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Helen Herbertson: The place where things slip
Festivals: Next Wave, Mardi Gras, Perth
Suspense: Hitchcock at The Performance Space
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- HOBART: HOBART FUNCTION & CONFERENCE CENTRE, ELIZABETH STREET PIER, HOBART 7000
  - Wednesday, 5 April, 9:30-12.30p.m. GST Overview. All.
  - Wednesday, 5 April, 1-2p.m. PAYG. All.
  - Wednesday, 5 April, 2-3p.m. Compliance. All.
- Thursday, 6 April, 9-11a.m. Contracting. Prod, Prod. Managers, Prod. Accountants, Funding Bodies, Lawyers.
  - Thursday, 6 April, 11-12pm, 1-3p.m. Production. Prod. Managers, Prod. Accountants, Funding Bodies.
- BRISBANE: COUNTRY COMFORT LUNNINGS HOTEL, 66-76 QUEEN STREET, BRISBANE 4000
  - Saturday, 8 April, 9-10am. GST Overview. All.
  - Friday, 5 May, 9-10am. GST Overview. All.
  - Tuesday, 23 May, 9-10am. GST Overview. All.
  - Wednesday, 10 May, 9:30-12:30. PAYG. All.
- DARWIN: MAC GRAND, GLILIUT AVENUE, THE GARDENS, DARWIN 0800
  - Wednesday, 12 April, 9am-12 midday. GST Overview. All.
  - Wednesday, 12 April, 1-2p.m. PAYG. All.
  - Wednesday, 12 April, 2-4p.m. Compliance. All.
- CARRNS: CARRNS CITY COUNCIL, SPICE STREET, CARRNS 4870
  - Wednesday, 19 April, 9:30-12:30, GST Overview. All.
  - Wednesday, 19 April, 1-2p.m. PAYG. All.
  - Wednesday, 19 April, 2-4p.m. Compliance. All.

Online registration

If you have any queries, please phone toll free 1800 338 430 (or via fax: 02) 9357 3737.
Editorial

This is the short back and sides editorial. Well, it’s short. After an exhilarating Adelaide festival (see pages 19-26) we hit the ground running, straight into hosting and performing in Performing Hitch for the Performance Space (see page 38) and then onto RealTime36 which, miraculously, you see before you. So there’s been no time to sum up, to look at the big arts picture. Instead we give you a photograph. A few months back we were excited to be exhibited in the salon of a well-known Darlinghurst hairdresser, a string of photos (stylishly pegged on 2 wires across the wall) taken by Australian Roslyn Sharp in US hairdressing salons. There’s another featured with the Junk column on page 32. Enough said as we extricate ourself from an intensive festival season and lean back in the barber’s chair. But before we turn up, congratulations to Zane Trow and his team and to the Brisbane City Council for their magnificent investment in the Brisbane Powerhouse Live Arts Centre. At last we have a purpose-designed centre for performance and related innovations in the arts, recognition not only of the significant work long evolving in Brisbane but also around the country. And congratulations too to Robyn Archer for 2 inspiring Adelaide Festivals that will stay with us for years to come and which have set new levels of expectation for the involvement of Australian artists in our international arts festivals. It’s high time the festivals of Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth followed suit. KG & VB

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Cover Image: Marian Drew—from photographs of the Brisbane Powerhouse before construction of the Centre for Live Arts began. “The response to a chosen site and introduced objects is recorded through long exposures with varied light sources.” Exhibition, Brisbane Powerhouse, May 6 - June 20.
Zane Trow lights up Brisbane's Powerhouse

Keith Gallusch

Let’s talk about your vision as Artistic Director of the Powerhouse in terms of the building, and then your program.

When I arrived here almost a year ago what I inherited was massive feasibility reports which had been generated by Brisbane City Council and a consortium called Positive Solutions. The kind of information that had been generated from the arts industry locally here in Brisbane, nationally and, in some cases internationally, identified the need for a medium scale contemporary venue that focussed very much on contemporary culture and performance. That was heartening. The second thing was to realise that Brisbane City Council, whose project the renovation of the building is, had listened and taken that on board. Some of the driving forces in the Council, people who have been driving the renovation of this building, have been involved in community theatre, community arts and in Pauline Peet’s case, physical theatre and circus in Brisbane, for a very long time. They maintained the rage if you know what I mean...

