. Where are the centres and frontlines which appear to surround us? Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish this capitalist epoch... yet the ruling ideas of each age have always been the ideas of its ruling class. As we approach the end of this millennium at a frighteningly accelerated speed, there seems to be no signposts left as we are inevitably driven not just ‘forward’, but also apart. What are the forces and positions which define the space of contest when the avant-garde has lost its manifesto? There is an urgent need to critically and theoretically interrogate the culture industry in relation to these collapsing ideologies. The strategy of preaching oppositionality against established canons is no longer appropriate, subversive or viable. It is clear that what little resistance is evident in the academy is but the last gasp of exhausted authority. The old hierarchies have shifted and the forms of opposition have altered. We live in an age already saturated by the politics of transnational capitalism or insulated by a form of repressive tolerance. Politics is everywhere but nowhere. The culture of revolt has been turned into a culture of spectacle: a culture of hope and profound imagination into a culture of management and fear... the worst of both worlds, a schizophrenia of unconstrained market forces combined with ideological fundamentalism. Politics of the new millenium demands of us a reinvention of a way out of the vicious circle of capitalism.

The object of this political event is to critically rethink the very substance of contemporary art in relation to the contradictions and the oppositionality of conflicting ideologies. Can art be political? How do you construct a political work of art? What constitutes the political in art? Does art have a transformative function? Who consigns art to be political? Who authorises art? Is political art a contradiction of impossible oppositions? What are the conditions that precipitate a political art – What are the political conditions of art? What is the nature of crisis in contemporary culture? Is it possible or desirable to mount yet another intervention against the changing paradigms of postmodernity? What is the role of belief? When boredom becomes anxiety, can art provide radical, subversive and alternative strategies for contesting the future? Can art in fact be radical? Does art have a political agency? What is art in relation to ideology? What is at stake for art in relation to political, ideological, social and economic debates? How can art operate in a trans-national corporate global future? What are the ideological conditions which construct the art debate and does it have a capacity for resistance? What are the philosophical and pragmatic assumptions for art in relation to developing strategies for and functioning within the next millennium? Can art redress the impasse and argue for new positions and directions, albeit, even if they are contradictory and in conflict with current sensibilities. The intention is to problematise, interrogate and renegotiate the gestures of thought, and the meanings which inform the debates on art, ideology and politics. It is further intended to approach these difficult subjects from affirmative positions of optimism and critique the ‘endisms’ that have pervaded much late twentieth century thought.

The Politics of Everyday Fear... To construct a totally open, inclusive and discursive event which generates energy, thought and positions in relation to contemporary visual culture. The project aims to reflect/refract the multiplicity of voices, hopes and fears in a sustained cumulative interrogation of the mechanisms and institutions of art, and provide a framework for an active debate on visual culture. The project is a political discourse, a political event, an act of extreme democracy, a distraction/a meditation on the relationship between language, bodies, political ideologies and art. You can respond by letter, fax, email, phone, image or in person. There will be no limits. All responses will be included. You can make a response to Artspace. Artspace The Gunnery 43–51 Cowper Wharf Road Woolloomooloo NSW 2011 Australia ph +612 9366 1899 fax +612 9368 1705 email artspace@artspace.org.au http://www.artspace.org.au
You could describe it in many ways. A casual "gossip" or "looks like rain" to the bloke next door can be seen as a Verbal Readymade (unedited text). Notice the resemblance to Duchamp's non-originate: "a mass-produced, machine-made object with no aesthetic qualities whatsoever, chosen on the basis of visual indifference and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad taste." (Calvin Tomkins, Duchamp, Chatto & Windus, London, 1996) Gossip. Neighbourhood gossip. (Don Miller, Neighbours and Strangers, Rainbow, Delhi, 1999)

The particular expression chosen is of small significance; it's one you found (as it were) lying around, having little value in itself, belonging to no-one or nowhere, but appropriate enough in the circumstances. You pay only marginal attention to it; it will be forgettable. The whole thing has a chancy quality about it; a minute before you don't necessarily expect anything in particular, then you are suddenly confronted and your identity. Over time we unwittingly cultivate an apéritif for the occasion you have little time or inclination to speculate on your talents and technique. However, an Antonin Artaud, though he may be unimpressed with your lack of passion (cruelty and may well inhabit the neighbourhood but not to the degree to which he would aspire) would nevertheless approve your constant spontaneity. You never rehearse let alone repeat a performance; each random telling is both of its time and one without ulterior and instrumental goal. Each performance end in itself. Each a matter of the heart and gut more than reason or mind. Each a matter of a process of canny denaturalised representation—the neighbourhood is live theatre. It contains no second-remove commentary. It is direct.

Gossip is not modernist art. And its place in history is unequivocally premodern. But as an art form it can be considered only postmodern. It displays no authority or authorised text, and no undisputed authorship (who first greeted a neighbour with a friendly, or cold, hello?). It is a play with an amateur cast, a seemingly improvised script, a limited yet indeterminate stage, a panorama endlessly recreated over time without beginning or end. Constant iteration—variations but without a frame. There is no copyright. Paste, pirating and parody are its uninhibited norms. Its audience (and the roles of giver and receiver are constantly interchangeable and indeterminate) expects more of the same rather than novelty; nor is it too concerned with truth. Gossip is infatuation at its purest; a situation faced with a little fair knowledge, that is all that is assumed. A passing entertainment the adequate reward. A certain lightness of being. A popular editorial on a current affair.

But neighbourhood gossip can also be described as politics. A steady coalition of permanents will always be found where clusters of people meet. It is not that forgery or plagiarism is considered poor taste—it is simply not considered, the matter being secondary to a deliberate contribution. Your style of gossip becomes one major form of your identity.

Don't be misled by the apparent grandeur of the term if I were to suggest that each of you as gossip with your neighbour is an auteur in your own right. What is a Godard doing that you are not? The "dislocated imagery" of your talk, the cut and paste of your collage, the very insignificance of your neighbourhood chatter can be compared to the highly respectable and well-established. Celebrities of The New Wave, or of the Dadaists. Do you not everyday execute in your local street a verbal form of an Eisenstein montage?

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Reconfiguring absence

The politics of public space envelops Alex Gawronski

Sydney is currently undergoing a radical transformation. The redevelopment of the city raises a multitude of often alarming questions that remain unanswered. Some of these questions concern attitudes to the city's least fortunate inhabitants, the homeless and destitute. Other groups are aggrieved by rapidly changing trends in the use of public space including artists and gallery owners. While some communities are becoming increasingly an issue of embarrassment. Other groups affected by rapidly changing trends in the use of public space include artists, their galleries and public bodies. The result is often a confusing conundrum of public and private interests. Furthermore the visibility of corporate influence is enhancing, reshaping Sydney in the guise of a multi-million dollar play. From this there emerge questions of public identity as well as endlessly cited economic stability. The Olympics, whose spectre lurks behind much of Sydney's rapid transformation, is being presented as being unquestionably 'good for everyone.' This assumption of the total compliance of the city's occupants is most disturbing. It is an assumption around which the most fragile and visible transfusions of public space are executed. The degree to which one is inclined to believe stories of nocturnal demolition and 'accidental' immobilization of public buildings represents also the degree to which an individual is likely to subscribe to the Games' homogenising influence. At present the passing of public space developments would appear to far exceed their rejection.

One of the most visible of the city's recent redemptions is the expansion of the Central bus terminal. Here flying angular planes of glass that provide little real shelter from the elements is surmounted by the knick-knack neo-Gothic fantasy of the creative team. The massively phalliccentric totems are designed to designate Sydney's centre from afar. It is ironic to dwell on such a moment which is so much needed arena for the presentation of otherwise dormant ideas. The physical location of South, tucked away on the 6th floor of a building next to Australia's largest music manufacturing industry, meant visitors had to consciously seek it out. This encouraged loyalty amongst collectors and critics. The level of an outdated narrative of centrality enhanced by the construction's sheer scale. Its architectural form is not designed to challenge the rapid deployment of modernist combinations of glass and steel. Overall design, Noel Bell, Ridley Smith Architects; urban design, Margaret Perywskau; tower ribbon concept in collaboration with Marilyn Fairisky. Fairisky's architectural proposal was the digitally produced artworks in the pedestrian tunnel and on the shelter walls not discussed here.}

Superficially the structure references, through its dissecting fractures, certain deconstructionist tendencies in architecture as championed by the philosophers Jacques Derrida and architects like Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi. When thought in comparison with the work of these architects, the Sydney site lacks any semblance of specificity or of a discerning unravelling of place. The central redevelopment tells us nothing about the site historically. Instead the bus terminal becomes a more testament to corporate interest and an instance of physical domination. The totems are likewise notable for their narrative possibilities overlaid with the most innocuous of possible new age symbolism, that of the elements. Even the universalism of such discourse is undermined through the simplistic identification of each element by a colour. Given the limitations of this symbolism, the site could have been marked by the light of a spectral and evanescent phenomenon sensitive to atmospheric alterations. Instead the work appears rigid, atrophied and cold.

The incorporation of stainless steel bar seats upon which to lean and upon which vagrants have no hope of securing sound, serves to compound an uncomplementary combination of the transitory and the immovable. In this case notions of the genuine shelter are undermined by the emphatic encouragement of the sheltered to move on. Here Sydney proclaims its identity as a city of and for tourists.

Nearby, another of Sydney's public artist-rent exhibition venues, South, comes to an end, temporarily or not. Did this have by its dedication to inclusiveness, South was a venue where the most vital contemporary art could be seen. Such organisations function on the innate narrative possibilities of art and its much needed arena for the presentation of otherwise dormant ideas. The physical location of South, tucked away on the 6th floor of a building next to Australia's largest music manufacturing industry, meant visitors had to consciously seek it out. This encouraged loyalty amongst collectors and critics. The level of an outdated narrative of centrality enhanced by the construction's sheer scale. Its architectural form is not designed to challenge the rapid deployment of modernist combinations of glass and steel. Overall design, Noel Bell, Ridley Smith Architects; urban design, Margaret Perywskau; tower ribbon concept in collaboration with Marilyn Fairisky. Fairisky's architectural proposal was the digitally produced artworks in the pedestrian tunnel and on the shelter walls not discussed here.

In her multi-site project, Question Dawn Streets, Sydney artist Lisa Anderson has disseminated a poem throughout the city. It has appeared in bus shelters and on billboards. A series of silk-lined matchbooks was also issued bearing the work's title. These separate manifestations were harnessed in anticipation of Anderson's major work, a large pink neon text, once again bearing the work's title, mounted at the intersection of George and Market streets in the vicinity of the Town Hall and the Queen Victoria building. Above this sign on a large billboard, the artist is commanded to art. Indeed for an artist there could not be a more visible 'point of sale'. Yet what does this text tell us, on what level does it function? The answer is, the artist's intent. The text is a final, an indeterminate tribute to the city as a site of dreams, purely in terms of the known; a poetic cliché. The poetic has been augmented by the magnified public dimension inasmuch as it has the potential to ignite individual imagination, Anderson's sign appeared a sign amongst signs, eloquent on that level. Its conceptual invisibility was served as an ironic counterpart to the undistinguished gloominess of cultural domain. There's still the feeling in Australia that art isn't part of the political domain, especially in the visual arts—unlike in the United States where 8% of the artistic workforce that survived in Australia was a very reactionary one. We can't sustain a culture that doesn't understand its political imperatives; we can't distance ourselves from nothing to dialogue. If we don't dialogue, says Tsioutas, "We constantly absent ourselves from responsibility. It feels as if culture sits on the precarious edge of total disappearance."

This is a discrepancy too of opposition: "Capitalism has proven itself to be avant garde and highly adaptable; it creates its own space for ideas and absorbs them. It becomes almost too difficult to think of a space of opposition." Tsioutas says that in Australia, we are ourselves a product of this political 'opposition' at "the end of a century in which art was seen as inherently radical, a re-thinking of forms and ideas. We have to renegotiate the terms of reference and that's where this project is placed. I'm not arguing for a return to '70s radicality but I'd like to think that art still has the capacity to be radical, even though I've got this feeling that it hasn't now." He makes it clear that he's not arguing for overtly political works, but ones informed by a knowledge of the workings of ideology and ones that are open to discussion, rather than to being exhibited, forgotten, made invisible. As for 'opposition', "the left seems to have collapsed. It's unfashionable to have left views. Should we even be thinking in those right left politics? What will we mean by 'politics'?"

The question is not just of opposition but of how to open up a space for it. Where do the ideas that fuel discussion and opposition come from in the art? From art practice, from the works, says Tsioutas, often in what is left over from the work once it has been experienced, what he calls 'residual'—the ideas a work provokes in itself. "What provokes that sense that in a market-driven arts culture there is little space for the residual. He asks, "What mediates ideas, how do they travel, how do they learn something that we can operate with?"

The Order of Things, Artspac'e, Australian Perspecta Project 1999, September 3 - February 5, 2000

You can respond

Nicholas Tsoutas interviewed

The day before I speak with Nicholas Tsoutas at Artspac'e, some 15,000 workers march through the city in the anti-trade union march to maintain the right to strike. An act which has been lost by its losers. After protracted public discussion, Premier Bob Carr announces Sydney's first official shooting gallery for heroin addicts (with Jeff Kennett looking set to follow). Public debate about the health system rages—many letters to editors urging a small rise in the Medicare Levy rather than the application of the new private health insurance scheme. They propose an increase in taxation in order to get decent services at the very same time the federal government tells us tax cuts (while simultaneously as a GST). There's a palpable shift in mood, a move to action. But can it be sustained? How visible is it? How audible? How thought out? Or is it ultimately powerless against capitalism's ever increasing capacity to absorb and neutralise opposition? And what about the arts, where in recent years artists have been driven into the back foot, defending hard won territory, rarely exposing vision or calls to collective action?

Nicholas Tsoutas is feeling consternation over Perspecta 99 art and politics theme and it's driven him to action. "The more I thought about it, the more impossible it became to curate. The more I thought about it, the more impossible it became to curate. The more I thought about it, the more impossible it became to curate. The more I thought about it, the more impossible it became to curate." While the ideas that fuel discussion and opposition come from in the art? From art practice, from the works, says Tsioutas, often in what is left over from the work once it has been experienced, what he calls 'residual'—the ideas a work provokes in itself. "What provokes that sense that in a market-driven arts culture there is little space for the residual. He asks, "What mediates ideas, how do they travel, how do they learn something that we can operate with?"
A dangerous course?

Hunter Corday on the challenges of teaching new media in universities

The conceptual challenges and energy surrounding new media translate into a vibrant academic environment. Both students and staff sense this—there is a distinct energy associated with teaching new media. Megan Heyward

The university sector is in a financially unsustainable situation and is being propped toward bankruptcy at an ever accelerating speed, with the assistance of new media and a conservative government. Who will be left to teach new media in Australia when a flood of new media savvy staff move out of the university sector and into working for vastly improved salaries in industry? Will the next generation of new media students need to move offshore to study in the future? Phil George

Of all the major shifts in the tertiary landscape in the last 5 years, the presence and development of new media is the area which has brought the most fundamental changes. What was once seen as a technological fashion is now a central and indispensable part of university curriculum. And because media is an encompassing discipline, the impact of its presence on campus has been more fundamentally transforming than, say, the arrival of film studies in the humanities in the 1970s.

New media has become central to the teaching of film and video, design, communications, architecture, and now some areas of business and law studies, especially where globalisation and copyright is concerned.

There has been a gold rush which has affected University departments across exhibitions, curriculum development, teaching resources and budgets. For a university not to have new media as part of its educational palette is now clearly to be Jurassic. To have it only partially is even worse...there is no halfway house on the road to digital qualifications.

New media appears to absorb and embrace all these previously separate skills, it is seen as a threat to traditional areas of art education, and a panacea to other problems of perceived vocational relevance. In the marketplace for tertiary students potential 'clients' of universities now see new media knowledge as essential to possible future employment.

Because new media appears to be so all encompassing, it is seen as a threat to traditional areas of art education, and a panacea to other problems of perceived vocational relevance. In the marketplace for tertiary students potential 'clients' of universities now see new media as essential to possible future employment.

Courses need to be re-written, partially or more, to accommodate the technology and its potential in both output and conceptual terms. The extent of the change is such that entire university departments are now devoted to teaching courses which have new media at their core. Across the sector the departmental name changes over the last 5 years denote the new direction: Media Arts and Production at UTAS (University of Technology Sydney) and Visual and Media Arts at UWS (University of Western Sydney) are two examples. At UWS there is also a Centre for Digital Media, a commercial arm of the Visual Communications Degree, an expensive new complex serving both undergraduate and graduate students as well as providing facilities for industry training.

The question must now be asked: is this the death of the art school or merely another evolutionary moment in its development? The most likely answer is that the traditional skills in visual arts (and even film production) are now part of a practical understanding of new media in terms of the creation of art/cultural objects and their positioning within the cultural landscape.

The effects on teachers and teaching are variously described as "challenging", a "crisis" or "a realignment of educational knowledge." The result is that university programs have become reactive to the pace of technological development, rather than driving and informing that change. Teachers, as well as their students, have to be up to speed with both hardware and software which, each year, dramatically changes. Often converges. Lecturers' lectures are useless in many cases because students want to study Version NEXT of a particular program.

There is no doubt that it is extremely challenging teaching new media. This is due not only to the constant change to and upgrades in software, but also due to the conceptual challenges—finding ways of imparting professional skills at the same time as recognising that new media is still developing its own voice, its own conventions. You must remain open to the possibilities of experimentation. Megan Heyward

This requires a fundamentally new teacher open to both technical and conceptual changes in their subject and a degree of professional awareness unlike anything a university has required of its teachers since the boom in nuclear physics and maths after 1945. New media knowledge is not absorbed by osmosis the way annual and subtle developments in particular subjects or genres used to occur—instead a steep hierarchy of knowledge has been created, supported by an ever-increasing number of "workshops" to retrain teachers in the new technologies.

These teachers are better placed, however, to pursue their own creative explorations of new media than their colleagues, and there has emerged a new set of digital works by teachers who, inadvertently, are re-establishing the university as a production centre for the creative arts.

On the staff level we have many multimedia projects to our credit. The works of Norie Neumark and Megan Heyward have both been richly awarded. Kate Richards and Ross Gobbo are involved in a number of AFC-funded new media projects [and Ross is now director of Cinema's Platform.10 in Melbourne's Hawthorn Space (Working the Screen). Andrew Jacobowicz (Making Multicultural Australia) and Chris Nash (The Tumbalong Project) have been involved successfully in the area too. Gillian Leahy

The new media curriculum and its expensive hardware comes to universities at a time of dramatic budget shrinkage and a fundamental change in the way universities finance their programs. This is both unfortunate and a rare opportunity for some lateral managerial responses.

Most departments that I know of are in acute financial crisis, and redundancies are widespread. How can a university realistically respond to new media when its basic hardware costs compared, for example, to a new literature or history course, are astronomical? How does a Dean or Head of Department decide on buying $500,000 worth of computers, failing full time staff or abandoning entire subjects within existing degrees to pay for the new? The answer is that they are not only more important, having bought the hardware, it is mandatory to employ or retrain staff to service it on a daily basis. Their skills and salary requirements are quite different from those of a studio assistant in the traditional arts program.

A huge amount of time was spent by many of us in the department and among the faculty's support staff researching the best solutions to go in digital editing, and comparing systems in relation to our purposes. These have been huge costs and it is hard to justify them in a climate of cutbacks to education. Media students cost a great deal per head therefore to teach and we are constantly having to investigate more cost efficient ways to teach, and other ways of finding income for the faculty. Gillian Leahy

The pace of this change and the ruthless nature of these decisions are changing universities in a profound way, largely because of student demand for new media subjects. The drift away from courses which do not have a new media component is becoming obvious, threatening the viability of those (often traditional) subjects whilst at the same time confirming the decision to invest in new technologies.

New media courses are perceived by students as 'hot', fuelled by the perception that to be without these skills makes you a graduate unemployed. This means the university's priority mission is suddenly transformed into providing vocational basic education in these technologies across a variety of disciplines.

Phil George is an artist and lecturer in digital media, UWS (Macarthur); Gillian Leahy is a filmmaker and Head of Department, Media Arts and Production, UTS, Sydney; Megan Heyward is a media artist and lecturer in multimedia at UTS.

Hunter Corday is a writer and lecturer in screen studies, UWS (Macarthur).

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On the staff level we have many multimedia projects to our credit. The works of Norie Neumark and Megan Heyward have both been richly awarded. Kate Richards and Ross Gobbo are involved in a number of AFC-funded new media projects [and Ross is now director of Cinema’s Platform.10 in Melbourne’s Hawthorn Space (Working the Screen)]. Andrew Jacobowicz (Making Multicultural Australia) and Chris Nash (The Tumbalong Project) have been involved successfully in the area too. Gillian Leahy

The new media curriculum and its expensive hardware comes to universities at a time of dramatic budget shrinkage and a fundamental change in the way universities finance their programs. This is both unfortunate and a rare opportunity for some lateral managerial responses.

Most departments that I know of are in acute financial crisis, and redundancies are widespread. How can a university realistically respond to new media when its basic hardware costs compared, for example, to a new literature or history course, are astronomical? How does a Dean or Head of Department decide on buying $500,000 worth of computers, failing full time staff or abandoning entire subjects within existing degrees to pay for the new? The answer is that they are not only more important, having bought the hardware, it is mandatory to employ or retrain staff to service it on a daily basis. Their skills and salary requirements are quite different from those of a studio assistant in the traditional arts program.

A huge amount of time was spent by many of us in the department and among the faculty’s support staff researching the best solutions to go in digital editing, and comparing systems in relation to our purposes. These have been huge costs and it is hard to justify them in a climate of cutbacks to education. Media students cost a great deal per head therefore to teach and we are constantly having to investigate more cost efficient ways to teach, and other ways of finding income for the faculty. Gillian Leahy

The pace of this change and the ruthless nature of these decisions are changing universities in a profound way, largely because of student demand for new media subjects. The drift away from courses which do not have a new media component is becoming obvious, threatening the viability of those (often traditional) subjects whilst at the same time confirming the decision to invest in new technologies.

New media courses are perceived by students as ‘hot’, fuelled by the perception that to be without these skills makes you a graduate unemployed. This means the university’s priority mission is suddenly transformed into providing vocational basic education in these technologies across a variety of disciplines.

Phil George is an artist and lecturer in digital media, UWS (Macarthur); Gillian Leahy is a filmmaker and Head of Department, Media Arts and Production, UTS, Sydney; Megan Heyward is a media artist and lecturer in multimedia at UTS.

Hunter Corday is a writer and lecturer in screen studies, UWS (Macarthur).
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Virginia Baxter goes west to see a new contemporary performance centre

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The Bobbies

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Integration/disintegration

Edward Scheer on the (dis)orientations of a new collection of essays on intercultural performance

NYU based director Anne Bogart was a revelation at the ADFA conference in Melbourne in 1997 (the essays in this collection were selected from presentations given at the conference). For a change, reprinted here, in itself justifies the price of the book and recalls the experience of what she said and the unprotesting but still engaging way she said it. She spoke of 6 things, the first 4 being: 1) the need to maintain one's own interest in whatever one is doing, 2) the change and suddenly takes you in a different direction; 2) the need to embrace violence the way Artaud said, to oppose the self censorship that stifles creative energy; 3) learning to listen produces unforeseen results; 4) to get closer you must get further away. She talked about working in Japan with Tadashi Suzuki, a very different type of director and how this made her more aware of what she was bringing to her own work. Her words on rehearsal were especially illuminating: "There is that saying you can't look directly at the sun" in a rehearsal, or in an intercultural experience, you cannot focus directly on the thing because it changes it.