So there’s a real passion there? Yes. Pauline is a senior bureaucrat now but she’s been working away in Brisbane for many years. She was a founder of Street Arts which led to Rock’n’Roll Circus and Arterial, an interesting multimedia group. What I was able to do was to take those hints in the feasibility study and consolidate them around a developing artistic program that would influence...or be influenced by you...like the design of the building. The other great asset, then Project Manager for Council and now General Manager of the Powerhouse, is Chris Bowen, who’s also been working in multicultural arts in Brisbane for a long time. Chris made the strategic decision to move out of the council offices and base the operations of the Powerhouse on the building site. So we’ve actually been sharing our office with the architects. It’s allowed us to have a very close dialogue about the nature of the work that will be performed in the theatre and that has allowed the design to be influenced in a positive way.

So these are very practical things to do with space and flexibility?

Exactly. Things like rigging lights, infrastructure for projections, designer friendly, just simply where the loading docks should not be positioned. Really basic stuff, combined with an understanding that what we’re dealing with here is a contemporary performance space and not a theatre. What we’ve ended up with, as the main space in the building takes on its character, a space that’s not unlike the Merlyn at the Malthouse in feel but larger and more flexible. So this building has retained a lot of its industrial character. There’s no carpet and chrome. We’ve retained the graffiti inside the building that’s accumulated over years of misuse. If something is being built out of concrete, we’ve left it as concrete. So it has a real found aesthetic which the architect Peter Roy talks about a lot. What we’ve done is build a need for structures within it which facilitate the 3 main performance spaces in the main building—a 400-seater, a 200-seater and an open atrium performance space.

So this is a great opportunity to do something that is rarely done in Australia, to establish a performance space from scratch as opposed to a theatre space.

Yes. And I think the program we’ve just launched as well hints at that direction. It says that our focus is the body, not the word...in a sense. There are plenty of arts centres all over Australia that focus on the well-made play, the opera and the ballet. We are not a great icon of culture like the Adelade Festival Centre or the Queensland Performing Arts Trust. We’re not as big. We’re medium scale. We’re dedicated to new work. That led me to defining what we do as live arts, appropriating that term from its use in Europe and defining that as being a very broad church of performance. In the current program, the local second tier theatre company La Boile and later in the year Expressions Dance Company are probably as close to mainstream as we go. That’s where we start and we move to the left from there. And there are other events in the program like Lighttime 27.5° which we’ll do every year. It acknowledges events like Antinatice (Sydney) and Dancers are Space (Perth). It’s within that kind of parameter, an event for independent dancers, for new work each year (see Bonomagi p35).

The diversity of Brisbane’s contemporary culture is spreading across the city. There’s a chance in Brisbane for some considered audience development for contemporary work. What we’re discovering, having just launched the program and having spent some time thinking about marketing strategies, is that there’s an audience here that really want to see this stuff. It’s not a subscriber base. It’s a different kind of audience. It’s younger. There’s an audience here who are staying in Brisbane that 10 years ago might not have left. And there’s a whole range of live arts workers coming back to Brisbane.

And you’re giving the work a focus, giving it a home.

We’re certainly giving a number of things a focus that have existed within the cultural fabric of Brisbane. The Powerhouse and, in 18 months or so, the Empire Building with which the IMA, Rock’n’Roll Circus and Elision are involved, are happening at the right moment. One development has been a physical theatre culture. The other is the vibrant history of community theatre. And the other is emerging technologies.

And how are you handing that at the Powerhouse?

Three ways—initially in collaboration with Multimedia Australia Asia Pacific who are moving their offices to our centre. We see that as an opportunity to work with MAAP closely in terms of introducing a performance aesthetic into the event over a 3-5 year period.

The second area will be strong and developing links with Queensland University of Technology, with their Academy of the Arts. We are working closely with them to look at research and development projects in performance technologies primarily through residencies where we’ll be inviting local, national and international artists into a partnership between the Powerhouse as a public presenter and developer of work and the Academy as a research site. We think in the second year in 2001 we can begin a process that would involve 2 residencies a year with one specifically in new media and another one in dance and/or music.

The Brisbane City Council is incredibly supportive of community access to technology and is driving that harder than other local governments I’ve come across. And we have a state government that keeps talking about innovation, innovation, innovation. Within this is a nexus of research and development and project funding that can assist me. I’m also looking at international sources of funding and partnerships. One that’s fruitful at the moment is our relationship with New Modern: New Territories with Nikki Millican in Glasgow. We’re hoping to develop an exchange program with her not only in dance but also in live arts.

Again through the Brisbane City Council, we’ll be working closely with one of our cultural tenants here, Access Arts, in thinking about technological arts and people with disability. We think we can develop range of projects that speak directly to various disadvantaged groups through that partnership. And again, we would probably use a residency style program to do. ANAT’s event is a good example—for Alchemy (May-June) they’ll be bringing out Mongrel from the UK. While working here at the Powerhouse, Mongrel will interact into the Aboriginal community through the DAR Festival which is run by Brisbane City Council’s Aboriginal Arts officers. They’ll be running workshops in everything from web design to game design to performance with the Murri community here. That sets up a model as to what kind of artists you might invite in. They’d probably be artists a little more left field than normal and you’d be inviting artists in who had an interest both in research and development in performance as well as political activism and community arts development.

There’s a national dimension to your program with the inclusion of William Yang’s Blood Links and Donna Jackson’s Car Maintenance, Explosives & Love.

We’re discovering that what we offer in the larger space is what the Powerhouse is a venue that hasn’t existed in Brisbane before. This flexible medium-scale venue means that a range of performance companies that don’t perform in Brisbane for many years—and some never—now not only have a space that suits their work but also a partner in terms of marketing and aesthetically representing their work.

Quite clearly you want an audience and you’re going to get them in by multiple means.

In the first 3 years we have to establish an audience that likes us and wants to come more than once, an audience that thinks about the Brisbane Powerhouse as another option. We’re in the New Farm area which is constantly developing around us—it’s not quite West End yet in terms of Brisbane culture—but it’s getting there. That’s the beauty of this artform space which is right next to the bar. We can do a range of stuff with the bar, not keep the bar open late. If you’re in Brisbane, you might think about going to the Powerhouse at 10.00 at night as much as you might think of going there at 7.30. That’s important that we create this experience and identity in the city.

The irony of all this, of course, that this is the building and the resource that The Performance Space in Sydney needs. What has amazed me here is the will, particularly of this local government, to do it and to spend the money. In terms of its arts and its relationship with PICA and other contemporary performance spaces across the country, The Performance Space is very important to us here. We’re already talking about ways and means of getting a range of Sydney performance people into Brisbane. There’s a role for us in cultural and political terms to prove we can get the audience, that we can operate at this level, that you can have an arts centre in Australia, similar in scale to the Malthouse or the Wharf, but which is dedicated to this kind of work. That’s the challenge.

For the complete interview visit www.realtime.com/—openly/ Brisbane Powerhouse opening weekend celebrations are on May 6 & 7, 111 Lamington Street, New Farm, tel 07 5254 4518 www.brisbanepowerhouse.org
Next Wave is ready-to-roll

Keith Gallascb

Next Wave is in pre-launch mode. The 2000 festival is to be announced in April for a May season. Artistic Director Campion Decent talks about the kind of program he has created and how.

What drives your festival?

We're dealing with an organisation that's been around since 1985 when it started as a young people's festival. It's been forced over the years to broaden its focus to embrace contemporary artmaking and the whole notion of the young and the emerging artist—these aren't always the same. It's about distilling what we want the organisation to be about, to acknowledge the changing landscape and to just re-focus slightly, not revolutionise. One of the things we want to do is make sure we're capturing a new generation of art-makers and that we're not, to put it bluntly, running the risk of growing old as an organisation. So we've gone on a bit of a hunt in the last 18 months to make sure that we have quite a few unfamiliar names.

Do you have an advisory panel to help you with this detective work?