To me this says that there is a need to allow room for transformation by not locking in an experience of a person or a culture before the encounter with them has taken place. This transformation is something that an insistence on identity does not allow for. If there is a "big me" and a "little me", people with themselves and with other people and cultures, then it should be free to not know in advance where it is going, not to be marked out to be lost in the excess that identity politics ignores or cannot deal with. At this conference such exercises in ethical and cultural cartographies seemed almost covert academic exercises for researchers interested in interactions with Asian theatre practices but it didn't always make for interesting research. As Bogart said in her last 2 points: 1) "every creative act involves a leap" and 2) "truth happens in opposition." This timely collection of essays mostly avoids prescriptive mapping exercises. It attempts to counter the various orientalisms to which intercultural discourses and practices are sometimes liable, while shifting debates concerning the Asian-nest of some theatre work to include the atypical, the non-essential, the hybrid. In their introduction the editors affirm "dislocation, contraction and a proliferation of alternatives; but also with a sense of the discoveries that might be made when artists find reincorporation in confusion and where nations and cultures seem to change." This is not always evident in the discussion of Una Chaudari's version of the experience of theatre as "pedagogical unpleasantness of urgent ideological instruction," which seems a bit overbearing and makes theatre sound like a bootcamp for moral pylmes rather than a sensual factory for dreaming new radical relations with the world.

The reader makes the point about "disintegration" as a critical cultural practice and situates it in opposition to a smug and chummy "integration" favoured by certain interculturalists; an approach which masks all kinds of slavish lergedom, only universality and grubby appropriation. We are required repeatedly in the book to think of Brook and Mouchkine in this context as in Bill Peterson's excellent study of Singaporean experiences with Georges Bigot from Le Théâtre du Soleil (not Cig'Bigot) "guiding Singaporeans back to their Asian roots", thereby enabling the others to "otherwise" themselves? Peterson's reading amounts to the "montage of deviance" the editors allude to in their introduction, generating a friction with normative meanings in a way which is clearly expressed in the cover image by Hou Leong. This image suggests the kinds of disorientations the book is advocating with its superimposition of the artist's own Asian image onto Paul Hogan's face in the publicity shot for Crocodile Dundee.

But not all the contributors seem to have joined the program. David George's discussion of his project The Tempest in Bali is surely one of the least convincing uses of the intercultural approach imaginable. This is Western Theatre practice situating itself within an Asian aesthetic to make George's own production of Shakespeare with the Murdoch Performance Group appear more sexy and relevant. Nothing wrong with doing The Tempest in this way but let's not call it interculturalism. Let's call it neo-colonialism with a tinge of patronising Arnoedeque cultural snobbery. Without a trace of irony, George compares himself favourably with Brook and Grutzowski, who unlike his own twilight zone company, never had the guts to take their productions back to the cultures which inspired them.

The reader gets a mini-guide tour of David George's East where "To Buddha eyes everything is performance" whereas "Western philosophy" regulates performance to a "land of shadows." Or is it in fact, Buddhism can handle practices, bodies and actions and Western thought can't.' To quote British playwright Martin Bell from Martin Bell's essay in this collection: "I would say: 'Bollocks.'" No examples are given, no substantive or generalize and we are left with an East/West once again in need of disorientation. Despite all this there's something charming about George's naive gesture towards an "ontology of the possible" recalling the always charming Roland Barthes in Empire of Signs where he says that the Japanese approach the "nullity of meaning." Ergo Zen Buddhism = Meaning degree zero = Japan. Thanks Roland. Thanks David George, and as we say here in NSW, "May the lotuses in your mount always be open."

For a really intriguing and genuinely hybridised account of what is at stake in disorientating theatre, Tadashi Uchino's amazing ramble through Brave New World, Heiner Muller and contemporary Japanese avant-garde performance constructs a beautifully succinct portrait of a failed project in pure national self realisation. Uchino is an important advocate of radical new theatre in Japan and his discussion of Gekidan Kaitaisa (Theatre of Deconstruction) and Dumb Type is entertaining and probably essential reading for artists and theorists in Australia seeking seeds for similar projects in this country. Uchino is absolutely clear about the kind of theatre he is advocating. It is as he says: "theatre as cultural intervention not as dream machine which reflects our unconscious fears and escapist desires, to come up with some kind of performativity of way to deal with our political reality." It's worth noting that one of the editors of Disorientations, Peter Eckersall, has studied with Uchino in Japan and will be working with Kaitaisa later this year in collaboration with NYID (Not Yet It's Difficult), a Melbourne based theatre collective which can genuinely claim to be working in this way. The volume Eckersall has co-edited with Rachel Fensham of Monash University is an uneven but significant and fascinating contribution to understanding what is at stake in just these sorts of collaborations.

Making machines behave

Naomi Black talks with electroacoustic artist Tim Kreger at the Australian Centre for the Arts and Technology

There is as much interesting computer music happening in Australia as there is anywhere else in the world. Just ask Tim Kreger, Lecturer in Electroacoustic Composition at the Australian Centre for the Arts and Technology (ACAT). Kreger spoke with me recently about his 10 year career as a computer music artist, touching upon the nature of his work, the usefulness of technology, and true experimentation in performance today.

ACAT comprises one third of the Australian National University Institute of the Arts, sitting between the Canberra School of Music and the School of Art. The Centre provides, it says, a "unique environment for the teaching, research, recording, publishing and performance of electronic and computer music; computer and electroacoustic music, computer animation and interactive media." Its graduate and undergraduate courses, especially the music streams, are respected for their focus on experimentation.

Kreger has worked with ACAT for 9 of its 10 years. In his graduating year of a Bachelor of Music at the Canberra School of Music, he received the 1990 Harold Wesley Allen award for composition and in 1994 was conferred the Highest Award for the collaborative work Biocurate at the Contours of the Mind exhibition. He attends annual computer music festivals and conferences in Australia and around the world in an attempt to see and hear as much as possible and to perform his own compositions.

Dark Fires: Music with Images is the most recent in a long succession of performances for Kreger. During a 5 month residency at the Bregman Studios, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, USA, last year Kreger worked with Larry Polansky to conceive, conjure and evolve pieces which would make their way to a Canberra presentation earlier this year.

Two streams are utilised by Kreger to present his music: studio based tape pieces made for listening on multiple speaker systems; and performances, half of which he does outside Canberra and is mostly, he says, "improvisory."

"There is a lot of experimentation required when you're working with interactive technology," says Kreger, "it takes a long time to get a new concept to behave in a semi-intelligent fashion so that there is logic behind what it is doing. The improvisation processes Kreger has developed means he must constantly adjust his strategies on stage in accordance with the unpredictability of his machines. The performance, while utilising consistent conceptual themes, are therefore ever-changing creations. As The Reflective Space festival in Melbourne in 1996, Kreger created sound by feeding a musical microphone back into the speakers. Although it was completely controlled and produced "quite beautiful tones and resonances", Kreger knew that it could be "psychologically scary" for the audience to see what he intended to do.

This approach is similar to that used in the award-winning Biofocate which I saw performed in Dark Fires accompanied by a computer sound system that looks like Nichols. Biofocate is controlled mathematically to accept one note in and spit 2 notes out while the whole system feeds back on to itself. To Kreger this reflects an interesting parallel with the concept of population growth.

In public presentations of computer music Kreger feels that it is not enough to simply have strong ideas, you must also correctly realise them. "I've sat through many hideous performances where people are basically running an experiment on the audience. What they should be doing is presenting the fruits of an experimentation of the preceding months or even years."

This is one reason ACAT students are encouraged to utilise their technology. Process first, public later. "We have less of an attitude of making high art and more about developing our students' ability to think," says Kreger. "The area we work hardest at is in maintaining the level of imagination and the ability to solve problems in order to realise that imagination." The greatest impact a Centre like ACAT can have on influencing a country's cultural diversity is to turn out musicians with an ear for depth in sound and, more importantly, thinkers.

Dark Fires, Canberra School of Music, Institute of the Arts, May. Further information on ACAT at http://online.anu.edu.au/aut/ACAT
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WriteSites

Kirsten Krauth explores hypermedia on the web

about Bacon numbers "a measure of how enticing, the content are worth persevering for: little jigsaw puzzle pieces, to be filled in around the edge by computer.

If you come across any innovative hypermedia works on the web, please email the URL to Kirsten: opency@ritmearts.com

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Providing viable illusions: the word is...?

Richard James Allen introduces The 1999 Australian Poetry Festival

Growing up as a poet in Australia in the 70s was a bit like growing up in a war zone. Poets' desks flying overhead, everywhere one stepped a minefield. It was fine for people to have different points of view. All the better, more interesting, more colorful, but the pleasures and intrigues were more engaging in the work than in the dogma around it.

Perhaps, in terms of the big split between the so-called "generation of 68" and the "conservatives", the way forward was not to join any school, whatever the detriment "politically". Rather, to recognise that while the changes to our perceptions of language and meaning brought by postmodernism could not be ignored, we nevertheless had to build from those fragments and impose some kind of meaning that would make our experiences worthwhile. A human space, however transcendent and ephemeral, however linguistically fabricated and compromised, nevertheless had to be constructed, and indeed this was the function of the imagination and of art—to provide viable illusions.

The 1999 Festival of Australian Poetry is about bringing these principles into a wider context. It is a place where poets of many different methods, beliefs and persuasions can come together and listen to each other. And where audiences can not only listen but participate in a dialogue about who we are as expressed with the word.

Presented by the Poets Union in the Balmain Town Hall from Friday night August 27 to Sunday August 29, the festival is a weekend in the immersion of the word as written, spoken or screened by some of Australia's broad poets, on themes from love to politics, sex to spirituality, home to humour, wild to the future.

Stylistic Collisions is a gala opening (Friday from 6pm) with a tasting of all our festival topics and a piece of the Poets' Union birthday cake (we're turning 22). Saturday night is The Great Love Poetry Reading to tie in with the ABC theme for this year's National Poetry Day. Saturday and Sunday sessions feature responses to the implied question in the word is... In each session, 3 distinguished poets read from their works on the topic of the hour (the word is... funny/political/the future/narrative/spiritual/place/ist /growing). A moderator teases out connections and contentions with the panel of poets and there's a chance for a newcomer to read their best poem (pre-selected by a panel of Poets Union judges) on the topic in question. (Send up to 3 poems by 25th August: Poem of the Festival Award, PO Box 237, Annandale 2038.)

Running throughout is The Hard Poet Cafe—the participatory wing of the festival—a venue where punters and poets can talk and browse between sessions, featuring special on-canvas booths designed for professional development sessions.

The Hard Poet Cafe includes The Editor is a table where a rotating series of poetry editors take on customers at a rate of 4 dollars for 10 minutes, reading, critiquing and discussing their poems. The Well-Read Poem is another table, this time with a coach for poets wanting to learn techniques for reading their own poems more effectively. We'll also feature an array of visual art interfaces with the word, a Cafe, a Bookstall and Signage Table, information desks, and The Word on TV, a monitor continuously playing poetry videos and poetry TV shows.

There are special events sprinkled throughout the festival, but rather than lay them out here, perhaps a few less words about words:

CREDO
I feel no need to describe the world as we see it. It is easily explained through more accurate technologies than words. / Language has needs of its own. / It is like a new species / we humans have spawned / and live with symbiotically. / Our task is not murder. it / to give it room to flourish, / to heal it when it is wounded. / It is like a broken nightingale, / whose care may be our reason for being, / whose voice may be heard / in all those places / that we call the heart.

All comers are invited to a weekend of poetry and poets to answer for themselves—what the word is... The 1999 Australian Poetry Festival, Balmain Town Hall, Friday, August 27 - Sunday, August 29. Tel 9818 6966

Richard James Allen is Artistic Director of the Australia-wide Poets Union Inc and Director of the 1999 Australian Poetry Festival. His 7th book of poetry, Thursdays Fictions, published by Five Islands Press, will be launched during the Festival in the Balmain Town Hall on Saturday August 28 at 7pm.

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John Cassavetes occupies a unique position within cinema history. He negotiated the space between Hollywood and independent American cinema traditions, creating a body of work that is often difficult but has had a lasting influence on the way in which independent filmmaking is conceived of and discussed.

Much has been made of Cassavetes as a biographical figure; his memorable acting roles and labelling as a 'maverick' director (who usually worked with the same troupe of actors which included his wife Gena Rowlands, Peter Falk, Ben Gazzara and Seymour Cassel) have perhaps generated as much interest in Cassavetes himself as in his films. American academic Ray Carney for example, who introduced the retrospective at the 1999 Sydney Film Festival, engaged the festival audience with numerous personal anecdotes and reflections. Carney is the author of several publications on Cassavetes including The Films of John Cassavetes; Pragmatism, Modernism and the Movies, Cambridge University Press 1992)

This focus, however, leaves a number of the more complex issues surrounding Cassavetes' often opaque work at the margins of the discussion. With rare public screenings of all but 2 of Cassavetes' films in Sydney and Melbourne in June, it seems timely to return to some of the ideas generated by his work about how we understand cinema; ideas that we can find traces of across a range of contemporary work.

I spoke to George Kouvaros, who has taught and written extensively on the work of Cassavetes, about the nature of performance, the preoccupation with the everyday and the rendering of the cinematic object itself in Cassavetes work.

Q Why do you think there has been a renewed interest in critical discussion of Cassavetes' films over the past decade?

GK The first thing to note is that nearly all the films are now available on video. For a long time, the only films available were A Child is Waiting (1963), Gloria (1980), Love Streams (1984) and Big Trouble (a film Cassavetes actually disowned). In the early 90s a 'Cassavetes collection' became available in France, the US and Great Britain made up of Shadows (1959), Faces (1968), A Woman Under the Influence (1974), Opening Night (1977) and The Killing of a Chinese Bookie (1976). The British critic Richard Coombs, who, along with Tom Milne and Jonathan Rosenbaum, was one of the few English language critics to pay close attention to Cassavetes' films during the 70s, wrote a very interesting short article celebrating the release of the films on video in Sight and Sound and since then there has been a trickle rather than a flood of critical interest.

But that doesn't tell us the full story of course. An important but more complicated factor in the reappraisal of Cassavetes' films is that the study of film has changed and so too have the concerns of a number of key film journals. To tell this story properly, however, would take much more space than we have here.

Q At first glance Cassavetes' films don't seem to lend themselves to being written about. What kind of pressures and challenges do his films pose for critical interpretation?

GK I think it is true to say that his films demand a different set of analytical and descriptive skills to those most film students, or my generation of film students at least, cut their teeth on at university. Rather than concentrating on obvious formal manipulations in terms of point of view, editing structures, narrative patterns and relating these to broader ideological structures, with Cassavetes' work our attention has to be on a shifting surface of bodily gesture, human relation and emotional interplay. I think Kent Jones articulated this shift of attention very nicely in a recent issue of Film Quarterly. He makes the point that in The Killing of a Chinese Bookie the way the "Chinese bookie closes his eyes and mouth tightly, tilts his chin and shakes his head...before he is shot by Ben Gazzara is as much a structural event as a change of angle in Hitchcock." (*Movie Mutations: Letters from (and to) Some Children of 1960*, Film Quarterly, vol. 52, no. 1, Fall 1998)

To get back to your original question, another reason why there has been a renewed interest in Cassavetes is because film studies has found itself coming back to the question of formal description via a renewed interest in mise-en-scene—that somewhat elusive term which calls our attention back to the materiality of the filmic image and the way in which human figures are brought into being, positioned and put under pressure through the process of filming.

Q I have this sense of each of Cassavetes' films being an exploration of a particular cinematic world, despite the spilling over of each film into another through the ongoing exploration of character. I'm interested in what is suggested by his almost Hungarian shifts from one generic space to another, from the screwball comedy to the family melodrama to the gangster film etc.

GK Perhaps what these generic shifts highlight is that his antipathy to Hollywood narrative has been overplayed. I think that as a set of narrative scenarios and archetypes, Hollywood is too much a part of Cassavetes' experience for it to simply be renounced. I am thinking here of the influence of Don Siegel who served as something of a mentor figure for Cassavetes in his early encounters with Hollywood bureaucracy. And this can be seen in the way he takes up certain genres, like the gangster film in Killing of a Chinese Bookie. But at the same time that he takes up these genres he is interested in what happens when they are subjected to a different kind of performative rhythm and narrative logic. For instance, in Bookie, it is these detours, obstacles and stumbles on the way to the hit that are made central. The encounters Cosmo has as he's trying to get to the house are given as much play and time as what happens when he gets there. So this continual process of taking up and detouring is crucial to Cassavetes' work. In Minnie and Moskowitz we find the emotions and basic tenets of the screwball comedy opened up to all sorts of uncertainties. So the relation to genre in Cassavetes' films is very much about emotional expansion and transformation. And, importantly, the passage for this transformation is an acute attention to the dynamics of acting and the always unstable relation between performer and role.

Q Cassavetes seems to have been positioned outside of any cinematic tradition, as though his methods emerged without a history and he worked with his ensemble in a vacuum. What other influences played a part in the formulation of Cassavetes' approach to cinema?

GK A key influence (one that Cassavettes himself acknowledged many times) is the work of Shirley Clarke, continued on page 18
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GK Olivier

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happens to Cassavetes' camera, what It

films? It seems that what

righteousness of daily life (in A Woman Under the Influence, for example, a spaghetti breakfast, a children's party, a day at the beach) become subject to a process of amplification and transformation that opens up these events (spatially and temporally) and subjects them to a process of crisis whereby we are no longer sure how things come together or what the proper order of things is. And the instigator for this crisis is an explicit engagement—on both formal and thematic levels—with the issue of performance. In terms of their narratives, his films continually return to the question of how to act, the question of what is the appropriate way to perform a certain role when the old ways of doing things are no longer viable. Performance serves as a way of unleashing a performative kind of energy specific to cinema that renders the everyday larger than life or operatic.

To come at this from another angle, Cassavetes' films not only give us back the everyday but set about to constantly reinvent it through the act of cinema. Each film seems to mark a process of starting from scratch. The camera looks for the possibility of something never seen before but which emerges with striking clarity through the act of cinema. Each film serves as testimony to the plasticity and fundamental mystery of human emotions as they engage and are provoked into being by the cinema.

The John Cassavetes retrospective screened as part of the Sydney Film Festival programme, Stage Theatre, Deny Martin Place & Academy Twin, June 11 - 23

George Kouvaros teaches in the School of Theatre, Film and Dance, University of NSW. He has published on Cassavetes in Screen, Post Script and Metro (forthcoming). Along with Lesley Stern he edited the anthology Falling For You: Essays on Cinema and Performance (Power Publications, 1999).


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Sandra Rowlands & John Marley, Faces
Digital rules!

Michael Hill is engaged by D.art 99 at the Sydney Film Festival

D.art 99 is a gallery exhibition of CD-ROMs and a cinema screening of linear video "made by artists who use digital processes", both programmed by dlux media arts. The screening was presented as part of the 46th Sydney Film Festival; the CD-ROMs were exhibited at Artspace from June 10 to July 3. D.art will soon tour nationally. The opening also included a performance by Wade Marynowsky and the launch of the remarkable CD-ROM Basilisk & a universe of dirt works by Wayne Stamp, Lloyd Sharp and Panos Couros.

We haven't yet reached the point on the curve of increasing bandwidth that will make any of the more interesting forms of digital art easier to distribute, so opportunities to view international works locally are still rare. At D.art 99, CD-ROMs, films and videos from Australia, Spain, Brazil, the Netherlands, Finland and Canada were shown alongside work from Australia. It is heartening to recognise that exhibitions of digital media art all over the world are striving (not always successfully) to make its present effects.

Lux media arts should be commended for continuing to program international pieces—a practice first tested at D.art 98. It seems obvious that exhibiting best international pieces benefits local production and critical practice, in much the same way that the major film festivals perform a function for their national contexts in the same way for their international context for their efforts. Once the relevant funding organisation emerges from the Hall of Mirrors it may be encouraged to support the exhibition of international digital media art locally.

One of the highlights of the video program was Peter Callas' work-in-progress Lost in Translation—part I: Plus Ultra, his first piece since moving his production process out of the video studio and onto the desktop. You have to admire anyone who will learn Unix for their art, and the result of his intensive re-skilling in Softimage is shown in this piece, which seems to offer an expanded dimension to his previous efforts in the essentially 2D world of the Fairlight video synthesiser. While still using 2D sources—images and drawings from the heroic period of Portuguese exploration and consequent non-heroic period of South American colonisation—Callas has managed to manipulate them (figures especially) in a manner which suggests a life in 3 dimensions. In one sequence a Prince-Henry-the-Navigator type of figure is seen hunchedback over a map and continues to draw and redraw the edges of the world. In another a bed-ridden figure cut from what looks like a Goya is made to buckle in spasms from some deep sickness of the soul. The new tools have allowed for a greater depth of texture and mood. Callas' new work is more poetic. Lost in Translation seems to offer a kind of the comic harshness provided by the saturated colours of his early work, while pleasingly retaining the psychotic repetitive actions of the figure and his political concerns, and remains unmistakably a video by Peter Callas.

Michaela French's Flux is also a beauty, or is beauty. A richly layered and textured series of visually poetic fragments carefully sewn together in the edit suite. It makes you think of all sorts of things—love, loss, longing, ferris wheels, Christ how did they do that and what is that a picture of? We are finally starting to see some spirited use of Adobe After Effects which proves that all those bank commercials with their gliding logos haven't ruined it for everyone.

Ian Haig's 2 minute blur Trick or Treat "ghosts, zombies, bloodsuckers, freaks and demons are brought back from the dead", looked like 16 different personalities vying for control of the body of Edward Scissorhands. Tuba and its splicer in the space-time continuum. It was comically unnerving in a Tobe Hooper sort of way, which rendered it as its visceral effects (significantly augmented by Philip Samartinz's soundtrack) were starting to be felt. Hopefully, Haig will turn it into an endurance piece for those people who can't get enough of his sort of madness.

Tina Gonsalves' Swelling was another substantial piece in a generally high quality video program that suffered only a couple of lapses.

New media curators always have to grapple with the problem of exhibiting interactive digital media art (CD-ROMs and websites) and linear digital media art (video) in the same program. Recent attempts by film festivals to incorporate both have usually resulted in each piece or PC with CD-ROM driving sitting in the foyer of the cinema. dlux have gone the extra mile, and provide a batch of PCs in the foyer of an art gallery, allowing for a longer exhibition window. The set-up at Artspace was pretty perfunctory—4 Macs on 2 trestle tables with headphones to stop the sound spill and a bunch of those laundromats in Chinatown which also serve as other narratives. The Tallinn People's Orchestra is a slightly different work in that it uses sound as a basis for its development. A tiny scene is panned off shot of a square in the Estonian capital shows at various points different figures walking into the shot in the foreground, middle ground and background. Panos Couros people all have a separate sound figure and can be turned off or ordered differently to evolve the soundscape. It is not as immediately fulfilling as his previous The Twelve Loveliest Things I Know and others, but still an interesting example of the development of interactivity with linear video streams.

Chris Hales remains one of the few artists worldwide who is interested in this area which seems rich with possibility and may reach its height with the spread of DVD-ROM.

Wade Marynowsky's Diaspora 2000 was both a performance and CD-ROM. The performance was held in the vestibule at Artspace after the opening speeches and during everyone's second beer. The speakers were cranked up and the video projector above Marynowsky's head was pumping out a stream of data against the universe. The music was a reasonable sort of bland techno filth thing. It was kind of okay in performance and the energy was up but at times it looked like another virtual anorak going through the motions.

The CD-ROM version of Diaspora 2000 (made in Director) even though the same, is another thing entirely. The user is given a very simple keyboard layout to learn and then get started. By selecting different keys, you can call up different sound samples coupled with images. Some are drum loops, some melodic sequences and some short samples. Not only can you overlay sounds over each other, but the images coupled to the sounds flash alternately, creating a sort of episodic—interactive situation between images. Eisenstein would have liked the way the images evoke different meanings when placed in proximity with each other, but the broad themes of the piece make you think of the 4 horsemen of Sydney's Apocalypse—greed, envy, lust and the Olympians. You can build up quite complex layers of sound and image, and experiment with turning layers on and off. After about an hour of playing with this thing, you get that sweaty overstimulated feeling you get from video games or loud music and which is strangely satisfying to the adolescent in you. You begin to realise that this program was what Wade was interacting with to make the audio and video streams for his performance on opening night which you previously thought was a bit ho hum. What makes it so different? Why was it the linear version a bit familiar, but the act of interacting with the same material so exciting and so fun? Maybe we are starting to see what interactive media is going to be able to give audiences that linear media can't. Interactive media's offer not of control but of play as an antidote to the didacticism of linear media will win every time.