I'm a firm believer that the very hierarchical model of artistic director on top of a triangular structure choosing every piece of work is not the right way to go any more, particularly when you're working with something as complex and various as youth culture—which is not just one thing. You need to plug into a network of people and what we set up was a curatorial advisory committee from within Victoria but outside of the organisation. It includes Angharad Wynne Jones from Chunky Move, David Chisholm who runs big party events in Melbourne, Timothy O'Dwyer who is a musician, Kate Dow (in the past visual arts coordinator and international events programmer for Next Wave) and Craig Garrett, an editor at Vulture. It's been a fantastic experience working with strongly opinionated people. Our initial work was then handed over to staff coordinators in visual arts, text, performance and digital media, an area we're focusing on.

How extensively?

There are 2 ways we've come at it. One is the creation of digital works. We're showing these in a gallery context, but we're also trying to get them out of the gallery onto the big TV screen in the city on the corner of Swanton and Bourke Streets. We'll also be putting a lot of this work on our redeveloped website. The other way we're working is to enter a partnership that will put the festival on the web, like a net radio station, and that will be updated daily.

Focusing on good sound rather than the difficulty of conveying images online?

That's right. It's an exciting partnership with RMIT and its radio students, and is run in conjunction with the ABC-Coemedia Multi-Media Production Accord. This will take some of the work and the artists to a much larger audience in Victoria and nationally.

What's the focus of your live performance programs?

There's a wide range of formal styles, many with a decentering of the text. There's still a lot of text-based work in Melbourne and a couple of these have been included in the festival—others we felt lacked vigour. So there's circus-based, physical-based works and also Nikki Heywood's Burn Sonata. In the case of Burn Sonata, we're placing the work of more experienced artists next to less experienced, but that's one of the rules of Next Wave, to provide a context and models for artists wanting to work in similar ways.

What's the range of participation in Next Wave?

We're trying to broaden it out to include young people who are not solely from an artistic background, that is they do not define themselves as young arts workers. A project that's active in Victoria is Anglicare Victoria's Teen, for young women who are homeless. Anglicare want their young women to have access to an arts festival and to participate in it. "Can you include us where we can tell our story?" There'll be a performed element based on workshops. We helped them put their grant application together to the Australia Council, which was successful. From the Northern Territory we have Ending Offending—Our Message which predominantly involves Indigenous offenders making largely well-based art work. We're bringing the project to Melbourne with the permission of the NT Correctional Services. The artists are creating new works for Next Wave and with each there'll be an artist's statement. For our participants and audiences this is an important work about art and context. There's about half a dozen of these kinds of work like Tess and Ending Offending—Our Message in Next Wave—every program coordinator has something like that in their area.

Is there an active centre to Next Wave?

The Lounge in Swanton Street will be the site of the festival club. It's easily accessible by public transport. In Lower Town Hall there will be a sound and text program. There's a major partnership with the Victorian Arts Centre, including one of the Black Box—the former Performing Arts Museum. And there'll be activity radiating out from the city through the remarkable network of Melbourne galleries. There's a small regional program but we can reach more people through the net.

What's the strength of Next Wave from your point of view?

Because we're not focused on a single art form or on community arts alone we have an opportunity to throw works together and out of that create a real dialogue.

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Burn Sonata

"Burn Sonata is almost unbearably good"

Jill Sykes, Sydney Morning Herald

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Director: Nikki Heywood
Designer: John Levey
Music: Garry Bradbury

RealTime 36 April - May 2000 5
Perth Festival: the trouble with angels

Sarah Miller

For the 2000 theme was water and so it proved as the average rainfall for January multiplied itself by 20 times in the opening weekend of the festival dumping 180 mm of rain on the outdoor Philip Glass concerts. New director, Sean Doran, was wary resigned and jokes about a hotline to the heavens went unnoticed. There proved to be surprisingly apt, given an abundance of angels and the emergence, arid, of what is sometimes described as the new spirituality of a millenarian shift? Rather than art as an essential palliative for the failure of religious ideology, we seem to have art recreating various spiritually inspired rehearsals, extended touring and a rigourous working over in an international context. And of course, it may be the choky, relatively native but also culturally and politically ambitious worlds that are the sites where you push us out of our respective comfort zones and take us somewhere else. Something is struggling to emerge and nowhere this is more obvious than in the area of new produced theatre.

Yvra Yanka Noonong Theatre’s Solar (Subiaco Theatre, Feb 1-19), created by Black N’ Productions, is utterly grounded in the experience of engaging with different Aboriginal cultures and seeks to challenge the idea that for most non-indigenous Australians, all blackfellas are the same. Niagul Lawford, Kelton Pell and Phil Thompson are the creative team behind this production which seeks to create an authentic voice and to make theatre in ‘a proper blackella way’. At this point in Solar’s development, they have yet to create an internally consistent cultural experience and ironically this is largely because Solar solely manages to escape the confines of a fairly conventional TIE style of play. I hope Solar is given the opportunity to more rigorously pursue a distinctive theatrical form but that probably necessitates getting rid of some of the hand-me-down theatrical ideas and taking a few more risks both formally and conceptually.

Deckchair Theatre’s Jimmy & Pat Meet the Queen (Victoria Hall, Feb 10-19) adapted from the life of the same man who was more or less saved and illustrated by Jimmy Pike. Adapted for the stage by Mary Morris and with beautiful painted sets by Jimmy Pike, this is a fantastic idea that takes the concept of dream play further than I imagined the Queen of England confronted with the traditional owners in their own country. What would happen should the Queen of England go campfire with Jimmy and his wife? What about the corgi? Throw in a brush young goanna and a
cruzy old bush dog and the stage is set for a wonderfully satirical exploration of some of the ridiculous contradictions that hold this country of ours in a strange thrall. Whilst all the elements are there, the work never quite gels, relying a lit­tle too heavily on burlesque, although the pup­pets (usually unattractive to me) are great.

How do you know that Adam & Eve is a subtitled story—not a blackfellas story? Some Eve wouldn’t eat the snake not the apple!

I just wish I had heard that joke (a Kunawrink one from Western Arnhem land) before I went to see Black Swan Theatre’s Plainsong (University WA, Feb 2-19). Plainsong, subtitled Mysteries and Miracles for the Millennium, described by writer David Bottom as ‘a contem­orary theatre event which builds on and incorpo­rates some of the Mystery plays (Christian ritu­als) presented in Europe from the 13th to 16th centuries.’ Originally performed in monas­teries and later town squares, in Plainsong this transmogrifies into a promenade through the beautiful grounds and well endowed buildings of the University of Western Australia, whilst the Mystery plays themselves are translated into vari­ous forms of vernacular theatre, from vaudeville to cabaret—a biblical pastiche.

Plainsong begins with God’s creation of the world, in which God bears a strong resemblance to a survivor from a Bachelor & Spinster Ball and concludes with the Final Reckoning—a foregone conclusion apparently. In the Garden of Eden, Adam is performed by young Indegenous actor Trevor Jamieson and Eve by Flora Chui, putting a whole new spin on their expulsion from paradise—I always knew it was their fault. The audience is whipped through select stories from Genesis and around the camp­us at a relentless pace, ending up in the New Testament after interval. I’m sure I don’t need to run through the story from the Incanmate Conception (on a trampoline), to the Crucifilal and the Resurrection—unless of course you didn’t have the benefit of a Christian upbringing—in which case you’ll go hell anyway, hence the importance of missionaries in the evangelical scheme of things.

In fact if Plainsong reminded me of any­thing, it was those proselytising missionaries, with their simplistic bible stories and moral para­biles, striving—as Barbara Kingsolver (The Poisonwood Bible) describes it—‘to have dominion over the whole of the earth.’ Yet nowhere in this production is the hugely com­plex and often catastrophic relationship between Christianity and its forcibly colonised congrega­tions so much as suggested. Audiences were huge for Plainsong—it was an undoubted box­office success.

This historical, apolitical and nostalgic approach perhaps explains why I also had prob­lems with The Angel Project—definitely a critical if not particularly popular success. The Angel Project (Jan 27-Feb 18), first created in a small high rise office block in London, was recreated by British theatre director Deborah Warner, using 15 sites in Perth, which is a little short on highrise. Audience members undertook a solitary walk along St Georges Terrace, the dead heart of Perth’s CBD, in order to experience their own epiphanies, to find their own angels.