With this event, dlux have gone on tour on a limb by concentrating primarily on the exhibition of digital works, a move which remains unpopular with many camera-using filmmakers. D.art 99, however, must be described as a successful event. It had a focus which its predecessor, Matinaz (1991-97), always lacked, and a breadth, through the programming of CD-ROMs, which D.art 98 couldn't achieve. With the possible inclusion of a sound component next year, D.art seems to be morphing into a separate event altogether. And now that other film festivals are sweeping up all those pesky short dramas, dlux can concentrate on exhibiting digital media art in all its forms. And this is a prospect which is not at all unpleasant.
Dream lovers and objects of desire

Kirsten Craith in the thicket of things at this year’s Dendys

While the themes of last year’s awards were isolation and anti-urbanism between men and women and men, and men, this year’s Dendys are about the search—through tragedy, humour and moving between stories and identity—or a place to fit in, continuing the cultural and gender crossovers negotiated last year. Outsiders are in: Kath Duncan (My One Legged Dream Lover) explores America positioning herself as the object of desire, while wanker-artist Bob Fischer graces our shores in Original Schlick, revealing cringemaking, a descriptor desperate for the big buck. Dendy fiction has moved beyond the gag film and homogenous Tropefest final products with a focus on minorities—gay and lesbian (Two Girls and a Baby), Above the Dust Level, Reunion), Japanese (Flowergirll, youth culture (Your Turn)—and grrrls’ perspectives. All 6 entries in the under and over 15 minutes categories are directed by women. The Beach is still a focus of cultural identity and Cate Shortland looks like a new perspective. AU shores—for identity, for a place to fit in, tragedy, humour and moving between

_object/s of desire:

Kath Duncan is used to being different. In her 30s, she no longer wears a prosthetic arm, determined to be accepted as an amputee. In the opening shot, she swaps, limbs large and white, and her stumps confronting yet graceful. By repeating the same scene at the end, My One Legged Dream Lover shows the nature of our reactions to people who are physically different. We are challenged at first, but by getting to know Kath inside-out, we become more intrigued than confronted. We feel the desire to know, to look, to touch. An exciting exploration, the film's quirky, sensuous, funny, and the thinly veiled fear.

In a fit of d fiance, Kath tries on skimpy wild lingerie—it’s decent enough to wear out—and pretty soon the camera becomes more than an observer. Kath asks the only really attractive woman in the room, her voice struggling above the jingle of coins, whoops and sirens of the machines.

The documentary is elegantly handled, clever and bizarre enough to keep you guessing as to whether it’s been constructed from the outset. Towards the end, the camera becomes malicious, as do most of the audience. When told to stop filming it moves, surreptitious, and keeps on recording.

The surprising given the reverential tone it adopts towards its subject’s approach to filmmaking. Using a mixture of archival footage, sequences from Brakhage’s films, and direct interviews, Shedden constructs a portrait in which there is a lot of assumed knowledge about Brakhage. And yet one imagines that for those who are familiar with Brakhage as a figure as well as his work, nothing particularly new or interesting is revealed. The historical significance of Brakhage’s oeuvre is referred to a number of times by the interviewees, including George Kuchar and P. Adams Sitney, but the uninitiative way in which this is conveyed means it always remains at the level of statement—there is little evidence within the film which renders these comments particularly compelling. It seems unfortunate that this portrait of such a groundbreaking filmmaker was so unengaging.

Two documentaries about the relationship between people and the urban environment were like opposite sides of a coin and evinced the at once utopian/dystopian connotations of the words ‘urban’ and ‘globalisation.’

Christopher Tuckfield’s Rico Pano, about the Italian architect, focuses on Pano’s buildings in cities around the world and compared with the theoretical framework behind his work. It considers how a sense of harmony can be brought to the contemporary urban environment by thinking through how a city, its history is used by its inhabitants and how it engages with its history (as with the project to rebuild Potsdamer Platz in Berlin). It is of course a rarefied expression of the film’s sense of order and precision, enhanced by Richard Vella’s score, complements the architect’s utopian vision and the contemporary city.

An interesting contrast is Michael Glawogger’s Megacities, a confronting, at times horrifying, but also extremely humane film about life in New York, Bombay, Mexico City and Moscow, cities where people vastly outnumber buildings and indeed space. In a series of vignettes which construct a certain intimacy and empathy with his subjects, the filmmaker amasses the minute of the life of the majority of inhabitants of these cities that are out of control. A street hustler in New York, factory workers in Bombay, a sex worker and her family in Mexico City and alcoholic men in Moscow. One of the most memorable sequences involves a man in a daze factory in Bombay. Like some kind of magical creature he sits daze, and out of a mesmerizing puff of

Bob appears vulnerable—he is re-born, naked, from a body cast to reveal a statue with enormous erect penis. But, he needs more than a strap on dildo to preserve his sense of self.

And speaking of erections…

In Editville good ed Giff (“thirty years I’ve been on my own” says mother with her daughter in the room) moulds a man out of sand and seaweed, her own Greek god who transforms, and caters for, her rescue fantasies in a love shuck of pussy willows and sensual fu. Fuelled by desire and her sister’s postcards (stamps of David), femme-frankenstein Edith escapes her White Sauce confines and feeds off her lustruous creation, carefully arranging herself in poses and positions on the screen as artificial and voluptuous, gold and velvet lined, as the State Theatre itself.


(Not) testing the limits

Neeeyla Islam on some Sydney Film Festival documentaries

While all Sydney Film Festival subscribers can be certain, at some point, of having to eat the bad, overprocessed food and catching a respiratory illness, if not on Day 2 like myself, then certainly by the second week, the excitement and intrigue remains the same for 2 people. The number of films and parallel programming mean that for each viewer the festival has a logic and emphasis that is unique, almost personalised. Each little detour, taken for particular reasons and often because of the most mundane contingencies, can allow for strange combinations of these films. Often those with apparently nothing in common but their production date can throw strange light upon one another. Concentrating on one aspect of the festival such as the Cassavetes retrospective this year meant that many of the features screening at the State Theatre had to be missed. However I did manage to see a number of documentaries that are worth mentioning.

Among them, and largely because it was potentially so interesting, was Brakhage, Jim Shedd’s film about influential experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage. It turned out to be a particularly conventional documentary;

 colour, emerges as, in turn, a blue, then yellow, then red, then green man. This image is transfiguring but then he speaks. He says that he works for hours a day for nearly nothing, that his body aches and finally, simply, that he is unhappy. In these moments, a rare subjective is conferred upon people, who are all too often depicted as the substance of urban chaos, rather than products or victims of it. Glawogger’s style is artful, considered and tendentious. It raises questions about the nature of what we think of as documentary, through a bold testing of its limits and possibilities. Brakhage (Canada), writer/director Jim Shedd; Rico Pano—Piece by Piece (Australia), director Christopher Tuckfield; Megacities (Austria/Switzerland), writer/director Michael Glawogger, Sydney Film Festival, June 11—23

Sydney Film Festival

20—RealTime 32 / OnScreen—August — September 1999

Michael Glawogger’s Megacities 12 stories of survival
So much searching, searching, searching for The Thing—determination, truth, love, belonging, revenge, shoes...which makes Laila Pakhalin's The Shoe appropriate and appealing in the context of this festival. Three soldiers and a dog go searching for the owner of a shoe but for a long time we seem only in the distance, hear the crunch of boots, follow shadows. The film is built around such subtle resistances, refusing to take its own premise for granted. Majid Majidi shows us the pathological, inhumanity of having to stave off the latent threat of authority (Ali's Father, the school) but he also demonstrates that the real cause of Ali's troubles is class inequality—his family's poverty, the rich kids All must overcome in order to win/lose.

Strange coincidences emerge: a sheep and a goat are killed in the same way in two contrasting documentaries about Central Asia, Genghis Blues (another crowd-pleaser) and Shadow of the Toor (story of displacement and return). In Genghis Blues, the sheep's death marks the arrival of a group of Americans in Tuva, a symbolic moment in a film that works in parallel with Western search for place, and the random means by which this place can be found—a signal picked up on late night radio, the memory of a face, a phone number. All is some- times bleak look at displacement and return). What big helicopters they have in Greenland (all the better for making in Heart of Light).

Gena Rowlands waiting for a bus, Peter Falk running heller-skelter down a hill, or Ben Gazzara crossing a road and disappearing into the night.

Pet Lutsko's debut Osktrki (Russia) and Taiwanese director Tsai Ming Liang's The Hole couldn't be more different in setting—freezing expanses of the Urals Steppes; tiny apartments in the monotonous city of Taipei—but they are both tense and brooding, with a bureaucratic station, the director himself. At what point does he connect with the erotic. Gena Rowlands. In Dreams, Outskirts, and Love. Director Ming-Liang's The Hole, a cop in the room, closes an umbrella through the gap in his floor, knocks out the ceiling into the umbrella, closes it and pulls it back up so the gradual surrendering is almost imperceptible to her. She fills the hole with various limbs, testing the boundaries of how much she can bear. This sense of the absurd is a relief, his dangling leg withdrawing slowly, the foot of an upside- down synchronised swimmer, when she returns to the room.

Her escape comes through Singing Detective. Detectivle-style 50s fantasies which gradually incorporate the idea of love. Director Ming-liang uses the stylistic device of the musical to "confront the environment at the end of the millennium...towards the end of the century a lot of qualities—such as passionate desire, naive simplicity—have been suppressed. The musical contains those qualities. It's something that I use psychologically to confront the world." (David Walsh, interview with Tsai Ming-liang, World Socialist Website, 1998, www.wsws.org/articles/1998/oct1998.1196.shtml)

In Dreams, Outskirts, World Cinema, 1999 (Peter Herskott, "The Hole", World Cinema, 1999), www.tcf.edu/usfl/ucr/reviews/hole.htm, creates an atmospheric fable about survival and loneliness in a city-gone-mad overcome by cockroaches and torrential rain. With virtually no dialogue or exteriors, we are cramped in relentless, flooded, wet and humid apartments where 2 characters live above, below each other, increasingly dependent on streams and flows, joined by a hole in her ceiling/she floor which becomes a focus for connection, shared space and burgeoning sexuality. She sits on the window sill, white undies around her ankles, green plastic boud on her hand catching the drips. Pipes.
LIVING HERE NO ART AND POLITICS

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Speakers include Benjamin Genocchio, Elizabeth Gertstaks, Charles Green, Ian Howard, Gary Lee, Catharine Lumb, Tony McGregor, Harriet McKern, Ian McLean, Pauline Pantsdown and MacKenzie Wark

A city-wide Australian contemporary arts event

managed by the Art Gallery of New South Wales
The real/digital festival

RealTime previews MAAP99’s impressive program of digital media works and online cross-cultural collaborations

Satisfying physical and cyber-needs

Talk about working the screen! By the time MAAP99 (Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific) Festival hits Brisbane and the Asia-Pacific region on September 4-12 the organisers will have considered over 180 proposals (quadruple last year’s content) for more than 50 projects showcasing the latest in digital arts in the Asia-Pacific region. From over 60 submissions from Australia alone, the curatorial team selected 4 artists who have been supplied with Macromedia and Metacreations software valued at nearly $10,000. MAAP is inviting the artists to Brisbane to participate in the festival.

The work in MAAP99 covers a range of art forms and practitioners, with an emphasis on interactive multimedia, web, video, animation and projects integrating new media. It encompasses a range of public events, online projects, cinema screenings and exhibitions both on-site and online and forums addressing issues of audience awareness and critical engagement with artists working with technologies and screen-based media. MAAP99 is the ultimate complement of the real and the digital, satisfying both physical and cyber-needs.

As you’d expect, such an ambitious project requires major support and MAAP99 has this from Online Australia, an initiative of the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) promoting the development of information technology throughout Australia. They’re also supporting the Third Asia Pacific Triennial’s Virtual Triennial exhibition which will be APT3’s official online art content and screen culture provider. MAAP99 is again working with Macromedia making available just about every tool they produce including Generator. With help from Flimware’s Generator, real time live image and text updates to the web will be used extensively during the month-long online festival.

SEE, SEEK and SPEAK

The program has 3 streams. SEE is the national and international screening program at The State Library Cinema, September 4, and Queensland Art Gallery, September 5. It includes recent works from Korea, Malaysia, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Feng Mengbo from Beijing will present recent video and web interactive works. Videolounge features the One Minute Video Festival, a selection of works from China curated by the Hong Kong Video and New Media co-operative. DAIR is the annual showcase of experimental film, digital video and computer animation from digital arts in Sydney. Visual artists are creating short works for television to be broadcast in Art Rage. The Art Rage For Kids edition is available to schools and adds a new dimension to creative uses of new technologies. The Samsung Project from Korean artist Young-Hae Chang will feature a narrative progression titled Streetile Stories: Soft-Made Cinema. It incorporates recent works from Hong Kong curated and presented by Jo Law and will be toured by the West Australian Film and Television Institute. Digital Degrees features showreels of current digitally produced projects by multimedia and design students from Singapore, New Zealand and Australia.

SEEK is the interactive exhibition program including gallery, public spaces and online exhibitions. net.works/MAAP99 Australia/Asia Artists Exchange is an online residency program aimed at generating dialogue, exchange, and collaboration between Australia and the Asia-Pacific. Rather than run ‘real’ residencies which result in artists making works for the web, net.works/... is a habitation of the web, where the internet is used as a beginning point, a space from which to proceed, to commence a dialogue, to speak an idea, to live and work. It’s hosted by Multimedia Art Asia Pacific for the MAAP99 Festival and funded by the New Media Arts Fund of the Australia Council. Feng Mengbo (Beijing); Young-Hae Chang (Seoul); Rick Vermey (Perth); Tina Gonsalves (Melbourne) are partnered to interactively create joint online work.

SPEAK comprises a conference, forum and training program. Presented by MAAP99 in association with AMAT and the Queensland Art Gallery, the conference Collapsing Geographies will take place at the Brisbane Exhibition Hall and Convention Centre on Saturday September 11. The focus will be on artist exchange projects involving over 15 web artists from the region. MAAP is sponsoring international guest speaker Hanaraj Rajah (Malaysia) at a forum discussing current and future strategies for digital art networks. This is part of the Asia Pacific Triennial Conference, Beyond the Future. As well, at the 30th Pacific Triennial Conference, Brisbane for this high-tech evening. “Dikl”, the virtual pop star (originally from Korea, but often holidays in Japan) has promised a new world release for the MAAP 99 opening!

Stay online

Events physically held in Brisbane and in other parts of the region will be available to view from any location with a series of netcasts on the internet. Forums, artists’ live performances and intimate interviews will stream through the MAAP99 festival site to achieve a web festival experience. Each day of MAAP Month an online art project will be launched onto the MAAP website. Thirty online projects have been selected to enliven the web festival experience.

Fame too is on offer with The National Digital Art Awards staged at the Institute of Modern Art. And participation: a “People’s Choice” page will be housed on the MAAP website for judging the best Artist’s Website. These awards are open to all computer artists working in any digital format. Submit entries to the IMA.

MAAP99 is the perfect stay-at-home festival for the avid online but it’s also a seductive program for see-ers, seekers and speakers who want that special in-the-body festive experience.

RT

Venus becomes Lottie

Training and prizes from WIFT in Victoria

WIFT (Women in Film & Television, Victoria), founded in 1988 as a networking association and now with over 400 members is organising 2 forthcoming events: Our Brilliant Careers, a training program, to be held on October 8 and 9, and the Lottie Lyell Awards shortly after.

Our Brilliant Careers is designed for women at varying stages of their careers, from school leavers considering entering the screen-based industries, to those who are well established. This program will see the revival of Women in Motion, a film forum for school leavers held successfully in Melbourne for 7 years. Sessions will take the form of classes, panel discussions and Q & A sessions.

Through the national Lottie Lyell Awards for women in film, television and multimedia, WIFT recognises the role women have played and continue to play in the screen industries. Customarily women have had to challenge social boundaries in order to participate.

“For too long Lottie Lyell has meant less to Australians than her American contemporary Mary Pickford. Yet in the trite capacity of star, filmmaker and pioneer of popular screen images and Australian dreams, Lottie is the outstanding Australian personality of early film. Her work as director, producer, editor and screenplay writer proves that heroines existed on both sides of the camera, and that from the first, women were able to make an important contribution in an exciting new medium although their work was seldom fully recognised.” (Andrea Wright, Brilliant Careers)

The successful inaugural event, known as the Venus Awards, was held in Sydney in 1997. The Venus Award was presented to the late Joan Long by Gillian Armstrong. The Lottie Lyell Awards have been re-named to give them a distinctly Australian identity.

These WIFT events are sponsored by Cinemedia. For further information, contact the WIFT office on 03 9525 4902 or visit www.cinemedia.net/wift

Feng Mengbo, Q. 1999, digital video.

A real/digital night out

Opening night is Friday September 3 where special guests and late night shoppers will mingle in the Queen Street Mall in Brisbane’s CBD. The program includes large projections and a special opening nightcast live on the web. Melbourne curators Shiraee Saul and Helen Stuckey will present Pre Fab: Invisible Cities and Photon Palaces comparing and contrasting the digital architectural practices currently being developed by Australian artists and architects with those of their Asian peers. This virtual architecture exhibition will be projected onto buildings in the mall area. Cyberpoet Kominos will perform and project his poetry onto the main wall of the Queensland Performing Arts Trust. This will be netcast on the web. There’ll be computer games for those wanting to test their motor coordination. MAAP has also been trying to lure an international pop-star to Brisbane for this high-tech evening. “Dikl”, the virtual pop star (originally from Korea, but often holidays in Japan) has promised a new world release for the MAAP 99 opening!

M goalie, Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific Festival, Director, Kim Machan. Brisbane and online http://www.maap.org.au/, September 3 - 12. Enquiries info@maap.org.au
Philip Brophy hears film at the Melbourne Film Festival

In the infamous shower scene from Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960), the 'stabbing' violins perform a psycho-musical function—which if it had not been articulated clearly enough became part of the image itself as a postmodern plane upon which the multiplicity of the self is repeatedly decimated, reconstituted and expelled to form a constellation of disembodied and detached "wholes."

Let's take that again one step at a time. The intentional evocation of sound and the connotation or clarification of emotional synchronisation—primarily through a matching of musical codes and references to character traits and conventions—appear to call a sad person to announce sad music; announcement of sad music = cause for sad person to appear; etc. Characters and narratives—following many a grand literary tradition—act as conduits and navigators for the placement and intensity of musical presence, creating a whole catalogue of "motivational strategies" for film scoring (when to cue, for how long, etc.). The shower scene from Psycho (as with most of the 20 odd musical passages which comprise Bernard Herrmann's score) is nothing to do with music. For the shower scene cue is a depiction (not an illustration or justification) simultaneously of 2 liminal characters: Marion (Janet Leigh) and the shadowy 'mother' figure (Anthony Perkins) —as well as a conflation of 2 substantial figures—Norman Bates and his dead/unnamed mother (both Anthony Perkins in dress and voice). However, the cue 'does not simply emote something about 'people' on the screen. Herrmann's music performs as a sono-simulacrum which conducts the physiological performance of the on-screen bodily states.

The cue in question can be broken down into 3 component pieces:

1. In 80s/ early 90s, the full-fledged BA duration, but also lower parts, each component inherent romantidsm
2. RRNNNNNNNNNNNNN which grows Longer and more slmulacrum
3. shadowy illustration or justification) simultaneously passages of Psycho, her heart

breathe fuelled (both Anthony Perklns in dress and voice).

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inexhaustive floral shower—especially the lead actor's eyes which resemble those of a fish in the supermarket freezer—but the soundtrack energies and even terrifies the blank world

accompanies at the beginning and

close-of the film like muddy red velvet curtains as a corny old anthem played by a dying brass band. Elsewhere, a single orchestral note is struck sparsely—maybe 10 times; no other music occurs. Yet repeatedly, the loud sound of a compressed, fat gunshot is synced to sudden lurches in the digital editing (hyper-speed jump

tracks which repetition a mid-shot frame into a close-up across 12 frames).

These sonic moments initially appear gratuitous, again recalling the in-your-face musical crescendos of late-80s/early-90s Nikes/Pepsi/Gatorade etc. ads. (The subtext of the sound of basketball on the contemporary film soundtrack is another story altogether.) What becomes apparent is the tension created in the film actors between these two stylistically policed PWIs of which violently rupture the polished nature of the film's 16mm grain: before long, one is psycho-acoustically primed to anticipate a bang, or to actually witness rather than audit a horrific act (which you will in the film's final 15 minutes). True to this logic, when the pounds occur while on screen violence is most manifest, the mix pushes the gun shot effects into the background; the vision becomes defanging. Just as an extreme tension is maintained by opposing non-natural sound design to naturalistic visuals and performances, so too does a conscientious tension humans throughout the film, representing the sexual and emotional constipation of the film's lead psychopath. In fact at the film's climax, an audible vocal humming sounds unconnected from his mouth, as if he is trying to block out the churning of aberrant voices which articulate his turmoil as he falls prey to the ultimate transgression of incest.

The sonic punch which periodically and primitively drills holes into I Stand Alone's soundtrack function as shocks which gradually destabilise the lead character's head-set. It's like the sonic version of the famous image of George Sanders' thinking man's brain wall in Wolf Rilla's 'Village of the Damned' (1960) as the children try to penetrate his thoughts and control his mind. Eventually, the wall inside Sanders' head crumbles; he dies as the bomb he has been hiding from the children explodes.

In I Stand Alone, the gun shots are not merely sonicizations of violence, but a string of detonations which reduce social conditioning to the state of postwar rubble—the definitive picture of the modern European landscape. With all psycho-familial architecture blown apart, the film's 50 year old loser stands alone as a repossessed self, ready to act out his own Marco Ferrari-style narrative (a la Themroc, 1971). This is the male core at so much Euro angst: dumb, blank, unforgiving, unrelenting. Not liberated but beleaguered; not resolved but evolved. A common social core, traumatised by shocks as symbolised by the soundtrack's percussive violence, yet revealed as an unavoidably natural and dramatically inevitable figure—like the bare location sound of a street at the outer ring of Paris' industrial zones which closes the film. No operatic catharsis as in the glorified finale(s) of Rola Roni Runn; merely the respite from noise which hollows out the head of the psychologically scarred and the socially dispossessed. I Stand Alone is a thankful return to the inclusive violence which gave life to Herrmann's score to Psycho, and which—if things turn out well—the next millennium will neither avoid nor smother with stylish excess.

Cinesonic

Philip Brophy

I Stand Alone

Close-up across 12 frames.

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Millennial maverick

Ashley Crawford talks to Mark Dery about the gothic, the grotesque, ideas and theory, and America

Mark Dery has built a remarkable reputation as one of America's leading cultural critics. With a vocabulary that would terrify Barry Jones, Dery happily dives into realms that most critics avoid. He not only names our ontological vertigo in an age of product tampering and toxic Coke, multiple-chemical invisible contaminants in our age of product, and the push-button gratification of infantile desires. This is increasingly seen as a septic nightmare, its grotesque, the cleanliness of New York, the horror of the Gothic Imagination.

Dery's approach to cultural criticism is remarkably inclusive. He scorns popular culture as comfortably as high brow theory, from Disneyland to Delancey. In this he shares a dissecting table, Hint's pickled animals become a way of talking about these things.