There’s been a lot of work that has sought to reconnect audiences to site and location through research and careful attention to the often previ­ously unarticulated histories of various locations. The Angel Project was not, however, one of these. It preferred to suggest that paradise and consequently angels are both universal and ubiq­uitous—even in this most unlikely of corporis­city. This seems a bizarrely adolescent fantasy, however much it relied on Milton’s Paradise Lost for inspiration. Much more problematic, however, was the glossing over of local histories. What am I supposed to make of the top floor of Bank West—beyond the fabulous and panoramic view—when on the one hand its perimeter is occupied by office chairs, each with its own Gideon bible, whilst on the other, the office kitchenette is occupied by a dead or sleeping angel as the lift is left to run—and this in a par­ticullarly water poor environment. Is it yuppy heaven I’m supposed to have achieved upon dis­covering an angel in the bathtub and another in the closet of a show apartment in the Kingsgate Building? And what am I supposed to make of the fact that most of the angels were black and of course beautiful although not Aboriginal? Perhaps that explains why I loved the cele­brated and controversial The Peony Pavilion so much. Although I was (unfortunately) only able to attend 3 out of the 6 ep­isodes, its cultural specificity and astonishing vitality, not to men­tion the extraordinary performances by both actors and musicians, made this an outstanding theatrical event on a multiplicity of levels. Performed at the Perth Concert Hall, the produc­tion included a most complete with quotas­ting ducks, lots carp and water lilies, singing canaries, extraordinary sets and an ostentatious Chinese pavil­ion, built by 12 master carpenters, using the woodsawing and joinery techniques of classical Chinese architecture. And the costumes! Brilliantly beautiful and painstakingly hand­embroidered, made by more than 400 elderly women from the villages surrounding Suzhou, a city famous for its embroidery.

Written by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616), renowned as a brilliant intellectual, outstand­ing thinker and literary critic, this contempo­rary incarnation of The Peony Pavilion (conceived and directed by Chen Shi Zheng) is impossible to briefly summarise. It traces the fantastic and satirical story of the love of Beautiful Du for a handsome and brilliant young scholar: ‘Dreaming of a lover, she fell sick and once sick, she became ever worse; and finally after painting her own portrait as a memory to the world, she died. Dead for 3 years, still she was able to live again when in the dark underworld her quest for the object of her dream was fulfilled’ (Tang Xianzu from the 1598 preface to The Peony Pavilion). The subtitting was brilliant; it never felt reductive and managed to convey a delicacy of language, a sophisticated poetic, as effectively as the very funny albeit very silly sexual puns and burlesque happenings. As dream plays go (Tang Xianzu wrote 4 great legends that share the theme of dreams), you can forget Strindberg’s northern European miseries, how­ever beautifully visualised by Robert Wilson. The Peony Pavilion is one dream play you would want to experience!
From this state, I am ideally placed: vulnerable, small, abject, to be directed from darkness to light, to be led to precipices, bombarded with sound and, gradually drawn through the delicate machinations of each carefully constructed image.

Shuffling through the woody odours and subdued natural light of St George’s Cathedral, I move towards the pulpit as The Messenger, to the right of various ornamented vestiges, rises to a wetty surface, and draws an elongated breath. A man descends into inky blue water, his image shrinks, refracts whilst the sounds of his ascent, his breath, resonate within the body of the church. The work is replete with symbolic intentions, from emulating the body of Christ, to describing eastern religious and scientific notions of the expansion and contraction of the universe. In this Cathedral, projected alongside the gilded commemorative plaques of fallen soldiers, The Messenger gathers yet another meaning: Bill Viola is an artist cognisant of the effects of structure, of architecture upon religiosity throughout history. The work achieves an almost sermonic position, installed entirely unencumbered by the sounds or visual interference of other contemporary practices. Visitors sit in the pews and watch quietly.

Through muted sound and darkness this time to The Interval installed at the John Curtin Gallery. A work once removed from the white cube, a room within a room where the dichotomy of chaos and order is played out between 2 opposing figures. A third figure, the viewer, processes the shift between these 2 as the images cut from one to the other at a gradual, exponential rate. A naked man who washes himself calmly in a bathroom projected on one side of the cube is larger than life. It is impossible to view his entire image, the bathroom and then the torrents of fire and water that bequeath the frantic figure facing him.