"As for the 'mordid' aesthetic you mention, it's a conjunction of individual temperaments and Zeitgeist, I suppose. We live in gothic times, as Mark Edmundson points out in his marvellous book, Nightmares on Main Street: Angst, Saudade, and the Culture of Gothic. He sees American culture as fraught with gothic assumptions, Gothic characters and plots, from The X-Files to the O.J. Simpson trial, recovered memories of satanic ritual abuse to right-wing conspiracy theories. I'd add that we're also witnessing the resurrection of the gothic's conjured twin, the grotesque. The grotesque is the gothic with a sense of humour. We see the grotesque in the carnival-midway mix of horror and hilarity that is personality trait of the late 20th century. Virtues are typically gothic, and those stock-in-trade of Robert B. Dwyer's on-camera gunshot suicide for laughs on the web, for example.

In an era when New York City has gone from Gotham to glitzen, when President Clinton gets away with personal mayhem and announces the healthiest economy for many a year, Dery's position, if anything, has become more extreme. It is not difficult to perceive Dery's cultural reading in part as a reaction to political correctness.

"Don't you mean a reaction to political in-correctness?" says Dery in response. "Namely, New York mayor Rudy Giuliani's ongoing transformation of the 'mongrel metropolis' into a gated community for the mega-rich, a police state ruled by Michael Eisen, while quietly shipping the homeless off to suburban holding pens, turning a blind eye on police brutality, and cutting tax breaks for the real-estate barons pricing the lower classes out of Manhattan."

"As for the 'extremism' of my critique, what's the alternative? A playful slap on the wrist for a nation rotten with filth, corporate disregard for the lives that pries B-2 bombers over prenatal care, corporate welfare over public education? A horrified from William Bennett's Book of Virtue for a country that subverts democratically elected governments and coddlers dictators, rewarding the nightstick justice meted out by pariah governments like the Sudanese with arms shipments, the better to drive sweating sweatshop workers back to their posts? I may be an egy-eating rat gnawing on the tail of Tannysaurus, but as a politically engaged intellectual, speaking truth to power is part of my job description."

Dery's approach to cultural criticism is remarkably inclusive. He scorns popular culture as comfortably as high brow theory, from Disneyland to Delancey. In this he shares a number of qualities with such writers as Mike Davis in City of Quartz, Greil Marcus in Lipstick Traces, Erik Davis in Tychingosch and McKenzie Wark in Virtual Geography.

"I think we're beginning to see the faint footprints, in mainstream and alternative journalism, of the first few graduating classes to cut their intellectual teeth on postmodern philosophers like Baudrillard, Foucault and Deleuze," says Dery. "Erik Davis is an exemplar of these smart, young, incurably informed academic hackers. McKenzie Wark began as a rock critic and is now a card-carrying member of the professoriate, represents the trajectory from the opposite direction, namely academics who stage-dive into the mosh pit of popular culture and media exposure." There is a precedent for this trend, says Dery, in 60s pop intellectuals such as McCahan, Buckminster Fuller, Susan Sontag, Norman O. Brown, RD Laing, Leslie Fiedler and Herbert Marcuse. His stock-in-trade, his thinking that mocked the hidebound orthodoxy of the orthodox, was typically ideas, not theory, as Andrew Ross points out in No Respect: Intellectuals & Popular Culture. It would take to recall a time, not so long ago, when the 'critical theory' trust didn't have a Microsoft trn monopoly on the operating system for intellectual discourse? I think this says that media imagination is all to the good. Inbreeding, whether literal or intellectual, is a recipe for monstrosities."

Dery comfortably hops around the cultural terrain, jumping from comparatively 'mainstream' subjects as the Unabomber and Heaven's Gate to the far less publicized Mutter Museum and the grotesque comic books of Renee French. "I've always been interested in unnatural history and unpopular culture," says Dery. "It's an obsession that springs, I suppose, from the implicitly political assumption that what's removed from the official version, the eloquent horror left by the censor's scissors, is more informative than what's left in. I'm interested in the repressed truths, whether visceral or political, buried in the Freudian boiler room of mass culture: the unconscius, like the 'Doll Hour' on the Home Shopping Network; the unspoken like the wax models of medical horrors in museums; the unconscius, like the statistics on runaway personal bankruptcies and credit-card debt defaulted by the media, lest these sour notes clash with the received truth that we're all rewarded by the Long Boom, not just the top 20% of American families."

Dery begins Insanitary with the brilliant metaphor of crumbling Coney Island. It is incredibly apt for millenarian culture. However one could argue in the opposite direction, that rather than the lights going out and a healthy rot setting in we are seeing the creation of souless citadels; the cleanliness of New York, the puritanical vigilantism of Los Angeles, the plastic re-make of Singapore. It is impossible to escape the post-genic hamburger Meltdown anywhere on the planet and if anything the lights seem to be going on, making the ghosts and freaks scuttle away so the tourists are safe.

"Well, your comments imply, we can be 'asleep' or 'awake' at night - the nightmarish nature of life in the 20th century, with its media feeding frenzies and its copycat killing of urban pathogens and postmodern desolation—what James Howard Kunstler calls our strip-mall, convenience-store 'geography of nowhere'—can be every bit as scary as the night terrors of the Gothic imagination. Baudrillard hints at this in America, in his ontological vertigo in an air-conditioned Hell that
Review

Challenging the seen

John Schwartz tests the vision of McKenzie Wark's Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace

McKenzie Wark's ongoing contribution to a contemporary understanding of Australia's social and cultural condition cannot be underestimated. His third book, as its title indicates, paints a huge canvas and LIKE most of his astute commentary in newspapers, academic journals and magazines, seems to provoke reaction and stimulate further debate.

An amazing array of what at first appear to be unrelated topics make up this impressively researched opus. Both individually and collectively, the topics formulate important questions. There is suggestive analysis of the meanings generated by the likes of Kylie Minogue, Nick Cave, Peter Garrett, the Kylies (Ned and the 2 Pauls) and Natalie Imbruglia. There's also an assessment of the 'post broadcasting' era we are fast approaching, which forcefully challenges the dominance of suburban myths and values.

At the core of these matters lies Wark's chief concern: that the ALP today has lost touch with what its constituents actually desire from everyday life. The answer lies, he argues, in an awareness and understanding of popular media-generated images through which people formulate ideas and aspirations.

Here indeed is a thinker who uses very broad brushstrokes in his view of the big picture. He examines the way new media technologies are embedded by a growing proportion of Australians as we approach the new millennium. Wark argues that being both more aware of and comfortable with cyberspace allows for a new way of seeing as well as a new way of forming information. Yet to argue that this constitutes an end to the broadcasting age and presumably to the end of mass media is highly contentious.

There is little evidence presented here to suggest that the birth of new media automatically assumes the death or even the steady demise of old media. The Internet, pay-TV and the phenomena of niche and nichecasting may well mean that there are more choices than ever before. Yet this does not preclude the possibility that most of us will still hunger for a diversity of our news and information from traditional media sources. As he cites more and more examples of celebrity culture on mainstream TV networks, newspapers and magazine pages in ways that inadvertently prove that we are not in a post-broadcasting age.

His argument goes deeper when he proposes that those who inhabit and embrace "fortress suburbia" are largely resistant to social change in general and to new flows of information from cyberspace in particular. These citizens, he argues, are essentially inward looking, fearful of the massive changes which globalisation has brought and generally indifferent of difference. Meanwhile, those who dwell in inner city developments represent a new urban and outward looking generation who are much more adaptable to all forms of the massive changes occurring around them.

The problem with this analysis is twofold. There is no evidence presented which supports such generalisations about community attitudes, let alone usage of new media forms. A recent Rural ABC Cooperative Research Centre report that at least 20% of Australia's regional farming community is currently online (and for longer periods of time) while the national average is 18%.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has indicated that generation Xers are leading the way and that up to 70% of those under 30 years old use the net. Wark seems to be suggesting that the propensity to embrace new media technologies results in new and dynamic flows of information which, in turn, allows forward, adaptive and more creative thought processes. Yet in very recent Newspoll findings these same 18-24 year olds are increasingly more fervent in their support of Prime Minister Howard. If he represents the most exciting and forward thinking Federal politician to have been elected to media savvy generation ever known, Wark's overall argument loses some momentum.

There is no strong evidence to suggest that spending more time with new forms of information and entertainment correlates in any consistent way with specific attitudes or behaviour patterns to do with social, political and/or economic issues. Indeed an overview of many of the most popular chat-sites around the web reveals an amazing lack of tolerance, goodwill and openness to new agendas.

I remain unconvinced that that plane of abode, propensity to go online or indeed age—another of Wark's apparent obsessions (shared with Mark Davis)—have much on their own to do with the way we feel or behave. There are far too many other variables which come into play here.

Finally it is the political implications of Wark's acceptance of many of young A/LP maverick Mark Latham's so called "third way" approaches which I find most troublesome. Much of the current economic orthodoxy shared by his party's political partners as proposed by Latham who goes further to urge continuous anticipation and positive adaptation to the ongoing changes brought upon us by the "natural" forces of globalisation.

These changes are somehow seen as inevitable and their consequences of the forces of nature. Those who oppose these seemingly gravitational movements are quite clearly naïve in clining to tied, out-date social principles once endorsed by the Labor Party.

This brings us back to the question of how we relate to the celebrities we encounter in all vectors. Wark argues that the Labor Party must come to understand the needs and wants of its constituents by coming to terms with the meanings and messages we receive from our celebrities. But how all of this is supposed to connect to future A/LP policy formulation remains rather problematic.

Throughout his book Wark remains optimistic about the sweeping changes we are all experiencing. "I write for dancers not moungers," he stated in a recent A/GE interview. Clearly there are many of us who remain sceptical about the directions we are heading in. Yet while we can disagree and be puzzled by some of Wark's arguments, he has raised and made readily accessible many pertinent questions about crucial issues which affect us all.

McKenzie Wark, Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace: The Light on the Hill in a Postmodern World, Pluto Press 1999

John Schwartz is a lecturer in Media Studies at Swinburne University of Technology. He teaches Popular Culture and is a regular media commentator on ABC radio.

Column

Telediction

Are Beasts just value-added slackers, asks Jeff Gibson

When Bob Denver of Gilligan and Maynard fame got busted for pot possession last year it felt like a massive act of confirmation. It seemed to authenticate Maynard's character while explaining Gilligan's humiliating ineptitude and tireless good cheer. And was it fact or urban myth that Dawn Wells who played Mary Ann— the most innocent being of all the castaways—sent our little buddy his homemade contraband through the mail? Gilligan always did have a weakness for Mary Ann's coconut cream pies.

There is something so affirming when reality rushes up to meet mass fiction. It's like a dream come true. I feel that much closer to our idols and that much more a member of the human race (work with me here). And in this instance the dream is not just an escape projection. I mean, who wouldn't have traded their schools uniforms for Maynard's deadbeat threads, or ditched classes to lounge in the South Pacific with some millionaires, farm girls, and movie stars.

Beach burns and beachtails made very appealing TV in the 60s and 70s, a period of great confidence and bravado for America, and a downhill run for Hollywood. Though Beasts were quickly stereotyped and routinely satirised, sometimes with affection (think of, or imagine if you have to, Beauty and Cecil's Go Man Go)—with thanks to the Craig Elliott Archive, they have come to embody a figure of undiminished pantheistic laa.alae,

Beast, as a cultural type, is free-floating and irresponsible, adrift in a pantheistic lacune, like a castaway skinny-dipping in Gilligan's lagoon.

But ultimately, network TV (read: straightvillle) just can't swallow the 'slackness', choosing to either trivialise Beasts for comic relief, or insinuate them in the direction of James Dean, creating character types for soap operas and teen ensemble dramas. Where would Aaron Spelling be without periodic drug-added, creative types? It's a far cry from the original, but an echo nonetheless. In fact, right around the time I stopped watching 90210 with any sort of interest, just too many stars, Mike and Brandon debated the virtues, or not, of Kerouac, before setting off on a motorcycling odyssey across America. (If only they'd taken a 3 hour cruise!) Brando thought On The Road and Dharma Burns sucked, leaving Dylan, predictably, to claim the whole territory. But alas, they resolve their differences along the way in an attempt at spiritual awakening. That is, a shamanistic native-American ritual—like I said, just too many travesties. But it's not all bad. Beasts can save the day, plenty of them. Within Mike, for instance, pays tender hommage to beat poetry in the box office flop/masterpiece, So I Married an Ax Murderer.

Playing an underemployed hipster caught in a web of desire and paranoia, Mike's simple, reflective neo-beat performances punctuate the plot line and drive home the characters' shifting existential crises.

Whether dazed or defled, the beat goes on. Maynard's parodic caricature endures. But he was never alone. As far as TV is concerned Beasts are just value-added slackers and there have been plenty of them meandering around the fringes of TV history. Lazy good-for-nothin' crooks and drunkened Mexican mice dot the cartoon landscape. Along with Beany and verden, the Simpsons keep the legend alive. Lenny and Squiggy (Laveme & Shirley) qualify in their own way, and Shaggy and Scooby Doo are absolutely central to the image of 90s slackers (Mike Myers is currently talking about doing a movie based around Shaggy).


Because of Maynard, Bob Denver washed up on the shores of Gilligan's Island with just the right kind of baggage. Maynard's philosophical detachment stood him good in good for an exile in paradise. The 2 characters are fundamentally the same: goofy, unambitious, a little thick, and happy to like, just be, man. Gilligan is simply Maynard without the artistic sensibility, while Maynard's characterisation of the Gilligan fable is well known—Sherwood Schwartz based each of the cast's individuality on the 7 deadly sins, with the Skipper: Gluttony, Mr Howell: Greed, Mrs Howell: Vanity, George, Mary Ann: envy, the Professor: pride—but it was the setting that did it for me. With the help of television, the Pacific, already installed as a traditional image of exotica within Western art and literature, became even more crucial to the escapist imagination. As American Edenic Ideal, and Australian frontier yard, the Pacific dreamscape was intensified, and further entrenched by media-driven mythologies surrounding the war with Japan. Having chased the serpent out of the garden, the abode of materialism, the landscape is an alluring and unobstructable battleship of cinematicIJnal.

As any lounge-hound will tell you, there is something so naturally and culturally cool about the Pacific. Indeed the centrality of things Hawaiian, via Vegas, to the resurgence of cocktail culture is being proof with the desert island scenario's enduring 'hedonic' appeal. Such iconography represents a kind of knowing, yet god-fatherly faith, sacred to decadent post hippie déclassé, dreamers, fantasists, and culture nuts. In fact, the attraction is almost TV-universal. What is the first vision of supreme relaxation that comes to mind? Do you picture yourself snoozing in a hammock in a bamboo hut, nursing a coconut shell full of fruit punch? Then it is, the icon for deep leisure; Gilligan's Island. Bob and Shermood really hit home with this one. It was all just so inviting, so gratifying, and so good to deupress by after school.

They say your actions on a desert island bespeak your outlook on life. If you strive to get off, you're a go-getter; if you set up camp, you're a survivor; if you content yourself with a daily meal, you're a philosopher. Gilligan just couldn't seem to concentrate and/or didn't care. Bong on little buddy.
The rise of digital exhibition in the UK

Sophie Hansen reports on northern England's Arc---"one of the first venues in the UK to place new media arts in a mainstream context"

Arc in Stockton-on-Tees in northern England is a media theatre, a key promoter and commissioner of local, national and international contemporary artists, and a state-of-the-art digital media centre. Arc is also an example of the regional centre phenomenon which is currently being examined in the UK. It is one of the first digital arts venues to have been commissioned by local authorities, rather than directly to regional arts boards (RABs), the equivalent of Australia's state bodies. A policy of devolution of means and methodologies to the RABs has been Arc's response to criticism of its increasing irrelevancy to and isolation from regional constituencies. The RABs, all operating diversely according to the varying preoccupations of their region, remain mostly undecided upon their interpretation of devolution. Northern Arts Board, however, with typical Northern gusto, has wasted no time. With perhaps the most to gain from distancing itself from the London-centric policies of ACE, NAB has finished its consultation with regional state holders of its fellow RABs and will distribute its funds through regional promoters, rather than directly to organisations in 1999. Arc is a regional promoter with strong creative desire, taking over from the small scale Dovecot Arts Centre, which for 25 years was devoted to provide for Stockton. Looking like a UFO in its chrome and steel incongruence with this drab, post-industrial city, Arc is one of the first wave of major capital developments funded by the National Lottery. It may have opened several months behind schedule, and over budget, but it has opened on this side of the millennium and that is a triumph for the North, as other beleaguered projects, such as the Royal Opera House in London, sink ever deeper into crisis.

With the ambition which has characterised the Stockton International Festival, also directed by Arc's Chief Executive, Frank Wilson, Arc has set its world class standards, with an inspirational programme to match its superb facilities. Arc's current programme includes a theatre, a music, comedy and cabaret venue, a cinema, a studio theatre, dance studio and recording studio for community and education use. Most importantly, Arc boasts a digital editing suite and all the equipment needed for the production and distribution of video and digital media arts throughout the building. These facilities distinguish Arc as one of the first venues in the UK to place new media arts in a mainstream context, and the Minor Images programme which opened the venue in January 1999, proudly celebrated the central role of digital arts within the organisation.

The season took its name from Richard Land's interactive video installation, which was commissioned by Arc to showcase the potential of its facilities. Triggered into action by the images of passing viewers on a monitor screen, the installation evolved over time as ghost images of previous visitors accumulated. Architect Richard Wilson’s intervention is Arc's facade, Open Easy, was another example of the playful nature of the opening commissions. Wilson's first permanent installation in the UK, evoking in Arc's glass frontage, inviting visitors to sample the non-artistic activity within. Again employing ideas of access and community, Arc commissioned Danish group Hotel Pro Forma to work with local people to create imagery and sounds for the audio visual spectacular Tall Stories High which illuminated the building over its opening week. Marci Ll Antunes from Barcelona performed his Epicó mechanical masterpiece of Belar-like physical manipulation; Multimedia from Norway presented Maggi's Love Bites, an internet link up with remote international participants; and British multimedia collective Black Box set up an exhibition of interactive sound and video work in the studio. Random Dance Company presented the world premiere of their new dance and digital media production Slippery Six, featuring graphic animation and film edited in Arc's virgin studios.

Complementing the digital season, Arc's inaugural programme features exciting new work in more conventional media. Jumping the Waves was commissioned from local playwright Gordon Steel; The Gardini Juggling Project premiere their new piece Renaissance Rastafar amongst several visiting national touring companies, Union Dance and Northern Broadsides Theatre present Dance Toil Warriors and Twixtwalks Might respectively; there is an extensive music programme and the comedy, club and cinema calendars are full of events likely to bring mainstream audiences into contact with new media work. Arc's commissions will tour internationally and artists everywhere will benefit from this pioneering approach to new media programming. Symbolism aside, Arc seems set to play an influential regional, national and international role.

New centres for digital arts mean new opportunities for media artists to create and present their work in conditions conducive to their appreciation. Funding from the National Lottery has significantly improved audio and video technologies in auditoria and public spaces across the UK, and in several cases, such as Arc, included digital production facilities for the creation of work on site.

The facilitation of digital arts creation is happening across the board, in venues large and small. In 1999, the Junction, a small arts centre in Cambridge, reopened with an impressive international digital programme. The new Sadlers Wells in London included a multimedia screen and an interactive installation in its foyer and is planning a digital programme for its studio Bayliss Theatre. In March 1999, The Lowry Centre in Salford Quays opened its doors to artists from NTF Media Lab, with a programme of residencies developed in conjunction with the commercial Digital World Centre next door. Future openings, such as The Baltic Flower Mills in Newcastle or the new Tate Gallery in London promise great opportunities for digital artists, with better residencies, showcases and schemes for education and development and marketing of media arts. Existing organisations, such as arts festivals, are catching the new media wave and offering commissions to performance and visual artists to create site specific interventions, often employing the digital media they have also acquired from smaller National Lottery capital applications. There is much to excite the British media artist at the moment, and more to come.

Review

Traces of the (in)visible and uncanny

Elizabeth Drake is immersed in a sound/cinema work by Philip Samartzis

Philip Samartzis must have been nurturing this idea for a long time. To mount a festival of electro-acoustic works, record them on 35mm film and then select a soundtrack to be projected over the images. The result is a surreal, odd, odd, odd film. The cinema system operating in a cinema near you. The cinema, a ready-made venue, with Dolby 5.1 in situ.

Electro-acoustic works rely for their integrity on the absence of the visual, on the notion of the acoustic. The absence of "the movies", odd in a cinema. The story of Pythagoras, giving his lecture from behind a curtain, hidden from view. I close my eyes. I enter a space behind my eyelids. Behind my eyelids I am somewhere else.

The idea of immersion. Fully immersed in water. Lost in an invisible world.

To be fully immersed in water gives rise to the possibility of floating or drowning under the surface. Underwater. Immersion to the point of danger. Flashpoint, I am drowning. I cannot breathe underwater. Surrounded there is no escape.

A castigation of craft, the wide open white empty screen, robbed of its image. Currents of air, still, something expressed in this cinema when not snapped in (the) darkness. This cinema about as empty as John Cage's silence. Not unlike that image of the cinema audience wearing 3D glasses on the cover of Society of the Spectacle (Guy Debord). The view from behind the 3D glasses, a vastly different experience from the image one observes from without. View from a bodily absent position. Confused by another point of anomalies, I begin to think it a very strange environment. Strange to be without sight when at the same time being continually reminded of it.

Sound presents itself as the trace of what was (once) visible. The trace of something that became another point of view, another time. A memory of past events. Pre-recorded. Sounds hovering above our heads, or landing within our bodies, a direct experience. The idea that sound can actually occupy this space, like a body can. It is a vastly different experience depending on your position, your seat in the cinema.

Almost all the composers attend the sessions, anxious to hear their work in this unfamiliar setting. Some have not heard their works like this before, another premiere? Another premiere? The advances of technology. Many are from overseas flown in for the conference. It was gratifying to hear so many women composers.

The Uncanny, according to Freud, is not simply the unfamiliar, the unhomely, the disruption. The uncanny retains some element of the familiar. A trace of a familiar or accessible place. The uncanny, where the familiar and the unfamiliar exist simultaneously or more precisely in our case, where the familiar is made unfamiliar through computer processing and altered spaces. Meanings circulate through each one. There has been the experience of being in place and "out of place" simultaneously.

Those moments of fear, when you might actually feel that you are there and not here, a sense of disorientation.

Ann Sophie-Brabant's The Space between, the soundtrack of a film that won't take place. We hear snatches of conversation, made unfamiliar, torn into pieces, made indecipherable, fast, quick gating. The female voice fragmented and re-examined as body. The voice marking the space between body and language. As language is fragmented, so too is the body. Her idea of (re)constructing the body through composition.

Line Tjombos-Thornson has for many years explored the limits of the voice through manipulated sounds and other extended vocal techniques. The sounds of crying and laughter are extended through the computer processes over impossible time frames.

In Humming, by Isabelle de Mullenheim, we hear the gentle murmurings of a child and the voice of the mother, intermingling. Infantile bliss held in a lullaby. The maternal voice which can both envelop and entrap a young infant. The irresistible sound of a baby's voice, reduced at one point to a single cry from centre front. Voices stretched, altered, distorted, made dangerous.

Cécile de Prado, with her husband at the computer, presented the third and final pre- session talk. The Triangle of Uncertainty is an installation developed from sounds recorded at wild and remote coastlines. Images: 3 lighthouses. Descate lonely beacons in a wild terrain. Her intervention into alien and remote territory. The treacherous of the ocean, debris washed up onto the beach, reminding you of some other familiar, unknown lands. Stormy landscapes, a bruised night sky, rolling yellow and grey over our heads.

The space within a space within a space. The microphone, the computer, the cinema.

That eerie trace, a mark, a footstep, of someone we don't know, walking out of time. Christian Zanesi's Public Garden. Sounds taken from the streets of Marseilles. His footstep, the single step of a woman, is given a rhythm that is impossible to "do". Too slow and then too close together. Disturbing, this distortion of narrative, especially when birds are singing in this hollow echo space.

The uncanny nature of sound, like a memory you can't quite grasp yet you know is there. The nature of reality is blurred, like physics. You are losing your bearings.

Immersion: a celebration of sound moving through a cinematic space, co-ordinator and curator Philip Samartzis, State Cinema, Melbourne, June 11 - 13
Report

The fantastic adventures of Ling Change

Maryanne Lynch investigates the multimedia possibilities of Transit Lounge with digital artist Keith Armstrong

Foyer: a place of impersonation, change, transition. Right now I need a coffee to settle my stomach. Black cushions, black caves; crawl into Saturday morning. Recovery via Art. Glossy fake turf; two screens beaming out licorice colours. Someone sticks their head around a temporary wall, "Excuse me, can you please tell me where the workshop...?" De-de-de-de makes a happy litchi-pop tune. Multimedia artist Keith Armstrong and I meet and greet each other.

We are in a space within the space of the Metro Arts foyer, Edward Street, CBD of Brisbane, an artificial space constituted by an installation of sound, vision, dance, 3D animation and captivation. The 2 of us begin to chat while lolling on cushions in the surrounds of this thing called the Transit Lounge: a world of many worlds and crazy characters. Keith: originator, digital video artist and artistic director.

Ling Change: a strong young woman who commands attention and investigates other worlds and ways of doing things.

What was the impetus for the project? I was on a Metro residency in 1998-99 and at the same time participating in the Jabalukas protests. In both instances I came face to face with the question of change, ie what are the conditions in which individuals or organisations can flourish and how are these conditions realised? This question’s also a bit of a follow-on from my previous project, Public Relations [from the IMA’s [On Line series]] I was interested in how systems lock together and influence their constituent parts and vice versa.

So, in the residency I wanted to look at how the tenants of Metro Arts might interact with the greater environment within which they operate so as to achieve a dynamic between diversity and equilibrium. I was around and spoke to tenants asking them open-ended stuff like, "How do your private ethics impact on your organisational management?" and "Do you play games?"

The Hamutic unemployed cleaners who live in decommissioned toilet blocks and dance to any identifiable audience in the hope of picking up a tip

How did you focus this? Originally I was going to use the whole building as an installation but narrowed it down to the foyer, which allowed external traffic as well. And I conceived of the installation as a nonlinear world which would be affected by audience activity. So I’ve located it in an area where the environment is always changing and yet people have some ownership, however abstract, of the space.

The Cock Blockies: mummiform characters permanently coiled in lotus position in the tunnels of the honeycomb plateau

What was the authoring process? I wrote a script that I then offered for an actor (in mind, and together we began to build storyboards. The script had the fundamental idea of a series of different worlds, with a description of each, a soundtrack, and adventures but it was totally a absurd piece. Some people asked me if I’d been on acid when I wrote it.

Lisa was very instrumental in the characterisation of the inhabitants of the worlds. She took it in directions I didn’t anticipate, such as having a cartoony quality to the characters. We shot her in a TV studio, putting the 3D cameras in the same spot if be in the animated world.

I sketched the environments and then Sean Young, Andrew Goode and Ross Anderson [3D modelling animators] developed the Y-frames in 3D. It was at a later stage that we decided to render them in a cartoonish style. This wasn’t only because of Lisa’s work but also because I wanted something of that quality that The Simpsons and South Park have and, again, the ‘reality’ factor of the original renderings somehow flattened out the narrative.

Young Macduffes: sueus saltamines who are forever seeking new opportunities to sell their product, the honey drink ‘Core’

Why did you develop a narrative? I wanted to play on the boundaries of artistic and commercial design and to create an installation that had a broad appeal. Given the conceptual underpinings, I wanted people to engage with the ‘artwork’, not just look at it. Of course, the narrative isn’t linear; this won’t be contrary to my interest in change and how it is measured. I’d like, ultimately, to make a play station.

Old Macduffes: slaves who package ‘Core’ in the niche markets

What was the role of sound? Guy Webster [composer] came to the project at a later point—possibly due to money or the lack of it. We all contributed hours of unpaid labour and the sound was a whirlwind of ideas and inspirations [of QUT and Apple.]

He basically had a responsive role although he contributed lots of great ideas. We decided that we do go for a ‘music’ rather than inhibit each style, a soundtrack. Therefore, the final model so to speak. He worked with miniatures of the animations and with Lisa.

Riniston, Bruce Canon & Dogs: unrequited, unsigned and insular neighbours of Ling Change

How do you structure the space? Originally I’d wanted to use the whole foyer. However, once you bring in the screens, you have a problem in sight so Culturium [interactive design] created this cavelike structure we’re sitting in. These cushions invite people to relax and not have an ‘artwork’ dichotomy. I intended a worthwhile space but this is contingent on the door at the far end being left open. The space is more enclosed than I’d originally envisaged; hence the turfs as one of bringing different environments together.

The large screen hanging above us shows the narrative as it unfurls, depts and so on. The smaller screen set up like a TV gives background information about the worlds and the characters, and the captioned thoughts of the main character Ling Change. It also includes a digital garden, the state of which is affected by the audience, and which in turn affects the narrative journey. So as the narrative unfolds, sound and light make the flowers bloom or wither away, and these changes influence the adventures of Ling Change. The interactive code was created by Gavin Sade [interactive designer] on a Director [multimedia authoring] system, and the engine of it all is in the basement below the foyer.

The Facultics: narrow minded empirebuilders who restrict others but themselves get stuck on the honeycomb plateau.

Our conversation dwindles to its end. Keith and I sit there, watch the flowers grow, see the Hamutik do their dancing-girls routine once again in very short uniforms and brassy wigs, give each a goodbye after a short black, and go our separate ways. In transit: on the go, between destinations, journeying into the... Ling Change Thinks: line dancing is so passe

Transit Lounge, Keith Armstrong, Lisa O’Neill, Guy Webster, Callum Lui, Sean Young, Ross Anderson, Andrew Goode, Gavin Sade, Nat Abrook, Richard Hayday, Metro Arts (Ryger), Brisbane, May 26 - June 19

Report

Diversion vs identity

Anthony May reports on Selol! Selol! Bigflaco Canoe, an Australian documentary in the Pacific

Selol! Selol! is the story of a big day on Epi, an island community in Vanuatu. In July 1998 over 1000 passengers disembarked from the P&O liner Fair Princess for 8 hours in a tropical paradise. Randall Wood was there with a documentary crew to catch the fun and anything else that might happen. Paradise, like anywhere else, has its good days and bad ones.

Produced under an SBS accord on a $60,000 budget, Selol! Selol! Bigflaco Canoe was broadcast on SBS on May 17. I spoke to the film’s producer, Randall Wood and second unit director Jan Cattoni in Brisbane recently. While the budget was small, they explained, it was funded within 3 weeks of application which allowed the film to catch the events on Epi when the calendar was always working against them. From the first idea for the documentary to the day of principal photography, Wood, and producer Gabriele Jones, had only from February to July to bring this project together.

The opportunity for the documentary came about in the most fortuitous circumstance. Wood and Cattoni were working with others on another documentary in Vanuatu, a long project called 7kimm Tarm, during a break, Wood took a vacation on the island of Epi on the advice of co-worker, Sam Obed. Obed was also involved on Selol! Selol! as a translator and editor. On arrival at Epi in February 1998, he learned of the imminent arrival of the Fair Princess in July. The idea presented itself as the meeting of different communities from Vanuatu and the tourists from the boat: it wasn’t destined to fall out in such a neat fashion.

Part of what made Selol! Selol! possible was the fact that Wood was already familiar with the protocols of making documentary in Melanesia. 7Kimm Tarm had been in production for 2 years and involved extensive collaboration with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Dealing with the sensitive issues of training Pacific youth in filmmaking and consciousness raising, the film had up to 15 young people actively involved, and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre had final decision making powers over the documentary as a whole.

Such elaborate avenues of consultation were among the first things to come into conflict with the corporate speed of P&O’s decision-making process. As the film shows, and Wood and Cattoni elaborated for me, the months of community discussion involving thousands of people across the island (regardless of the events during the day of the visit) were rapidly overruled by the arrival of Massimo Soprano, P&O’s manager of Operation Services. Within minutes the 15 dance sites, representing the 15 different communities on Epi, were reduced to 3. The requirements of holiday diversion meant cultural representation on and division within the island was immediate.

Central to Epi’s preparation for the visit were Tasso Wellawo, manager of Paradise Sunset Bungalow (where Wood’s initial script was thrashed out) and Markin Vila, principal of Epi High School. Recognising the cash value of the visit to the community that has difficulty raising the fees to maintain its high school the balance between reward and cultural destruction was difficult. Significantly the Epi community were sensitive to the importance of the film’s documentation in maintaining their profile throughout the process. One result has been the limiting of the cruise ship’s visits. P&O originally wanted 26 visits each year. The people of Epi have decided that 3 is enough.

Both Wood and Cattoni are pleased that the film could contribute to this outcome. Sensitive to the apprehensions of the island community— their appearance to the documentary’s wider audience—Selol! Selol! seems to have created an opportunity to develop stronger ties between Pacific and Australian filmmaking. Hopefully 7Kimm Tarm, which SBS plans to broadcast, will build on those bonds.

Randall Wood is presently negotiating distribution rights for Selol! Selol! and thinking of a return to the island in magpie 2 years time. His current projects include Shelter, a global investigation of Indigenous architectural design and building that attempts to negotiate rather than impose itself on the environment. He is also involved in Marine, a soundscapes in collaboration with Brisbane-based composer Roddythe Bikes.

Jan Cattoni is heading back to work once more with the Vanuatu Cultural Centre to produce a series of community films around the issues of reproductive health.
just before I started film school. But I never the making and creature, another aspect of filmmaking Sue get a release print of it, I’ll probably be 381” Sue tells me when she returns to the ambitious venture begun in 1997. “I always wanted her work: producer of Moshumentary Syd... strands experimental experimental. Captured Interview 10 Having studied rt, music and liter11ture in The Sue Brown’s on the phone to her partner to the Mercury Cinema. Adelalde, it is in her kitchen, trying not to listen in, which is hard, as Sue’s strong Canadian accent travels rather well. But the information reprinted as the issued press-kit on her work: producer of Moana, director of 2 well-received shorts Grunt and Snoop, and currently working as dialogue coach for the television series Chuck Fin, as well as completing her self-funded feature film Getting The Dirt On Trish (aka Dirty Laundry), an ambitious venture begun in 1997. “I always wanted to make a feature by the time I was 35”, Sue tells me when she returns to the table. “I started making it when I was 34, so I guess I achieved that goal, but by the time I get a release print of it, I’ll probably be 38” Having studied art, music and literature in her home city of Montreal, Sue found the medium that combined all these elements was film. “Rick Schmidt’s How To Make A Feature At Used Car Prices was the book I picked up in a second hand book store about 10 years ago, just before I started film school. But I never thought, “Oh, I’m going to get someone to pay me to do this”. So I guess I just must have been an expensive hobby. Sometimes I feel like it still is”, she adds. Being a gregarious creature, another asset of filmmaking Sue found attractive was the social side of the making and viewing of cinema. “I love encounters these days on websites using QuickCams. This teenage lesbian girl shot to recognition in the late 80’s, the usual adolescent rites of passage skewed through a queer filter in suburban Milwaukee. From the bicoastal bedroom video A New Year through to the ‘road movie’ It Won’t Love and the women’s health education, animated/live action hybrid of The Judy Spots, Pottis tracks the development of a style as sophisticated as her older sisters’ (such as Su Friedrich, Greta Snider, etc). The new Flat is Beautiful consolidates this: a witty, affecting film about growing up queer in the 80’s combines sharp takes on co-op psychology with some quite audacious character masks, as Benning transplants Chantal Akerman’s flat approach into the ordinary flow of smalltown middle America. The Ways of Being programme concentrates on the convergence of performance and video and the appropriation of popular forms. Joe Gibbons’ Multiple Barbie extends the pop-psychological theme in a Pixonvision therapy session framing an exorcism of a Barbie doll’s multiple personalities, a neat parody of tabloid obsession. The Hallifiers’ Actions in Actions turns material-action performance into slapstick, or vice versa, the properties of certain footstools taking on a new, metaphorical significance. One with Everything by Daniel Reeves is a technically polished ‘mockumentary’, a fast, iconoclastic ‘deconstruction’ of popular Buddhism. Zen-inspired punning culminates in the ‘punchline’ title. Anne McGuire’s I Am Omgay and You’re Not Wrong, spoofing a desperate cabaret singer, drops with deadpan irony and pathos. Singing “is a song for all of you who don’t fit in” (introducing Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer), she could be Cindy Sherman doing stand-up. The threads of barely suppressed tension and humour that entwine Ways of Being are intensified by the hallucinatory psychological landscape of Nocturne, the latest in Peggy Ahwesh’s series on sexuality, violence and mortality. The promiscuous Pixonvision is again used as a transformative device, its high-contrast providing occasional noir-erotic intensity. Recycled: Old, Used and Abused, consisting of work from Vienna, surely the European capital of Experimental Cinema, begins with Alon. Life Wastes Andy Hardy by Martin Arnold. Arnold, a virtuoso of the optical printer, takes fractions of old Hollywood movies through extraordinarily controlled repetitive forward and reverse reprinting; microscopic moments become tics, stuttering and breathy gazps. Alon... follows his earlier work in the exploration of the perceptual possibilities of this technique. The extended song, urbanites and exhilarations of the triangle of Fay Holden, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney becomeودised erotic tension in a distillation of structuralist aesthetics: a sinister reConstructive revisionism of cinematic language. Film bit by Gustav Deutsch reworks a staggering catalogue of found footage into a lexicon of cinematic technological form and function; chromographed concrete construction transcends its research-based premise as an elegant post-humanist poetic essay. The final film of the programme, Lisl Ponger’s djdt cu, frames old super 8 holiday movies from ‘excotic’ locations with voice-over tourist stories. Accidental and naive complicity imbues the problematised relationship of the post-colonial ‘gaze’ with subtle nuanced reflexivity. It is a credit to the Melbourne International Film Festival and the Australian Film Institute that they are respectively premiering and touring Captured; an altogether considered, coherent and accessible package, serving both as a progress report and captivating introduction to a rich seam of experimental cinema. Captured, curator Clare Steuart, Melbourne International Film Festival, Treasury Theatre, Melbourne, July 28 8:30, Aug 5:30; Perth: Film & Television Institute, Aug 13 - 14; Adelaide: Media Resource Centre, Aug 21 - 22. The Art of the Improvable (forum + local experimental films), speakers: Edwin Dayghty, Margaret Haeagreen, Janet Menwerther, Clare Steuart; Sydney: Chauvel Cinemas, Sept 2 6 3 Interview Mature punk chick sensibility Daniel Francis Cardone profiles independent Adelaide filmmaker Sue Brown Sue Brown’s on the phone to her partner John Martin, who is currently sequestered in Sydney, finishing the documentary Moana: A Misdocumentary for SBS television. I sit in her kitchen, trying not to listen in, which is hard, as Sue’s strong Canadian accent travels rather well. But the information reprinted as the issued press-kit on her work: producer of Moana, director of 2 well-received shorts Grunt and Snoop, and currently working as dialogue coach for the television series Chuck Fin, as well as completing her self-funded feature film Getting The Dirt On Trish (aka Dirty Laundry), an ambitious venture begun in 1997. “I always wanted to make a feature by the time I was 35”, Sue tells me when she returns to the table. “I started making it when I was 34, so I guess I achieved that goal, but by the time I get a release print of it, I’ll probably be 38” Having studied art, music and literature in her home city of Montreal, Sue found the medium that combined all these elements was film. “Rick Schmidt’s How To Make A Feature At Used Car Prices was the book I picked up in a second hand book store about 10 years ago, just before I started film school. But I never thought, “Oh, I’m going to get someone to pay me to do this”. So I guess I just must have been an expensive hobby. Sometimes I feel like it still is”, she adds. Being a gregarious creature, another asset of filmmaking Sue found attractive was the social side of the making and viewing of cinema. “I love Caroline Farmer, Getting The Dirt On Trish collaborating with people. I love doing things with people other than just going to the pub on Saturday night. That’s why most of my friends are in Trish. It helped that most of them were into film, anyway, but there’s only one actor as such. And we all became better friends from the experience of making a film.” I’m treated to a preview of Trish, albeit without sound. Sue speaks all the dialogue for me, in time with the actors’ lip movements. The absence of soundtrack places emphasis on the visuals—high contrast black and white, tight, economical shots, fast pacing. I am instantly drawn into the story of two-timing, manipulative Trish. Sue elaborates on the genesis of the plot; “It’s my French-Canadian-lessness in there, my experiences of being in Australia, my relationships with my sisters, and I’ve also brought in the kind of subculture I’ve been involved in for years, which is all kinds of musicians and artists.” Trish is somewhat ragged around the edges, but to say it’s only because of the low budget is a falsity—it’s an aesthetic decision as much as an economical one. Trish owes a sizeable debt to No Wave cinema which emerged from New York’s art scene in the 70s and early 80s—films such as Bette Gordon’s Variety and Susan Siedelman’s Smithereens. Conceptually and stylistically innovative, these films featured plot lines which were heavily location-specific and steeped in exploratory sexuality, incorporating aspects of French New Wave Cinema and documentaries by the likes of Frederick Wiseman. “I just wanted to make that kind of film”, says Sue, also citing Canadian filmmaker Bruce Macdonald’s Roadkill as a prime, and not disparate, influence. “Trish was motivated by a genuine love of films which have that no-budget quality and spirit to them. I like seeing films that are a little bit raw, rough around the edges. The goal wasn’t to make something slick and polished—it’s about the spirit, and the feeling that comes out when you are actually watching them.” Sue refers to herself as an ‘aging punk chick’, and it’s easy to see this sensibility in Trish—a do-it-yourself resourcefulness coupled with the embracing of a grungy milieu. But the aggressiveness and rebelliousness of youth is replaced by a different struggle, against maturity, against an acceptance of adult responsibilities that are perhaps inevitable. “It may be inevitable, but it doesn’t have to be boring”, says Sue. “I want an extraordinary life. I constantly push myself to have different experiences, to do things I’m scared of doing. Maybe it’s a fear of mediocrity. I don’t want to wind up sitting at home, talking about my mortgage.” Daniel Francis Cardone, at a supple 27 years of age, has written and produced 4 short films, and is currently developing 3 feature film scripts. He recently curated the film festival Barking at the Mercury Cinema, Adelaide, and makes a cameo appearance in Sue Brown’s Getting The Dirt On Trish. For more on film see Julia Postle talking to playwright David Atfield about an Australian who was a Hollywood star and filmmaker in the 20s—“Looking for Louise Lovely.” Page 34
Pixelated privates

Ivana Caprice and partner Art sample porn on the internet before the censor drops

Art and I sit down to sample the delicacies of the internet. We are on a mission. Open up Copenr, a groovy little downloder which manoeuvres through all the search engines at once, and enter the exact phrase “Australian porn.” Horbit. Excite. Almost too baby. We’re on the path to fulfilling desire... 1. http://www.eurotic-movies.about.net/articles/b/20.html

Free Nude Teen Thumbnai Galleries. This is first on the list, and I’m trying to imagine the appeal of looking at groty, adsornced, cardboardy fingernails. My own are ragged around the edges—must book in with Carmel, my nail technician. Click here for more porn than you can chew a dick at. The technological sophistication is astounding. Click on the butt—FUCK my Ass is revealed bottom left of screen. Calling all BIP away from seeing five teen sex, virtual lifeform perhaps? That’s a banana, Art cries accusingly. This site promotes teen sex which means teen girls having sex for the very first time ever. While promised as being very young and all virgins, the disclaimer at the bottom maintains that all models are 18 years or over. Almost too true not to believe. Many software links mean cruising fathers can feel assured that their precious teenage girls are safe.

The women look like aliens. They have strange black bloobly shapes over their bodies. Pixelated pussies. Live pornpurri. FREE to all members. We eagerly click on How To Join. Receive FREE newsletter: Sex Files. We enter the required information. Name. Email address. Birthdate. Password. Membership. Name. Jobtitle. Sex. Age. 15 is ready to rock and roll. Other porn sites keep flashing up. Close a window, a new site jumps in the face. Don’t flush. XXX2. Virginia shots. Jesus Christ, Art keeps exclaiming, they’re popping up from everywhere, his fingers juddering crazily over the mouse. We’re now on site 15 away from seeing five teen sex, but what’s this? Credit card details for legal age verification. Oh, Art moans. He’s never let us have a credit card. Always insists on paying everything in cash. He likes to keep control of our budget and expenditure and you know what women are like with plastic! We’ll just plug in the fake ones we can get free XXX pics delivered directly to our email box. We set up a hotmail account and joinoblow15 gets delivered. Who can resist the promised lands: pony shots—hidden cameras reveal young girls going to the bathroom (a blondie sits on tiles, next to the loo, legs spreadagleed, looking straight at us). Ya Va Voom.

Warning, warning, warning. Stop. Do not access. You must be 21 years or over: “if you are accessing from any country where adult material is specifically prohibited by law, it’s your responsibility to obey the laws of the country.” We’re sitting at a bit of a damper to the drive, darling. I sign a form stating that I am not a US postal officer or law enforcement agent and will not use information as evidence for prosecution of individuals or for the purpose of entrapment. Well, it all depends, really. I started hiring a private detective to follow Art when I found various items of my face underwear missing. I am visitor number 31,759,980, part of an intimate club almost twice the population of Australia.

Art tries to download Jessica’s shoot right to our computer. Here’s Amy, “wild crazy...watch her lean back and piss into a glass bowl.” Look at the quality of that scan, Art cries, zooming into a pierced nipple. They use digital cameras, the site says proudly, giving a quick plug to the Sony VX 1000. See pissing, frosting, bottle and veggie insertions, and a speculum. Which reminds me, I must book in for that pap smear which I’ve been putting off for years. Those blasted ads on TV make me feel guilty. If I do get cervical cancer, apparently I won’t have an excuse if I don’t go every 18 months. I have to certify that “anal sex, urination, vegetable and bottle penetration and fistng, do not violate the community standards of [my] street, state, county, city, province or country.” I am nervous about this. Perhaps we should do a quick survey of Hope Street, Art suggests. Messinei likes Street. I always suspected he had a bit on the side with that tart who lives opposite the RSL, the fake blonde with the German accent and red stilettos. Aaah, ooooooooh, 2 girls are engaged in a lip pulling contest and then there’s the carreos. Eggplants. Zucchinis. Squash. Art reckons this site’s so hot he’s going to cook a stir fry tonight.

3. Video linking free XXXX ShesMales
We want to watch Pammy and Tommy’s home video, see live video channels, find out more about that blonde bombshell lying in a fog filter with a finger placed delicately in her mouth, and look at those millions of hidden cameras: inside toilets, under desks, in the tip of a dildo. But that blasted credit card screen comes up every time. (Meanwhile, Tina Tripoli has delivered our bi-weekly Sex Files newsletter and we reply to receive pics.) Butts, boobs, beavers and more pop ups, “perv and on the fringe of decency.” Cher in The House of the Rising Cum. Tendercious and titities. A flash tour of bootporns. Use your powers of deduction to select the natural redhead (it’s not as easy as it sounds).


At last some Oz porn (which was what we were looking for in the first place but it’s so hard to find). A definite Oz Favourite with “stacks of real life rooks.” Stick for free samples, lick my whip, and I’m transported back into Penthouseville, circa 1982, with the reader’s input: 1st prize winner goes to Pantyhole vs Stockings where a man seduces a woman in a library who “has a formal beard but I’ll bet she’s got a cock.” So that’s why Art spends so much time at the State Library, I always thought he went there to take notes for his Business Management course. We find another Aussie Aussie: Street. I always thought he had a bit on the side with that tart who lives opposite the RSL, the fake blonde with the German accent and red stilettos. Aaah, ooooooooh, 2 girls are engaged in a lip pulling contest and then there’s the carreos. Eggplants. Zucchinis. Squash. Art reckons this site’s so hot he’s going to cook a stir fry tonight.