As my eyes dart from screen to screen, others squat in corners of the room as the video and its sharply cut intervals and sound force them back from any attempt at a dominant viewing perspective. There is no place for voyeurs here, you will be moved. Viola’s paring-back of visual clutter leaves only the figure and the bare bones of pictorial convention, symmetry and Renaissance perspective. With these we are familiar, and the construction or manipulation of environments through which his works are viewed can force the body into feeling. Physically succumbs to the movement of the eyes, and to the senses.

A twinge of nausea as I move towards a still, hazy panoptic perspective of the interior of an aircraft. The image fills the peripheries of my vision, and my body momentarily captured in the moment, basks at the dislocation. Rosemary Laing’s digital photographs cover the wall of the entire ground floor of PICA. Aero-zone, the culmination of 3 bodies of work, depicts visual extremes of height, breadth, expanse and the ultimate technologies of traversing space in time. An overwhelming sense of smallness in the face of nature and technology is almost impossible to shake as these representations draw the viewer into their realms.

Laing, who stops airport traffic to choreograph her photographs, uses the figure as a playful foil against her awesome landscapes and technological interiors. Part of the Greenwork series, Airport 2 shows a female figure throwing a red ball into the air as a demonstration of simple physics, juxtaposed against the powerful force of a jumbo jet’s aerodynamics and mechanical engineering as it takes off nearby. In the Spin series a bride hovers in mid-air above the vista of a mountainous horizon, trampolining on a precipice with all the frivolity her costume allows. The video component of Spin takes the formal, interior perspectives of Inwork to the sky as a camera clipped to the wing of a stunt plane captures a revolving forest, wispy clouds and the disappearing horizon.

Weary now and discomfort settles in the humidity and darkness of PICA’s West End gallery as Skinned, two large scale videos by Michelle Theunissen, play on a continuous loop. The disembodied, opaque lips of a narrator speak about a point of awakening from a world of apartheid and the social niceties of segregation, like racism over tea and biscuits. Theunissen’s memoirs are coloured by the dramatic language of pulp fiction through an increasingly grotesque, painted mouth. A close-up of the lumbering skin of an elephant plays and repeats alongside, like the persistence of memory. After the acuity and precision of the work of Viola and Laing, and their command of visual and physical responses to their work, I force myself to sit through Skinned, its position and its politics unclear, shifting. At one point the narrator slips up and cuts to another take, “hold me in your arms, big, black mama”, as if she can hardly bring herself to say the words. Meanwhile my body screams for me to leave and eventually I do.

Beneath The Surface: The Videos of Bill Viola, a co-presentation by Perth International Arts Festival and John Curtin Gallery: The Messenger, St George’s Cathedral, Jan 24 - Feb 19; Interval and other works, John Curtin Gallery, Feb 4 - March 29. Aero-zone, Rosemary Laing, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Jun 27 - Feb 27; Skinned, Michelle Theunissen, PICA, Jan 11 - Feb 27.

Bec Dean works in video, installation and performance at jacknife Gallery and studios and is an arts writer for Ma magazine and other publications.
Perth Festival: a thing or two about words

Josephine Wilson

Lately I've been thinking there are too many words. Then I think—no, there are not enough.

I just cannot make up my mind. I don't know quite what to think. The situation is complicated. There are no rules where words are concerned. Each case must be assessed on its merits.

Take the following events in the Perth International Arts Festival 2000. In Ralf Ralf's 'The Sammelworts' there are very hard words: but a lot of things are said. Philip Glass does not use many words, and if he does he says them over and over, like a mantra. Societas Raffelsohn Sanzo's Giulio Cocare breaks words in two and leaves them on the ground. The cast is assembled from broken words and damaged actors with little holes in them. Sometimes the words get lodged in these holes, like a chicken's bone in the throat or a large breech baby. Sometimes the words haemorrhage, making a mess of everything. The performers have problems with their outflots, especially their mouths. One actor appears to have a tracheotomy. A pair of anorexic girls move about like sick insects, jezkly, strangely constipated, strangled on the other side of bilumia. A very fat actor just sits there, draped in a toga. A plaster horse, a fragment of stratum—an arm! A leg! Classical theatres' mortuary. Props reduced to words.