Art says he wants to see more multimedia, and audio. And the use of sound has been most disappointing. I guess gags of pleasure are more intrusive than photos of woman ached naked to cane furniture, dog-collar-liked to her terrier. So we visit a site which has a porn in Stereoscop and Virtual Reality: “A review of images in stereo format allows us to look at the even common things from a new perspective and get different quick kicks. Especially it refers to Erotica. The sense of reality makes them especially Piquant.[sic?]” Art immediately perks up and puts on his blue and red glasses, saved from the Three Stooges TV special a few decades ago. The 3D effect reveals a girl tied to a boat backed by a beautiful deep blue sky. She looks cold, her goosebumps through the glasses thick bright boils. Click to Enlarge. Every man’s dream.

She has pubic hair. Art recoils, and it is a bit of a shock after the shiny, sanded, polished legs of the American teens, as demured as the Daintreee after a bulldozer has torn through. The Virtual chat room is unfortunately out of order, but a new nude avatar world is on its way. You no longer need to go to Gentleman’s clubs or Woody’s car wash to ogle topless women. That’s good news for Art, who pretends he’s going to the TAB, but in actuality he’s at Henke’s gone now...up the street to pick up a few vegies.

Ivana Caprice works as a private consultant to the Senate on internet issues. Art never returned from the greenpolicer. Police are continuing their investigations

Remember, you want to go Asia
An important reminder. AsiaLink Artist Residencies close in September.
Visual Arts/Crafts close on September 3; Performing Arts and Arts Management on September 10; and literature on September 17.
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Open door madness

Grisha Dolgopolov jumps into PICA's Putting On An Act

In its 6th big year at PICA, Putting on an Act (PoA) is a festival of open success, short works by self-producing artists from a diversity of disciplines (or lack thereof) pumping out material over 5 jam-packed nights. The focus was on "contemporary performance encompassing dance, written works, physical theatre, live art, new music, sound and hybrid forms." There was all that and more with a bizarre oscillation between retro-topios and future-philia—"an exciting permutation of all types of performance. Short films are all the rage now, but there is a need for more venues for the espresso buzz of short performance works in a supportive but critical context. The benefit of brevity is that crock works are short and it's not a long wait for the next blink. It also performs the golden rule of timing, compactness and knowing when to end.

One of the problems of an open access season is that the good comes up hard against the sad and the really bad. PICA director, Sarah Miller, makes no apologies for this. That's the risk. But the sheer range, worries about the open format and its limitations every year, there is clearly great demand and a respect for this type of festival. The potential soon blew out and their on.

The physicality of the 3rd Day was intense. Two performers were in the audience, Bindi Bucknell and Tara Bollard, who both performed. The energy and the pace was high, and it's not a long wait for the next blink. They also performed the golden rule of timing, compactness and knowing when to end.

Putting on an Act is a good idea. It works well when it works, but there seems to be a paucity of experimental performance around the place (even though on Friday night with the opening of ARK5 at PICA at the same time, the place was jumping with experimentalists). It's risky and unpredictable. As writer Josephine Wilson expressed it, "I think that the standard was pretty good this year. And as for the open-door policy the problem with more fences to jump is that someone has to mark the bar on the fence." What would be great is if there were sufficient funds to keep the open door madness and establish another annual event which would allow performers the opportunity to develop their work further but still within the productive constraints of short, pioneering works. Every town needs such an invigorating, experimental, low-fi, high intensity performance forum. There also needs to be more no-holds-barred audience and performer interactions. If passions get violent, that's an occupational hazard. There need to be more private invitations, bizarre quirks, silly sounds, bodily functions, fears, agonies and weird stories brought out into the public sphere—"it will be good for law and order and the zeitgeist. There's got to be more of this free access performance, a lot more.

Jonathan Sinatza, Nigel Luck, Chris Williams, Vertical Hold

Sanja Arembasic

Putting on an Act, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Perth, July 6 - 10

Grisha Dolgopolov is a writer, lecturer and director based in Perth.
Timewarps: culture, nostalgia and renewal

Urban Theatre Project, Subtropia

The strongest experience in the Urban Theatre Project's Subtropia, beyond being thoughtfully and vigorously entertained, is a sensation of displacement, of being time-warped, and not just because I'm led through a set of ultra-specific performances in a maze of a western Sydney suburban centre. I'm not familiar with, though that's important. It's to do with what is sometimes casually labelled a postmodern phenomenon—the coexistence of cultural styles that rely for their imagery on earlier cultural movements. I grew up in the 50s and 60s in a bleakly uniform culture. In those decades and in the 70s and 80s, new cultures emerged continuously in revolt against uniformity—rock'n'roll, hippee, various feminist and gay culture, punk, gothic, rave, rap and hip-hop. Subtropia reveals the coexistence and insistence of versions of these cultures in a suburban setting, sometimes convincingly, sometimes not, but with much verse and passion and with a large team of directors, performers, crew and guides. The question you want to ask at the end of the guided tour is have you been truly entertained by these subcultural gestures or have you experienced something more palpable, content behind the forms?

Adding to the sense of constant displacement is the renewal this part of Bankstown around the railway station is going through. The performances take place in empty shops and offices, half-deserted arcades, a frequently used old-cinema and in the stairwell of an old, half-deserted theatre. The program (and we play the local chess players immersed in their games on a patch of uneven dirt while they wait for an improved site). A huge crowd gathers for Subtropia in the early afternoon winter cool, is broken into colour-coded groups and led away by elegant guides who might burst into song or metodically pluck a Southeast Asian stringed instrument as we journey.

Our first stop is a ravel club with a hippee complexion—a pied pipe fairy, a fairy on stilts entitling "music as energy, a tool for transformation", it could have been 1968, a bar newly sculpted in rust against uniformity—putting lights, painting the walls. There's a crowd already dancing and half our group join in immediately, arms waving up and forward, while the rest of us prove like gallery-goers peering at the paintings of, yes, eyes, the mushrooms, the turntables, the dancers, the floor, the ceiling. Three cool, dark young men arrive late, look on with bemusement and go. "We come from the 18th century," they say to the dancing, arms up, but the rest of their bodies moving with a heightened articulation that hints at hip hop.

Our guides take us out scuttling into the sunlight, down swinging streets, through a carpark and into a lane where we pace around and make small talk before being admitted to the central stairwell of an arcade of small shops and offices. Band equipment sits at ground level in front of several screens onto which are projected large images of band equipment in a home, tea cups, poster posters. We climb the stairs. We hear "Saturday night is the loneliest night of the week" cooly drifting through the space. We see above us 3 sets of steps in light up with the tune, soap bubbles drift and fall. The program names and descends and introduce themselves, led by 'Joseph Cool', announcing the years they were born (the very years of punk peaking circa 1980), a curiously cool prelude to a punk-inspired Leslie. Black is part of the PACT Theatre is stroked on the wall in calcio, the actors dressed in suits with pink and blue ribbons identifying them as the characters from the opera. This is a play in the new technologies. We specialise in an object of desire. It's a confident first outing from the 130 team (Jane Park, David Williams, Damon Young, Keith Kempsin, Alchenor Macnena, Cheoeh Miller, Craig Anderson) many of whom are University of Western Sydney graduates. The company positions itself "stylistically somewhere between Frumpus and The opera Project." Some performers' wear costumes and envelopes for all present vocalists and the performances—especially Williams and Chenoen Miller who plays a wonderful louche and lend Don Attono—satisfy one of the company's primary aims, "giving the audience pleasure." PACT Theatre, June 4. VB

Samuel James, Space, 1989

One of the immediate pleasures of walking into Space 99 was to see the line-up of technicians and artists immediately to the front of the audience, between us and the performing space, at work, ready for the show to start. The second pleasure was the proliferation of screens across the space, some transparent, others angled, turning, reflexive. Televisions cameras were also included in the space, multiplying the performers on the screen, and there we didn't know about until watching the audience, relaying our image to a small screens on the front wall of The Performance Space. There was a sense of excitement here about multimedia possibilities so often promised but only partly realised in performance. Space 99 went some way to fulfilling these, always interesting to look at as images were refracted and layered across the space in new permutations and changes in detail and coloration. In a fantasy of endlessly shifting relationships fuelled by a plenitude of movie images of great movie lovers on the screen and by a couple of persistently filmed classic narratives, like Sabine (the original was directed by Billy Wilder), 3 performers act out arch, cut and paste the narrative, acting as director. Sometimes an informal meeting of actors had a good handle on the media, his grasp of his performers as they slipped into roles, cut and paste the narratives, Invoking different changes of state that can be utilised for theatre, dance or general living conditions." He writes that, "The form of the cycle can range from days to less than an hour, or as in this case"—the 24th Performance at Artpeak—"repetitive' states of fifteen minutes.

In the largest Artspace gallery, 12 performers from various backgrounds, and, from time to time lunche myself, created 5 minute improvisations over the 24 hours to specific sets of instructions, soloing, working as a mass, in teams, echoing each other visually (relying largely on peripheral vision and heightened intuition as the hours passed) and sometimes vocally. The performers were 'cycled' through different stations (based on states from Buddhist Pali texts) in the space. This included a sound desk where the performers had turned at selecting tracks—sometimes fascinating in itself and its odd conjunctions with the performances, a computer (for recording responses) and several devices and installations to interact with (a pendulum sculpture, a plinth, a grouping chain, a small trampoline...) and video camera/screen spaces. Within this tight framework and over such a long period the improvisations seemed minimal and often interior, odd bursts of great energy, inventiveness and wit surpluse to the form.

As an audience member for 6 of the 24th (I did in 3 x 2hr visits) it was an interesting experience, more clinical than anything and that was probably something to do with the set-up of the space. Although close to the performers, we were pretty much the other side of the 4th wall. We couldn't move around the periphery of the performance, couldn't see the computer javascripts, the lights, the performance of CLO. I found this frustrating. Then again it wasn't for me, it was essentially for the performances. There were occasional open dialogues in the next space at the same time, but they were too far removed from the action and didn't emerge as an integral part of the event. Here and there in my stay there were some remarkable moments that fed my audience desires, but I think the performances themselves were the best, the performers who what it did for them. Which I will. Did they reach that point when, as Lynch writes in his program for Subtropia, "the development of a culture of the gothic, a gothic culture of the other Lynch 's,..."

At 24 hours to close the audience grew rapidly (I think it was less), most of the performers come to see their peers triumph over time and the season of celebration palpable. These experiments and trainings are vital to performance. 24th Performance was a reminder of what we need to do. It's really only on after all these days. Artspace May 8-9 KG

Sydney Art Theatre, Willy's, The Mother

Bogdan Koca, playwright, actor and director has just been awarded the $15,000 Ford Transforming Art award for the play, which was announced in the March 345 page of RealTime .
Looking for Louise Lovely

Julia Postle on writer-director David Atfield's play about an Australian silent film star

David Atfield had been a silent film fan for quite a while, but it was the life of Louise Lovely—Australia's first Hollywood star—that really got him excited about this distinctive period. So excited, in fact, that her story inspired him to write the latest project brought to us by BFTS The Theatre Company, Lovely Louise. The play is the result of more than two years of research by the writer into the life of Louise Lovely, although historically significant to Australian cinema, has been little documented. It's a story of a woman who was a star of her time, but whose happiness and sadness were hindered by a series of bad choices and decisions.

Louise Lovely's testimony to the 1927 Royal Commission into the film industry was a starting point for Atfield. "An interesting form of government funding," the testimony revealed the promise of Louise Lovely as a filmmaker. Unfortunately, only traces of her film life remain; most silent films have been lost. The play features the press releases of major film companies to make way for the 'talkies' or have decayed over time. The fact that Lovely had no children made it even more difficult for her to gain a sense of the woman, the actor, and the filmmaker.

However he was able to access Louise Lovely's will, which led him to 3 named beneficiaries: Maisey Atfield who lived with Louise and second husband Bert in the 1930s, Nora Ratier, Louise's neighbour in Hobart; and Peter Dransfield, a friend of Louise in her later years. Atfield was able to interview each of them, and his interview with Atfield is now held in the permanent collection of ScreenSound Australia.

Throughout the play, Atfield has included Leatrice Joy and Ramon Novarro, who were in Louise Lovely's debut film, starring in a fragment from her directorial work, Lovely Louise. "I thought it was important that we all saw her at the peak of her career." Of Louise Lovely's films, the 2 with ScreenSound Australia—although fabulous resources—are not particularly good examples of her work. Another is in London and 4 are in the Library of Congress in Washington.

For the characters in the play—Louise Lovely's first husband Wilton Welch, mother Madame Carbaase-Alberti, second husband Bert Cowen, friend and confidante Sinbad—Atfield has chosen these modern stars: Leatrice Joy and Ramon Novarro. The play has been adapted for the stage, and film stars Leatrice Joy and Ramon Novarro—Atfield wanted to evoke an emotional reality, rather than trying to recreate personalities in an imitative style. For instance, Jonathan Gavin's superb portrayal of Ramon Novarro was developed as a positive gay character to contrast Barry Pearce's repressed Wilton Welch. And while Novarro was indeed a major star of both silent films and the first wave of talkies, his friendship with Louise Lovely was something Atfield invented as a creative mechanism.

Strategies of the writer-director aside, Lovely Louise is a unique historical work which also manages to examine some issues that confront us all, including the difficult choices we face between career and personal life. Atfield sums it up nicely really, "It's about going for it."
Darwin as transit lounge

Bill Perrett looks in on lives in the Block

The 4 plays which make up Block are what regional theatre should be. They reflect constrained by any what regional theatre should be. They reflect

Though just what ‘local’ means in the case of Darwin is not always uncomplicated. One broad theme which unites these pieces—apart from the fact that they are set in a block of rooms of 3 doors, one light and many lost souls. Welcome to a troupe in transition. A Block, Knock-em-down Theatre, Brown’s Mart, Darwin, July 14 - 17, 21 - 24

Bill Perrett teaches Media and Cultural Studies at Northern Territory University.

Hope springs eternal

Maryanne Lynch at Rock’n’Roll Circus’ Lovestunts

Enter a fantasy

We are met by 2 spirits of desire and destiny (Kate Reid and Andrew Bright). Clad in unforgiving white, they spring tricks on us and on the hotel/motel inhabitants. They play the slapstick trick of entry and exit with the 3 doors, leaving Mr A-Room-for-the-Night with nowhere to go. And then they vanish again.

Enter a problem

We are wanting to be seduced by the Rock’n’Roll magic; we are waiting for the sex and the sappiness to claim its own ground. We get what we want from the wild wandering-bands soundscapes (Brett Jones) and from such brief moments when the 2 Andrews dance a tango of disintegrating limbs ‘til passion do them part. But this underworld is strangely dead, its ghosts lifeless instead of possessed. There’s a curious bias towards conventional theatrics and aerial performers playing grounded actors. This show is well-travelled, having toured regionally, but it doesn’t feel well-shod.

Enter an audience

We are disappointed, bored and dejected but hopeful this is only temporary. We have learned the art of this company and can spot an old dog even when it’s disguised as a new trick. The performers are working hard; injury has laid siege to several of them (notably Azaria Universe, who makes a brief appearance). And now and then a liberated body soaring through the sky (Bright) in contradistinction to the baggage-laden body below (Ives) suggests the possibilities in this retelling of an ancient story of lost love.

Enter a company

Welcome to a troupe in transition. A move that has been taking place for a couple of years now and is still very much in evidence. Moving from a collective to an artistic directorship has meant a changing of the guard in performers, and new ambitions in the marriage of theatre and circus. Welcome to a not-yet-there vision.

Lovestunts, Rock’n’Roll Circus, artistic director Yaron Lichitsch, performers Andrew Bray, Andrew Bright, Derek Ives, Kate Reid, Ryan Taplin, Azaria Universe, musical director Brett Parker. Powerhouse, Brisbane, June 15 - 26

The Playsworks newsletter, Vol 6, No 3 features, replacing the (much to his own surprise) with a younger woman when she dies. But this is no piece of neat narrative naturalism. What begins with the mother’s quiet rumbling, half tipsy, homely complaints gradually degenerates into a grim fantasy belonging to either son or mother....actually both. Jennifer Clare and Rostislav Orel are excellent as mother and son, the one emotionally restless and morally righteous (and increasingly alcoholic) on her couch, the other a creature of nervous energy and incomprehension. Koca’s direction is just right in a show on a shoe-string budget in the tiny Pilgrim Theatre just across the road from the RealTime office. This was a rare opportunity. Some of Koca’s plays were performed in 1985 in Australia to an alert few to celebrate the centenary of his birth. Congratulations to Bogdan Koca for his Rex Clemphom Fellowship and for bringing us The Mother. Pigeon House, Sydney from July 6.

Joe Clements & Gail Evans in The Playsworks newsletter, Vol 6, No 3 features, replacing the (much to his own surprise) with a younger woman when she dies. But this is no piece of neat narrative naturalism. What begins with the mother’s quiet rumbling, half tipsy, homely complaints gradually degenerates into a grim fantasy belonging to either son or mother....actually both. Jennifer Clare and Rostislav Orel are excellent as mother and son, the one emotionally restless and morally righteous (and increasingly alcoholic) on her couch, the other a creature of nervous energy and incomprehension. Koca’s direction is just right in a show on a shoe-string budget in the tiny Pilgrim Theatre just across the road from the RealTime office. This was a rare opportunity. Some of Koca’s plays were performed in 1985 in Australia to an alert few to celebrate the centenary of his birth. Congratulations to Bogdan Koca for his Rex Clemphom Fellowship and for bringing us The Mother. Pigeon House, Sydney from July 6.

Timewarp...

continued from page 33

Like Nigel Kellow and others before him, it’s a richly deserved, and doubtless much needed, reward for his devotion to theatre, particularly in maintaining links with his Polish parent culture and a European theatre tradition which we experience all too rarely. Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) is a Polish poet of the early 20th century who stands alongside Gombrowicz and Bruno Schulz and shares some of the idealism of their vision and a sharp, if quite lateral, sometimes radical social critique. It’s often said that his plays appear to be precursors to the Theatre of the Absurd (true enough), but that’s to imagine Witkacy to be a one-off instead of part of a tradition quite foreign to our Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, a tradition allowing the artist to be in touch with the unconscious through vivid fantasy, to embrace disruptive notions of time and identity, and bravely, if despairingly, play the seer. The son in The Mother would be a seer, dependent on his mother’s knitting spells, repelling her, but forever attached, replacing her (much to his own surprise) with a younger woman when she dies. But this is no piece of neat narrative naturalism. What begins with the mother’s quiet rumbling, half tipsy, homely complaints gradually degenerates into a grim fantasy belonging to either son or mother...actually both. Jennifer Clare and Rostislav Orel are excellent as mother and son, the one emotionally restless and morally righteous (and increasingly alcoholic) on her couch, the other a creature of nervous energy and incomprehension. Koca’s direction is just right in a show on a shoe-string budget in the tiny Pilgrim Theatre just across the road from the RealTime office. This was a rare opportunity. Some of Koca’s plays were performed in 1985 in Australia to an alert few to celebrate the centenary of his birth. Congratulations to Bogdan Koca for his Rex Clemphom Fellowship and for bringing us The Mother. Pigeon House, Sydney from July 6.

Independent and non-independent visual & performing artists from the Northern Territory

Body Weather Laboratory & Dance Performance Unit

Informal live and online seminar with writers - poets, performance writers & theorists

Thomson in *The Age* praises *Odyssey* copiously for its skill and humour but also for the way it captures “a complex dual identity.” She also sees the work as providing “an individual story that situates what we might have thought of as a minority group firmly within the mainstream of our complex national identity.” Says Litras, “As a nation, we’re now prepared to hear these stories…. There’s a generational change which is leaving behind the Australia Pauline Hanson has been trying to recapture.” He’s hoping the second generation Greek community embraces the show—and brings their parents along.

*Odyssey* is one of over 200 arts events taking place in Sydney and across NSW for Carnivale Multicultural Arts Festival, September 11 – October 4. For more information and the complete program freecall 1800 064 534 or email carnivale@carnivale.com.au

**PACT & Nikki Heywood, no place, like home**

The original version of *no place, like home* appeared in PACF’s innovative *The Dark Room* trilogy in 1998. Directed by PACF performers and directed by Nikki Heywood (*Burn Sonata*), *no place, like home* has been expanded into a full length performance, doubtless going off in altogether new directions while retaining the intensity, humour and fearlessness of the child’s utterly focused, wildly distracted and fantasized vision of everyday objects each other that made the show such a powerful experience. PACT, 107 Railway Parade, Erskineville, Sydney. August 6 – 22. Tel 9550 2744

**Performing the Unnameable at the Melbourne Writer’s Festival**


Sunday, August 22 6pm The Bagging Room, The CUB Malthouse, 113 Stuart St, Southbank.

**Urban Theatre Projects, The Quarry**

A new work from a potent creative team working a citizen scenario and with more than an opinion or two. As UTP tell it: “Two buffoons are cranking up their karaoke machine, fondly reliving the glorious highlights of their wonderful show, *The Twentieth Century* (1,000 Great Moments to Perform in the Privacy of Your Own Home).” Embracing Mandela. Sharing a joke with Stalin. Taking a stroll with Neil Armstrong. A private moment for the camera. Welcome to Transnautialia, a (fantasy) world without borders, without conflict, freed of the chains of history, where all difference is accepted and celebrated.” “Interrogating notions of civilisation, culture, and globalization...and swarming a few millennium bugs along the way”, *The Quarry* is a collaboration between writer Merlinda Bobis, directors Nigel Kellywar and John Baylis, and performers Rolando Ramos and Xu Fengshao. Sound and images by Niki Wishart. The Performance Space with new, comfortable seating. September 9 - 26, Wed - Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm. Bookings tel 9698 7235. Urban Theatre Projects Tel 9707 2111

**PLAYWORKS**

women performance writers network

is pleased to present in August-September:

**August 21-22**

**Riffing on Language**

A workshop with Christine Evans (*My Vicious Angel*), exploring the use of soundscapes, ‘found conversations’, rhythmic patterning and harmonic tension as sources and structuring devices in writing for performance.

**August 27-29**

**Rehearsal Readings**

Three plays by young women writers: Nicole Kurkjian (Little Red Chickens), Angela Costi (*Spoken Silver*), Claire Bourke (*Monstre Montgomber*). In collaboration with PACT Youth Theatre.

**September 4**

“1.55pm and Bloody Hungry...”

Six writers, six five minute plays.
New work by Noelle Jaracewicz, Sarah Brill, Cathy Craigie, Katherine Thomson, Heather Grace Jones and Merinda Bobis at the Spring Writers Festival.

**September 11-12**

**Write Out!**

A weekend of panels, forums, discussion and practical workshops for new and emerging writers interested in writing for theatre and performance.
In collaboration with Parramatta Riverside Theatre, Urban Theatre Projects and Carnivale.

All these events will take place in Sydney. Contact Playworks for further information. PO Box A216, Sydney South, NSW 1225
Tel 02 9264 8414 Fax 02 9264 8449
Email: playwrights@ozemail.com.au

**Unnameable: An anthology of Australian Performance Texts**


1800 064 534

**PACT Youth Theatre**

Produced by Urban Theatre Projects.

**The Quarry**

Roslyn Oades, Meira Hunt, Glitz Dies!

“Inspired by the aftermath of Princess Di’s death, this 2 woman show comprises TV vignettes linked by news of a pop icon’s death.” Originally part of Open 98 and the New World Festival, *Gilt Dies* has been developed into a full length work with the assistance of The Performance Space’s Emerging Artists in Residence Program. Creator-performers Oades and Hunt use text, puppetry, movement and music to explore public obsession with celebrities. Original music by TJ Eckleberg sung on stage by Angela Morosin with musician Didi Mudigo. Watch *Gilt Dies* evolve—see the work-in-progress showing on Sunday, October 3, 5pm (free admission) and then the complete performance November 17 - 21, both at The Performance Space, Sydney.

**B-Grade Performance 2: Schlock Tactics**

Gravity Feeder, solo artist and bag snatcher (in his recent antistatic incarnation), Jeff Stein curates a welcome season from the outer limits and the up and coming of the Sydney performance scene. It’ll be good to see the return to TPS of well-travelled hip-hopper Hot Banana Morgan performing solo and with Metalass’s ‘Breath, the always welcome and hugely talented Katia Molina (with friends); plus a lineup that includes notables Erth, Sam James, Gail Priest, Frumph, Martin Ng, Rose Turtle, Archie Talbot, Extra-Bimbo and Stein himself with Veren Grigorov. Mysterious others evoking an evening in the moss pin: Peled Hearts, Mensuration Sisters and Strangely Brown. The Performance Space, Sydney, August 12 - 15, 8pm. $8/night. Bookings 9698 7235

**Perfoming Lines Presents the National Tour of Melbourne Workers’ Theatre’s Award Winning**

“One of the year’s best plays.”

“a confronting and riveting sleight of hand; cutting together four writers’ scripts loaded with facts and metaphors of social disintegration into two close-to-seamless acts. Six actors play 19 characters in as many scenes with a maturity beyond their years — nonetheless older than 35 — under Julian Meyrick’s unsentimental but compassionate direction...an absolutely must-see drama.”

The Australian

**SUIT Christos Tsokis • MONEY Patricia Cornelius**

**DREAMTOWN Melissa Reeves • TRASH Andrew Bovell • REQUIEM Inne Vela**

Directed by Julian Meyrick

And performed by David Adamsom Tony Briggs, Daniela Farnn cuc Eugenia Fragos, Bruce Morgan, Mana Theodorakos. Ad supported by Adam Merange and Nick Tsavros

**Melbourne**

**Aug 10-14**

**Trades Hall, Cur Uggio & Victoria Sts, Carlton**

**Tues Pre-Show - 7.30pm**

**Tues Fri 8pm, Sat 7.30pm & Fri 9.30pm**

**Fees: $25/$20/$15**

**Friends of MWT Under 26, Students $15**

**BOOK 9517 8284**

**Adelaide**

**Aug 17-21**

**Adelaide Festival Centre, 99 Hoe Street**

**Tues-Sat 7.30pm**

**$35/$30/$25**

**Friends of MWT Under 26, Students $20**

**BOOK 5165318**

**Sydney**

**Aug 24-Sept 5**

**Belvoir Street Theatre**

**Tues Pre-Show 24th - $25/$20/$15**

**Tues Sat 8pm, Sat 2.30pm & Sun 5pm**

**Fees: $77/$71/$65**

**Under 26, Students $52**

**BOOK 9699 3444**

**Realtime 32—August • September 1999**

**Performance priorities**

New works and events in Sydney and Melbourne

Andreas Litras’ bilingual solo work *Odyssey* premiered at Hobart’s Estia Greek Festival last year and went on to enjoy unanimous critical success at the Melbourne Festival last October. Interlinked with his personal view of post-war Australia is his work *Metinika* (Little People, Tasmania). Helen Andreas directed the work. Design by Constantine Andreas Litaras with Brian Tuthill who appeared last year and went on to enjoy the Festival last October. Interlinked with his own ace-epic of festival last year and went on to enjoy the Festival last October. Interlinked with his own ace-epic of

Andreas Litaras*’ bilingual solo work *Odyssey* premiered at Hobart’s Estia Greek Festival last year and went on to enjoy unanimous critical success at the Melbourne Festival last October. Interlinked with his personal view of post-war Australia is his work *Metinika* (Little People, Tasmania). Helen Andreas directed the work. Design by Constantine Andreas Litaras with Brian Tuthill who appeared last year and went on to enjoy the Festival last October. Interlinked with his own ace-epic of festival last year and went on to enjoy the Festival last October. Interlinked with his own ace-epic of
Queerly constrained

Stephen Armstrong finds CAB/SAV II occasionally heady, but not full-bodied

In recent years, Brisbane's been long on shows. Diverse events have been memorably programmed by Metro Arts, Koorna Jadda, Renegade, the brilliant if defunct Crab Room, Cherry Herring, Zoo, LIVID and more. Director Lucinda Shaw marks the territory of CAB/SAV II as "a group of queer-aligned performing artists into difference, making unconstrained theatre that celebrates full humanity and explores transnond sexuality."

In the context of what else is around, this sense of unconstrained difference just never materialised—even if the final triptych was worth the wait.

The Lisa O'Neill choreographed Lino Cats, performed by Caroline Duphy and Christina Koch, opened the show beneath the projection of Lucinda Haw's tidal Shells. It's a full piece, seemingly crammed into a finite stage belying the complexity of the subject matter and giving it hardly any space to breathe. Butcher's Window accompanied, and it seemed blunt and incomplete—an evident lack of competition, Lino Cats was well performed but too long, or perhaps not long enough, to reinforce and work in themes.

Beneath a projection of Leunice Haw's tidal Shells, Jennifer Newman-Preston, accompanied by Sills, performed a charming lament of longing and leaving from her Highways And Hamvoors, but was poorly positioned in the middle of a set. Duphy was followed by the Babel-esque confusion of Untitled Spoken Word by poetess (sic) Jess Godfrey whose energised performance, was full of self-ob sessing verse (self/identification/selfrepresentation/self) and included a memorable moment of remit with her own projected image.

The second half momentarily stalled with Remembering Evie, a terminal film memory by Kris Knoen, but was finally hot-wired by Lucinda Shaw performing "Everywhere I Go Someone's Reading Poetry." Sharp, witty, monumentally present, Shaw evokes the insouciance of art and its paradoxical capacity for banality and pain was a much needed creative call to arms. The tragi-comic fable of poet hero Joey Stefano (sex, drugs, sex, love, loss, drugs, death) in Psycho: The Rapist #2: Joey Stefano introduced a welcome queer phic. Conceived and performed by Brian Lucas, this is the second in a series of 3 weeks by an accomplished storyteller whose body is as eloquent as his clever use of prologue, snatch-narrative and sound-bite.

CABS/SAV II concluded with Lisa O'Neill's powerful Only Nights In Strathcliff performed with intensity by O'Neill and Caroline Duphy (with a soundtrack by Tom Wains, Beck and poweredmad). Ritual, and the ritual of performance itself, is at the heart of O'Neill's work. She and Duphy perform like giants behind miniature picture frames, isolated and out of reach of each other's screams, playing out rites of desperation and arousal to escape the rites of emotional atrophy. In Only Nights In Strathcliff performance and conceptual intelligence come together—O'Neill's choreography lures, suspends, creeps and catapults.

CAB/SAV II promised queer concentration but

A plentitude of Cinderellas

Eleanor Brickhill digs in the ashes for Young Woman Glass Soul

Two long-legged bodies lie, hips curving under dappled light, rolling gently together; a face appears, up high to the side, like a phantom, disembodied and peculiar. It takes a while before I realise that this man, Joseph Staranay, is producing most of the overpowering, long resonant drone and harmonics we hear. It goes on and on, the dancers' soft movements rippling underneath like snakes at the mercy of an almost imperceptible sound. Young Woman Glass Soul is a work of contrasts; piercing, immediate imagery alongside movement material that seems stuck resolutely in some other mindspace, loaded and unrecognised. Even so, the dancers, Georgia Carter and Jennifer Newman-Preston, move well together with meticulous grace and an unforced unity of stature and timing. But because there is such polish and completeness in the production you get the sense that there is nowhere else for this work to go, as if it is. It's a full piece, seemingly crammed into a finite stage beying the complexity of the subject matter and giving it hardly any space to breathe.

A multitude of Cinderella stories, from ancient Brazilian to comic Disney, have been researched and pored-over for this production. Newman-Preston wants to unearth the richness of pagan symbolism where ashes stand for cleanliness and material desire. A well-edited collection of these stories and drawings would be perfect for audiences to take home.

The most beautiful of all images depicts the fairy godmother, with her small white maskfae and beckoning arm, shraddled in a dark blue cape of sleep, tall and hovering over the sleeping Cinderella. Simple puppet brings an unashamedly magical reality to the character. Outside in the foyer, there are drawings by Vinn Pitcher on the wall—seen as slides in the work itself—and texts of some of the different Cinderella stories giving a stability and depth to the performance. There may be more, possibly S50, all versions of the same story: a woman's search for strength and inner wisdom. The illustrations seem comic sometimes, trying to incorporate both the spiritual richness of the pagan cultures and our own mass market mentality and material desires. A well-edited collection of these stories and drawings would be perfect for audiences to take home.

Young Woman Glass Soul, choreography Jennifer Newman-Preston, music Alexander Nettelbeck, performers Georgia Carter & Jennifer Newman-Preston, vocal harmonics Joseph Staranay, word Victoria Dicege, lighting Tim Preston, images Vinn Pitcher, projections Tim Grunzy, videographer Jo Griffin, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney, July 1 - 10

The conscious rejection of format, the allusion to and rejection of cabaret, caused its own problems of flagging energy, restless under-anticipation, no sense of celebration or commentary and problems with set ups which we note that CABaret attitude might have subdued with fun and SAVVY.

CAB/SAV II, a season of short works for the 1999 Pride Festival, Director Lucinda Shaw, Metro Arts Theatre, June 30 - July 3.

Helen Herbertson is a Brisbane-based writer and General Manager of the Queensland Theatre Company.

Helen Herbertson, Trevor Patrick, Delirium Jeff Buxby

Helen Herbertson's new dance theatre work, Delirium explores the schism between the worlds of sleep and waking. "The disciplines of dance, improvisation, theatre, music, visual arts and film inform Herbertson's work. However the language she creates", says her press release, "is something quite unlike any of the original stimuli. It's a personal approach, deeply embedded conceptually in an emotional and physical world and brought to the surface via a delicate interaction and collaboration with several other artists." In this case the collaborating team includes some of the best in the country—performer Trevor Patrick, writer-director Jenny Kemp, optical illusionist Ben Cobham and composer Liviu Rusco.

Experience Delirium at the National Theatre, St Kilda, August 19 - 27.

new dance theatre work from Helen Herbertson in collaboration with Jenny Kemp • Trevor Patrick • Ben Cobham • Simon Barley • Liviu Rusco • Bluebottle National Theatre cnr Carlisle and Barkly streets St Kilda • Thurs 19 - Sat 21, Wed 25 - Fri 27 August, 8:00pm 6 shows only $15/$23 • bookings 9525 4611

Steve Armstrong is a Brisbane-based writer and General Manager of the Queensland Theatre Company.
**Future multiplicities**

RT previews the widely anticipated Third Asia-Pacific Triennial

In a relatively short time the Asia-Pacific Triennial has established Australia's prime contemporary art events and the Queensland Art Gallery as an important site for exhibition, research and collection of the art of Asia and the Pacific. The third Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT3) opens September 9 with a celebratory program of events over five days. The exhibition runs until January 2000.

Consultation and research on APT3 over the past year has involved 130 international and Australian curators, writers and scholars in the selection of over 75 artists from the region. For the first time, APT3 will include artists from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Pacific Islands of Vanuatu, Futuna and Niue.

The globally mobile are also well represented — "born Wimbledon, lives and works in Karachi"; "born Singapore lives and works in Sydney"; "lives and works in Paris, France, New York."

Jun-Jieh Wang, I want my own Urlaub.

The media multiplicity we've come to expect is here in profusion—photography, video, CD-ROM, internet, painting, textiles, ceramics, sculpture, installation and performance. And yes, many works offer opportunities for audience interaction.

Engagement with Tasmanian artist Karen Casey’s Water Chamber, for instance, evokes "the comfort that children find in cubby houses, teenagers seek out in darkened bars and philosophers use to find in the inner recesses of caves—a kind of 'walk-in' art." Casey is among the strong representation of Australian artists at APT3. Others are Gordon Bennett, Michael Nelson Jagiara, members of the Utopia Collective, Guan Wei, Tim Johnson and Helga Groes.

Senior curators for APT3 are Dr Caroline Turner (Turner Asia Pacific, Melbourne), Julie Ewington (Southeast Asia), Dr Michael Brand (South Asia), Margo Neale (Pacific & Australia) with Tim Morell (New Zealand) and Doug Hall ("Crossing Borders"). The First APT took as its theme "Tradition and Change" (Can anything be done to stop the contiguous spread of these universalising themes? Perhaps some more lateral ones? — "Do Androuts Dream of Electric Sheep"? (Philip K. Dick) — might do the trick). The curators see this year’s theme "Beyond the Future" as "returning full circle to issues raised in the first (set) to do with "the transition from tradition and the past in contemporary art and society." A futurological conference will be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre (10-12 September) and features over 50 international and Australian speakers. The event includes daily performances and talks by artists and curators.

On the digital media front, collaborations and interdisciplinary approaches abound—visual arts and music, popular culture, screen culture and new technology. In partnership with Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (MAAP99, see page 24), the Virtual Triennial (www.apt3.com) will showcase work by artists from the region who use the internet in the creation and presentation of their work. Setting up the Virtual Triennial has involved extensive partnerships, international curatorial and inter-cultural collaborations as well as a raft of local sponsorships including QANTM, Apple and the Sydney Organising Committee of the Olympic Games Art Festivals Program. Significantly, the Virtual Triennial has been marketed as a "a "virtual" of Online Australia, a Commonwealth Government initiative of the National Office for the Information Economy. By discussions by artists has become a very popular part of the experience at contemporary arts events. In 1997, in Germany, at Documenta IX, impressive Paper Days 100 Days 100 Guests program, each talk was recorded on video in its entirety and transmitted live over the internet. The recordings were also digitally archived so that visitors could recall them on computer terminals in the Documenta Hall at their convenience. Among the later, special features of the APT3 website include profiles on participating artists, an email forum for discussing issues relating to contemporary art and culture, an exhibition of online artworks plus a Kids APT online—interactive artworks and projects developed for children 3-12 years. Access is available to performance and lecture extracts, educational material and conference papers. APT3 information will be available in 8 languages. Access to the Virtual Triennial and video documentation of artists’ talks and performances will also be available in the APT Lounge, a dedicated space in the Gallery where you can catch up on current journals, publications and resources on contemporary Asian and Pacific artists.

Artists in the Virtual Triennial include Wang Jun-Jieh from Taipei, "a pioneer of the use of multimedia in Taiwan whose work crosses the boundaries of what is seen as consumable culture and the role of technology and the media." Wang’s questions to his audience—"Who are the real masters? Who is Who?" — critically echo Microsoft’s "Where do you want to go today?" In Neun Urlaub Wang redefines himself as a travel agent offering his "customers" virtual trips real places. These adventures only exist in cyberspace but the artist will install his travel agency in the Queensland Art Gallery, complete with plastic palm trees and access to his booking service.

Born in South Korea in 1953, Choi Jae-Eun trained included Japanese ikebana from which she developed a range of work from video installations to monumental public sculptures. Her recent interest has focused on the natural world which are not naturally visible to us", says the artist who sees these experiments as "exemplifying chaos and it is this chaos, not the balance and stability of the ecosystem, which is at the core of our universe."

Building on a previous collaboration Australian writer Geremie Barmé and oral historian Sang Ye will install Temporary Apart for APT3. This work consists of two 13 metre high inflatable red Hua Biao (decorated columns) from Wang Fu Jing, the shopping epicentre of Beijing. A mock-museum exhibit illustrates the symbolic history of the Hua Biao, the original marble versions of which have stood in Tianamen Square for 500 years. Video interviews with witnesses to the Hua Biao both in Beijing and Brisbane "construct a dialogue with these silent and silenced icons."

Shi Yong is part of a generation of young artists interpreting the ‘new’ China. He is concerned with "image, marketing, popular culture and the idea of ‘Made in China’". The New Image of Shanghai Today asks viewers to choose from hairstyles and clothes to create the 'look’ for this new China. Shi Yong’s work "operates on the way we see ourselves, and how the media re-presents us.” He questions the kinds of images which might play a role on the stage of international communications and its medium, the internet.

CD-ROM and online projects from the Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, University Malaysia Sarawak, curated by Nonjan Rajah, will also be exhibited. On the performance front, a collaboration which sounds intriguing is the one between Brisbane-based contemporary music ensemble Eulsion, Hera Dono from Jogjakarta and Queensland artist Judith Wright.

In the gallery throughout APT3, there’ll be a curated program of short films, animation and video by contemporary artists and producers from the region.

There’s a strong emphasis in APT3 on art that crosses between traditional and contemporary. The "Beyond the Future" theme takes account of "the concern of many artists in the region today about positively contributing through their creativity to their communities surviving and constructing new futures...For Indigenous peoples in particular, their past is their future. Jonathon Mane-Wheoki has observed for Maori, ‘The future is behind us, the past is in front of us.”

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Venue: Rob S 178

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The lessons of censorship and collaboration

Dean Chan compiles ARX 5 forum artist comments

The Artists' Regional Exchange (ARX) forum in Perth saw protracted discussion of an event which occurred during the first stage of the tripartite ARX 3 project in Singapore in September last year.

Artists who were part of the ARX residency and exchange program spoke about the removal of Zunzi Wong’s work—which a Singaporean curator described as “lampooning” local political leaders—from the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) half an hour before the exhibition opening.

Fiona Wong: “The response to Zunzi’s incident among the 15 ARX artists varied from vigorous to indifferent. Although different ideas from us came up, the criticism of the poor management by SAM was supported by most artists. Interesting issues such as the role of the curator, the relationship between institutions and artists, were brought up. Things changed dramatically however after the residency in Singapore. The Hong Kong media was blamed for reporting the incident in an over-elongated and exaggerated way. This is totally irrelevant to the discussion before. It is quite obvious that the tension is being shifted on purpose so that the sensitive discussion would no longer carry on. I believe that artists are important in improving or changing the art scene of their own country, which in a way reflects its social and political situation. But only if they want to.”

Zunzi Wong: “The incident made a lot of interest for all the parties; and it’s better that my work in SAM made some progress and open up the art scene, or do some help for people’s thinking about what art is or what the limitations are. [But] I think I would [rather] do it in China because China has more problems than in Singapore. As a Chinese, I would rather do something for my country than doing it in Singapore in that sense...I think there are still a lot of things to talk about—not because I am involved in it, but as an example of how an institute, how a gallery, and it always works. These are things that artists should be aware of no matter where you are—and that might happen in Hong Kong or in other places.”

Zunzi Wong in his statement, quoted in ARTAsiaPacific: “Why did the incident happen? Because the Singapore authorities misunderstood what art is. If I knew what would happen before that, would I still do the same thing? No, I’d rather do it in China.”

On artistic collaboration:

Lucas Ihlein: “We went through a process of questioning how we might want to collaborate with one another during this particular residency. We began by thinking we might want to do a single collaboration among us, all fifteen artists. We kept that open as a possibility, laying out different models within which that could work. The difficulty, as I can see, is how we could give our energies to that project, but still retain a sense of individuality and not just become cogs in a big wheel. And who would be driving that wheel anyway? As it turned out, the energy sort of flowed away from that into a more organic way of working where individuals went off and did their own projects. There were some [smaller scale] collaborations that happened. I think that it was interesting to enter that ‘trial’ to see whether the big collaboration could be possible. It’s probably good to remember that rather than to forget it ever happened at all. It was an interesting failure.”

On the ARX 5 project and cultural exchange:

Khiew Huey Chian: “For myself, ARX 5 so far has given me a wonderful opportunity to be part of an amazing experience. Amazingly difficult, amazingly intense, amazingly challenging, and the list could go on. But underlying all this tension appears this familiar and yet not quite familiar sincerity to learn, to understand, to interact at different levels. At least this is how I feel though at times things turn bad due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of certain visual or verbal language. I began to realise I could not set a common standard on them, constantly allowing whatever happened to justify itself through other actions or interactions to take place...”

Cedric Chan: “In these [project] meetings I saw a lot of differences among us. These differences cause a lot of trouble in communication. For example, language, knowledge, interest, habit, maturity, taste, age, cultural differences, personalities, intentions of participating in and curating this project, honesty. These differences allow me to question what is cultural exchange, how it can be like, and why we should have it. I cannot come up with an answer at this moment. It is a good chance for me to think about it.”

Suzann Victor: “I want to reiterate [forum presenter Suzhann Rafael’s point] that to have engaged would be much better than not to have engaged at all.”

Zunzi Wong: “In this kind of cultural exchange program, I find I learn more through contact with each other—by seeing how people react to each other, how as a group we separate and combine together. That is more interesting than the artwork actually.”

More on the incident in Singapore:

Suzann Victor: “With regard to the notion of censorship in Singapore—it being totalitarian, and [other] such entrenched notions of Singapore—I think that as practitioners in the Singapore context, the fact that we were able to make a decision and be expressly visible in that decision to rally around Zunzi as a group of artists, says something beyond such over-simplification of Singapore.”

ARX 5 Forum, WA School of Art, Design and Media, Jul 10; Exhibition, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Jul 10 — Aug 1. ARX 5 is a tripartite residency and exchange project involving artists from Singapore (Suzann Victor, Khiew Huey Chian, Jason Lim, John Low, Jeremy Haib), Hong Kong (Zunzi Wong, Fiona Wong, Cedric Chan, Anthony Leong, John Wong), and Australia (Lucas Ihlein, Destiny Dacun, Joan Grounds, Erin Hefferson, Jane Findlay). The project continues in Hong Kong in October.

This article is a selected transcript of comments by some of the artists who issued statements, and who spoke, at the public forums. There are minor editorial modifications, mainly to do with ‘translating’ from spoken word to printed text. The thematic sub-headings accompanying the comments are of my devising.

Dr Dean Chan is a performance artist and a lecturer in visual art theory at Edith Cowan University.
Artificial blooms: animated stills

Jacqueline Millner sees Robyn Stacey's Blue Narcissus

Within the petals of flowers inhere a complex weave of symbolism: the flower as the incarnation of sexual reproduction, as ostentatious seduction; the flower as arcane repository of powers of healing, poison and extraordinary vision; the flower as benign decoration, as simple celebration of joy de vivre; the flower as secret flesh-eating life form, with the potential for vengeance and evil (as imagined by John Wyndham among many). A complex weave of symbolism which after some time starts to reveal a familiar pattern: the conflation of flowers with archetypes of femininity is after all a persistent theme in western culture.

Perhaps for this reason, let alone on account of their metaphorical and literal over-exposure, flowers as contemporary artistic subject matter are dangerously laden and hence avoided. Their archetypal power was tapped with dubious degrees of success by the central core iconography associated with some 1970s feminist art. More latterly we've witnessed the erotic mise-en-scene of Mapplethorpe and the anthropomorphic fashion shoots of living Penn. However, outside this generally overdetermined language of canonical commodification of beauty, few contemporary artists have met the brief with any conviction.

One exception is Robyn Stacey, whose current exhibition continues her subtle yet striking photographic exploration of flowers in the various stages of their life cycle. Blue Narcissus features a number of older works, including the heady Pollen Patch (1996)—a wall-sized configuration of panels of individual red, yellow and orange poppies in the prime of life—and the nostalgic Everlasting (1996)—the very same poppies captured several months later, now flaccid, sapped of colour and decaying, in an image scratched and handled as if it were a valuable keepsake. Also contextualising the newer works is an intimate version of Great Big Piece of Turf (1997), which Stacey exhibited as a billboard for Perspectives 1997 and which reads like a digital take on traditional Flemish vanitas painting.

Stacey's new works synthesise and extend the themes proposed in these earlier images. For not only are her digital photographs now tending more towards abstraction, but the artist has also brought another technological innovation to her subject, namely the lenticular process. This entails the layering of fragments of an image on several planes by means of a screen comprising an array of microscopic lenses. The result is a fascinating instance of animation that depends on the movement of the viewer.

Stacey's flowers appear to settle with life as one walks by, unfurling from closed buds to reveal a community of living cells, reproducing, growing, pulsating. Radiant (1998) for instance could be a differentiating zygote as much as a glistening corolla, while Surface Tension (1998) recalls a tiny creature being nurtured in the womb.

Stacey's images captivate partly by dint of their homage to traditional aesthetics. These flowers insist on their beauty, and are represented so as to heighten their allure. In works such as Narcissus (1999), Tulip (1998) and Red Rim (1999), the flowers' symmetry, palpi and sensual colour are unremarkingly celebrated. But Stacey embraces the complexity inherent in beauty. She handles the flowers in various stages of decay, once they have shed their petals, retaining nothing more than bristles and desiccated stalks but still graced with poems and compelling. Moreover, Stacey evinces this complexity in that she focuses our attention on the relationship between beauty, life and death, a complexity which is mirrored and underlined in the indeterminate status of the life form she handles their images evoke.

Stacey's images are digitally manipulated, abstracted from the 'natural' to varying but unspecified degrees. While recognisable as flowers, these images may well have been entirely generated by a computer programme (although we are told in Stacey's production notes that many derive from the scanning of actual flowers). The animation of her creations by means of lenticular screens further complicates the distinction between the natural and the artificial, the living and the dead.

Within the sensuous register of the beautiful, Stacey is thus able to invoke some complex questions, about the relationship of representation to lived experience, about the way visuality determines our understanding of the world, and about the increasingly unclear distinction between so-called natural and artificial life-forms. Importantly, Stacey's work raises these questions not in lugubrious or apocalyptic tones, but in a powerfully affirmative mode.

Blue Narcissus, Robyn Stacey, Stills Gallery, Sydney, April 21 - May 22

Falling into silken kisses

Zsuzsanna Soboslay on icons and sensations in works by Marine Ky, Sue Anderson and Stuart James

I remember a poet friend being told by Les Murray that he had used the wrong kind of cow. Murray, the king of the vernacular (if that is not a contradiction) as both writer and occasional teacher is always clear about what constitutes a particular kind of Australianism and what needs to be excluded from it. His exclusions come with ease. I like his nuggets of language, the vapour in his dreams and the very substance of our core).

The rivets remind the eye of how we construct our icons (rather than presuming they are innate or nature-made). There's a serious prank in the mounted laundry-tub full of fish and beer. The juxtaposition of whittiness with this crafting creates space to both accept and reject the identities prescribed. In another country the equivalent might be a cherub fountain, which remains a vibrant (not nostalgic) iconic marker for some immigrant Australian I know here. James' skill leaves a lot of room for the viewer's personal contradictions of memory and background.

Marine Ky's soft-ground etchings salvage her diverse histories (Cambodia, Portugal, France, Australia) in a mix of refinements and urbanities: fine silks and lace, kimonos, crocheted curtains, jeans. The complex surfaces ask questions with a fine translucency, lifters lifted and lifted and lifted across different skins. Where is that left of this silken kiss? I do not ask, where has this been, but where have I been to meet this surface? Where am I, when I have kissed? Does the kiss stay in me or on the inside of my lips? There is my heart fallen in the pit of my womb; there the silk that last summer grew too old. Ky says the fabric and the etching plate also kiss. She likes the ambiguity of which is which.

And beneath the lace, a bodyscape, beneath which the hollow that the lace holds. For me, these yoni echo the hollows carved in rock by Ancehs Kapoor (the hollow in the very substance of our core).

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Black plastic dreams

Diana Klaosen peers into Video-Case

The New Fine Arts Gallery is a small purpose-built exhibition space on the main Hobart campus of the University of Tasmania. With the university's Centre for the Arts/School of Art campus several kilometres away, the gallery is the Arts/School of Art campus several kilometres away, the gallery is interesting but low-key ventures from Art School students and some staff members.

A recent offering, The Video-Case Show, was deliberately more ambitious and consequently more resonant, thanks largely to the enthusiasm of its 3 co-organisers, senior undergraduate students working in a range of media, Fran Bradley, Craig Bell and Nenad Alempijevic. Addressing the smallest size of the NFAG, along with a desire to include as many participants as possible, the 3 came up with the theme of working with—and in and around—the form and medium of that ubiquitous contemporary commodity, the video box; the universally familiar, humble black plastic case itself, in all its ordinariness—something that every potential participant could access as an art material. The resulting show, it was hoped, might be able to capitalise on Alempijevic's international connections and tour to Europe, specifically Belgrade, inspiering in turn some kind of reciprocal, return tour to Australia of European works made as a response to the Tasmanian show.

The egalitarian atmosphere and lateral thinking of the show's theme prompted well over 100 Art School personnel to submit artworks; not only undergraduate and post-grad students, but lecturers and even administrative and support staff with limited previous exhibiting experience. A multi-faceted presentation, the show was densely installed on purpose-built shelving, a colourful and spirited whole that not only had instant visual impact, but quickly seduced the viewer into exploring at length the quirky, witty, individual exhibits. The works explore the usual gamut of personal and political preoccupations, with feminist issues, individual identity and non-violence perhaps the most common themes.

There is much humour, some of it directed at local arts identities and politicians. Simon Payne's fabric piece, Lipeze, with its nod to Mae West and Dali champions freedom of expression.

Johannes Timmer's 'Gorgeous Red Dot' is a clever visual pun: the exterior of the video case covered in Timmers' current idiosyncratic 'organic meets high-tech' imagery—inside the case, the artist simultaneously displays the actual paint-splattered palette used to create the work. The collaborative pseudo-postcard by Kate Duggan, Tiffany Winterbottom and Trevor Smith, Welcome to Tassie, a collaged vision of photograph and fur, claims: 'We have many mudie days around Tassie' (!), while Mangfe, Pat Brassington's inkjet print plus human hair is a disturbing manifestation of the abct.

The view from outside the Palm House through a half open door entices with a world upside down. An inverted green army tent hovers over a straw-stream floor. You enter, drawn by the odours of hay and canvas, by sudden memories of farms and camping, by merging images of agriculture and war—as in the Kozovski country side. You see 2 tents almost filling the small building, their peaks touching their floor, the roof. Jackie Dunn bases close to the ceiling, their form held taut by small sandbags on rope. You peer through their flaps and windows, run a finger across the rough surface, inspect the various slants. Just as the touch of vertigo passes, the floor demands attention and draws you down. It extends the military connection—striped army sheeting and grey ceiling, their form held taut by small sandbags on rope. You peer through their flaps and windows, run a finger across the rough surface, inspect the various slants. Just as the touch of vertigo passes, the floor demands attention and draws you down. It extends the military connection—striped army sheeting and grey ceiling, their form held taut by small sandbags on rope. You peer through their flaps and windows, run a finger across the rough surface, inspect the various slants. Just as the touch of vertigo passes, the floor demands attention and draws you down. It extends the military connection—striped army sheeting and grey ceiling, their form held taut by small sandbags on rope. You peer through their flaps and windows, run a finger across the rough surface, inspect the various slants. Just as the touch of vertigo passes, the floor demands attention and draws you down. It extends the military connection—striped army sheeting and grey ceiling, their form held taut by small sandbags on rope.

As you enter the intimate gallery space of Room 35 at the Gite Wellese Gallery, Oxford Street Sydney, a female voice backed by a jumpy little jingle, asks: 'How do I look?' Let's see: inside are rows of industrially made veneer furniture, of flatpack, of inanimate objects. You are seduced into exploring at length the kind of artistic response to marketing we like to see—imaginatively lateral, easy enough to make you reach for the metaphorical wallet and disturbing enough to make you worry why. At one end of Room 35 is clear evidence of the artists' business plan—a stack of small boxes, orders for 'pubic wallpaper' and 'smile enhancers'—all wrapped up and ready to go.

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Where: Exhibition gallery
900 South Terrace, Adelaide

Curator: Kate Dunne

Suzanne Buljan and Prudence Murphy were awarded the 1999 Mikhail Marketing Grant and this collaboration is just the kind of artistic response to marketing we like to see—imaginatively lateral, easy enough to make you reach for the metaphorical wallet and disturbing enough to make you worry why. At one end of Room 35 is clear evidence of the artists' business plan—a stack of small boxes, orders for 'pubic wallpaper' and 'smile enhancers'—all wrapped up and ready to go.

The show's travel plans are going ahead, though the hostilities in Belgrade necessitated a modified itinerary. Interest has been expressed from several art colleges across Europe—Scandinavia in particular. Whatever form the tour—and any reciprocal European-initiated venture—eventually takes, it will have been an imaginative and idealistic undertaking, skilfully realised.

The Video-Case Show, The New Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay, May 1999.

Prudence Murphy & Suzanne Buljan Finger Ticklers

The metaphorical wallet and disturbing enough to make you worry why. At one end of Room 35 is clear evidence of the artists' business plan—a stack of small boxes, orders for 'pubic wallpaper' and 'smile enhancers'—all wrapped up and ready to go.

Suspension

continued from page 43

dexterous, performance requires extreme musicality, or it would become pointlessly showy. In the right hands it lives, with its expressiveness and allusions to earlier forms.

Isang Yun was Korea's major composer, a Taeo humanitarian caught up in his country's politics, his imprisonment affecting his musical sensibility. His work attempts to meld traditional Korean forms and the forms of his adopted Europe. His solo violin work Kontraste, written at 79 in 1987, begins with a slow pizzicato marked mft —place the string as hard as you can withyour thumb and shape it. Those notes suggest the monk's wooden goin, demanding order. The extended pizzicato introduction evokes players slowing down, opening onto a stage. When the bass line is introduced it evokes the drone of religious chant. The music unfold in dramatic gestures and melodic beginnings punctuated by dramatic trills. Every expressve nuance is plucked out of the violin, but not in an overly Romantic way. The gestures have an Eastern feel. Pizzicati return periodically to give tone. The moody pensiveness of the work suggests it's the composer's memory, ending with a single, plucked, full stop.

Whittington rejoined Michael for the final work, Mauricio Kagel's Klängevolle (Wolf Notes) of 1978-9. Based in Germany, Argentinian Kagel is a leader in contemporary music, film, and especially, music theatre genres. The violin must carry a 'hotel moto, a chunk of chromaticism that smooths its bridge and reduces both tonal range and loudness. The whole piece is 'muted', the pianista applying the soft-pedal throughout and keeping the lid closed. From within this confine the music emerges with a remote, slightly industrial feel, and its sober sensibility creates a mood of oppressive distance.

McMichael and Whittington worked well together. This recital covered an extraordinary musical range and showcased McMichael's technique and her grasp of contemporary form and intent.


Chris Reid is an educational administrator and freelance writer.

Pristine Luxury & Suzanne Buljan Finger Ticklers

The metaphorical wallet and disturbing enough to make you worry why. At one end of Room 35 is clear evidence of the artists' business plan—a stack of small boxes, orders for 'pubic wallpaper' and 'smile enhancers'—all wrapped up and ready to go.

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'Stairway to Heaven' by Whittington
New music on the road

Melbourne's New Lighthouse Ensemble on a 7 city tour: Keith Gallash talks with artistic director and composer Martin Mackerras

In a statement of his philosophy, New Lighthouse Ensemble director Martin Mackerras (recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship that took him to New York's Juilliard School of Music in 1996) writes of the "specific intent to keep Lightening new music uncluttered through the creation of innovative music and energetic, exciting performance." He's not alone in this in a rapidly broadening and innovative new music scene. The impetus to theatricalise music performance has accelerated over recent years (and has a provocative international history reaching back to the 1920s). Indeed it is no mere dressing up or illustrating of a composer's work but a collaboration across artforms yielding installation and/or performance (eg Elision, Aplith Events) indicative of the emergence of hybrids that are attracting new audiences. Mackerras has incorporated poetry into part of the ensemble's Playing Australia tour (in the Sydney and Melbourne concerts Helen Morse intones Emily Dickinson's 'As All the Heavens Were a Bell' to a Mackerras composition of the same name). In a telephone interview, Mackerras says he's been working with sound designer Michael Armstrong, "disembodying" and "grounding" of the music for performance in the larger venues in the tour. Otherwise, he says, "the effect will be subtle, involving light and even a touch of dry ice. "The Dickinson poem suggests worlds within and I want to take my listeners there too." I'm a great lover of popular culture, I'm involved in it, and I'll use it in performing avant garde works."

He writes that he's as interested "in the space music occupies in the social consciousness" as in the spatial arrangements in which audiences engage with new music. The social issue and spiritual responsibility is not always consistently audible from the musical avant garde these days (with some notable exceptions like David Young's Aplith Events). Mackerras writes, "One of the key roles of new music is to offer an alternative to the dominance of the consumerist values that determine so much of today's music programming. New forms and approaches to artful expression are about the advancement of culture; I believe they provide us with the opportunity to more deeply explore dimensions of Australian spirituality and identity."

In a program largely made up of premières, 8 Australian composers have been invited to respond with quite short works for Seven Songs from a journey, poems by Judith Wright. The composers are James Wilkinson, Newton Armstrong, Adam Yee, Amelia Barden, Kate Neal, Adrian Sherriff, Ben Marks and Peter Humbie. "These are people I know, friends, all interesting composers who come from very different places in music. Some are "composer-composers", like Adam Sherriff and Ben Marks; Amelia Barden comes from an electronic background; Peter Humbie and James Wilkinson from improvisation. So the works are in a variety of styles and approaches. They're quite short—miniatures really—and the poems that inspired them are short. I heard the poems on Radio National's Poets read beautifully by Helen Morse, but this was followed by sung versions. My response was, "Leave the poetry alone." As well I'd been inspired by Barrie Kosky's Voice Jam & Videotape (RealTime 24, "In the mix", page 46) where he'd tried different combinations of composer-filmmaker collaborations. One of the seven songs for a Journey which even I like even the Weight poems, but his work is a valid response nonetheless."

Mackerras' own full length works Sulphurous Dreamscape and Obscure Lunar Conundrum and As All the Heavens Were a Bell are also featured. In Sydney and Melbourne only, his 30 minute solo piano work The Waves will be premiered by Michael Kieran Harvey. "Michael was a lecturer when I was at the VCA and was interested in my early pieces and in doing something by me. I went to the US where I concentrated on the clarinet and didn't compose for 2 years. To get a commission from Michael through the Music Fund of the Australian Council was a great way to launch back into composing. It's a big piece." A second coming in Hobart

Filomena Coppola takes a taxi to Rapture

Constantine Koulias has taken the successful Angharad Wynne-Jones Sonic Taxi concept and adapted contemporary opera, ensuring the production is distinctly HIS. Wynne-Jones with her company Cake Eaton Productions Sydney performed in Sea and Air in 1991. During HIS's Rapture performance audience members are transported and driven through Sea and Air. This is a visual reference to the religious notion of "the Rapture" (visions of Rem's St Theresa in Ecstasy), the audience is physically transported and places their faith not in religion but in HIS. Rapture explores the notion of the second coming of Christ within the context of the approach of the apocalyptic. It is a necessarily linear opera, staged over three sites in and around the Hobart business district. The second and third sites, a shed and a disused warehouse, have a very distinct and comfortable HIS feel. Beautiful installations of set and performers evoke the major warehouse productions which have become HIS's trademark. A sizeable cast, including the Rapture chorus, provides strong vocal performances which at these 2 sites evoke a gospel feel.

At the first venue HIS presents the audience with an exciting performance which is dynamic in its use and transformation of space. The audience experience is overlaid by the smell of chlorine and contrasted by a small swimming pool. Ushered in to seats along the length of the pool, we watch a man swimming breaststroke lengths, back and forth, back and forth; it is not easy for you. We hear his erratic breathing and the splash of the water. At one end of the pool his wife, reclining on a banana lounge, reads her book. Tea is steeping in a pot and she is waiting for him to join her. He wants to discuss his thoughts on religion and the second coming whilst continuing his laps. She, the wife, half listens, reads her book, and at one point walks to the other side of the room to the dresser and picks up a mirror. What was once a small set has become a scenic context; he could be mowing the lawn or watching the sport on TV and she in the kitchen painting her nails.

The transformation of the swimming pool site into a domestic theatre space represents the continuation and development of HIS and the demands they place on their audience. However, the audience does remain within the confines of the "veil" of the theatre production. It would have been interesting if the house has been making them an integral part of the performance, thereby encouraging them to interact with the specificity of each site. HIS have consistently crossed boundaries, combining opera, theatre, music and installation to present a performance which challenges traditional art forms. Rapture, brings together a talented group of individuals who have produced a work distinctly HIS and refreshingly innovative.

Rapture—A Sonic Taxi Performance, HIS Experimental Theatre Troupe, devised by Mary Burgess & Constantine Koulias, performers Colin Davey, Penelope Bruce, Andrew Short, Pete Davis, Dela Potton, Matt Skinner, Callum Doyle-Scott, Chona Allston Farrow, Caroline Kirk, Karissa Lane, Kathleen Stephen, Cleve Schupf, Darren Sangwiel, Zyka Kamalvez, direction from Salamanca Place, Hobart, May 16 - 18...
Chris Reid treasures rare performances of new music by Stephen Whittington and Anna McMichael in Adelaide

Quality performances of music by world-class contemporary composers are rare in Australia and especially in Adelaide. Two extraordinary recitals at the Performing Arts Technology Unit in the University of Adelaide signal a new era. The 30 seat PATU Studio, with muted lights, made sound baffles scudding under a white ceiling, and the city nightscape beyond the wide fifth floor window, is a perfect setting for intimate, thoughtful new music.

Morton Feldman's music probably wouldn't benefit from frequent hearing, its rarity making it more precious. On May 31 PATU Director Stephen Whittington gave us New York composer Feldman's For Bunita Marcus, a late work, written in 1985, 3 years before the composer's death at 62. The extended length of Feldman's last works placed new demands on the audience. He governed the performer with more conventional notation rather than his earlier graphic scores. For Bunita Marcus is formidable notation, requiring great concentration and technical facility of the performer over its 2 hours. Comprising brief, simple motifs, played pianissimo, it is remarkable that it succeeded in accomplished hands like Whittington's. Its is sparse music, the spaces between the notes, as they say, as important as the notes themselves. These interstices parallel earlier graphic scores.

Work written in 1985, it more precious. On May 31 PATU Director Whittington gave us Feldman's late works placed new demands on the performer. The sustain pedal is used virtually throughout, capturing the most exact intonation of each note. There is a grid of time signatures—3/8, 5/16, 2/2—the musical figures crossing bar lines. This asymmetry poses immense difficulties for the pianist, who must continuously count semi-quavers to keep the metre. The sustain pedal is used virtually throughout, capturing the softest intonation of the piano. Twice, after a key is silently depressed, the pedal is lifted momentarily, then re-engaged to emit the sound. Often a key is depressed only half way and then, when the note is required, pushed home, defeating the piano's natural percussiveness. Sounds do not commence but seem always to have existed.

In the absence of conventional melodic or dynamic development, the music is given form by subtle changes, in harmonics, metre, perhaps a shift in octave. Frequently repeated motifs feel different every time, each unique, like drifting clouds gently changing shape in an azure sky. They are iconic rather than narrative. And as in classical Japanese forms, the inness of each note is revealed.

But the form is subsidiary to the music itself. Much contemporary music (and art) emphasises form over aesthetics. Feldman's music is beautiful, sublime, even if emotive closure is suspended. "Time is measured not by the numerals on a clock face but by the incidence of our apprehended possibilities." (John Berger G, 1972). The 'moment' elongates to span the work's 2-hour duration. Awareness is heightened. The paradoxical notion of eternity in a moment is understood, even attained.

On July 2 Adelaide-born European resident, Anna McMichael, gave a dazzling account of new musical works from 4 major 20th century composers. A specialist in contemporary repertoire, McMichael's interests and virtuosity have firmly established her in the European new music scene. Whittington assigned McMichael for Erik Satie's only work for piano & violin, Things seen from the right and left (without glass) of 1914, its 3 movements (Choral Hymnody, Fugue a Tatons (the Groping Fugue) and Fantasie Musculaire) the work derives from the composer's mid-career, middle-aged attempts to learn counterpoint. These humorous little pieces betray a counterpoint, and also take 20th century modernism a step further. Thematic developments remain unresolved, breaking off abruptly, sometimes mockingly, perhaps with a quirky gesture.

Salvatore Sciarrino's absorbing Six Caprices of 1976 reveals a distinct realm in contemporary repertoire. This half-hour solo violin work requires Paganini-like virtuosity to produce swirling cascades of glissandi and harmonics, slurs running fast the length of the violin's neck. Often the bow's touch is so light and fast the violin sounds like a braying, thieving flute. Though lacking key signatures, the music sometimes moves towards melodic resolution then darts away. Fully notated hemi- and demi-semiquavers map the impossible score.

Sciarrino has developed a language, ethereal and impressionistic. If more conventional music is like a passing flock of birds, Sciarrino's is the dizzy dance of a cloud of brilliant butterflies, each a speck of massless colour, the whole moving forward imperceptibly, so dense it masks each individual's apparently directionless progress. At the edge of continued on page 41

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- For its new approaches to arts writing
- For its rational perspective
- For its growing international coverage
- For its focus on emerging artists and their work
- Because it appeals to my intelligence
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- It tickles my hybrid sensibilities
- I like the idea of looking at artforms in the context of others
- To be first with the latest on the new
- Because it gives me ideas
- Other...

2. Do you see yourself as...
- a rationalist with an affection for pavement press?
- an old leftie with a finger on the pulse?
- a Struggling creative type
- a self-employed under 25 with an ear to the ground?
- a fashionista...
- a boho chic...
- a working parent?
- a engineer...
- a professional...
- a popper...
- an armchair critic...
- A Lifestyle liftout?
- YES
- NO

3. How many of the following acronyms can you decode?
- ANAT
- ASCA
- CASA
- EAF
- ANZAC
- IMA
- ISER
- MAAP
- RSCPA
- MRC
- NOE
- PICA
- SGGHH
- TPF
- AFC
- All
- Some
- None

4. Please tick one. Are you...
- A working parent?
- An old leftie with a finger on the pulse?
- An armchair critic?
- A self-employed under 25 with an ear to the ground?
- Other...

5. Do you wish you had a better handle on theory?
- Yes
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- 1-1 1/2 hour
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- 2 hours

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- In terms of content
- In terms of design

23. Can you suggest improvements?
- YES
- NO

24. Do you print it out to read?
- Yes
- No

25. Where else do you look for arts information on the net?
- ACM (Australian Cultural Network)
- Serious commercial search engines
- Other...

26. Are you male or female?
- Male
- Female

27. How old are you?
- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

28. What is your postcode?

29. Your occupation(s)?

30. Are you currently:
- Employed full-time
- Student Self-employed
- Employed part-time
- Struggling creative type

31. Income range for last financial year:
- Under $10K
- $10K-$30K
- $30K-$60K
- $60K+$

32. What is your education level?
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Post-graduate

33. Which areas of the arts interest you in particular?

34. Which of these artforms would you like to see more of in RealTime?

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37. How much is work-related? How much for pleasure?
- (hrs) Work
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38. How many magazines do you buy each month?

39. Which artform magazines do you buy
- Visual Art
- Craft
- Theatre
- Film
- Music
- Photography
- Digital arts
- Martial

40. Where else do you go for arts information?
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- TV-Cable
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Online
- Magazines
- Other street papers

41. How many times per month do you attend
- Live performances
- art galleries

42. How often per month do you eat out?
- Yes
- No

43. How many times annually do you travel interstate/overseas for
- arts festivals
- conferences

44. How do you travel interstate?
- Car
- Train
- Plane

45. Where do you stay when you travel interstate?
- Friends
- Hotel
- Motel
- Any others?

46. Do you consume
- Spirits
- Beer
- Quality Waters
- Wine

*Exactly how much is champagne—let's get that sorted out once and for all.

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