The rhetorical flourish joins propaganda and dramatic art. The art of persuasion/Technologies of speech/The rhetorical empire/rhetoric reveals the corruption of the theatre...the true face of the theatre is falsehood. These fragments are from the very wordy program. In the program however, words are not broken. Giulio Cocare needs the unbroken program to supplement its broken back, just in case the production can't sit up by itself. The program notes are like a brace. A propping up. A woody prop.

'The Weir' puts all its wordy props up front, on the stage, and then pretends they are not words at all, but real things. Interior, tropical Irish country pub, Guinessness on tap. We are in for a good yard—and what's wrong with that? The words go on and on, meandering about as if they had plenty of time to just be words. How they dissemble! It is all so familiar—if this play was Australian we might say the words were giving us characters who were 'stereotypes', or 'export cliches'. But these kinds of words can be entertaining. Fun. A few good stories, a few good Irish laughs. But it is not enough for art to just be fun. There has to be More to this story. And there is. The only woman in the play has a dark secret—something unsaid, something to be revealed, to unsettle the audience—perhaps even rip a hole in the fullest! But before you can say HolyMaryMotherJesus the woman speaks the unspeakable and the words rush right in and stop up the little hole. Nothing escapes, nothing is lost. The unspoken was not a rip or a tear or a wound or anything vaguely threatening or interesting, but a round hole designed with the word-plug in mind. "The Weir is a play with a big plug, like a bathtub—safe, warm, full, to the brim with comfortable words, and guaranteed not to leak."


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MULTICULTURAL ARTS MANAGEMENT

is accepting expressions of interest from actors seeking representation. Send CV and photo to:

MAM, 41/142 Addison Rd
Marrickville NSW 2111
Enquiries: (02) 9560 0005

Arts Grants Programs for Activities in 2001

The City of Melbourne recognises that Melbourne's vibrant, living culture depends on the opportunities its artists have to present work to excite, challenge and enthrall the city's residents and visitors.

Applications are invited from individuals and organisations with innovative proposals that will make a strong contribution to the cultural vitality of the city.

ROUND 1: Grants are available in the following programs:
- Arts Festival Grants
- Community Festival Grants
- Indigenous Arts Grants
- Arts Partnership Grants.

The closing date for applications to Round 1 is 5pm Monday, 15 May 2000. An information session for prospective applicants in Round 1 will be held on Tuesday, 11 April at 4pm at the North Melbourne Town Hall.

ROUND 2: Grants are available in the following programs:
- Arts Project Grants
- International Arts Exchange Project Grants

The closing date for applications to Round 2 is Monday, 24 July 2000.

For guidelines, application form and further information on the 2001 Arts Grants Programs please telephone the City of Melbourne Hotline on 9658 9658 or http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Michael Malouf
Chief Executive Officer

WIDE AWAKE

dreaming at twilight

12-28 may 2000

Are you wide awake in terror?
Perhaps you're wide awake, refusing to blink, in case you miss the bus to the future?

Art & technology, dysfunction, superstition, relentless battles, insanity, lust, Satan, human-computer interaction, tension, hope ... these are some of the themes explored in Next Wave's multi-artform festival as we arrive at the 21st Century.

- Check out the website at www.nextwave.org.au for the festival and virtual gallery.
- See the Melbourne premiere of Burn Song, Viviana Sacchero's youth dance work INNATE; and As Cron, acrobatic mayhem lost deep within a world of spare body parts.
- Hear Sound@Swanston, three immersive soundscapes/installations in the heart of the city.
- Get along to Change! Writers' Weekend, a Power Grid of energised sessions celebrating text.

Call NEXT WAVE on 9417 7632 to get the complete program of events.

WIDE AWAKE checks the pulse of Australian youth at the beginning of the 21st century!

Brisbane Powerhouse in association with Hubcap Productions presents

Hormone racing humour, erotic acrobatic rawness, a multi-media anatomy lesson and the story of excreta told through interpretive dance - Amanda Owen delivers it all in this warm and very funny show that will leave you thinking differently about your own body-machine.

Preview: Thu 6 July; Season: Fri 7 to Sun 16 July
Powerhouse Theatre
Brisbane Powerhouse - Centre for the Live Arts
119 Lamington St New Farm

Director: Donna Jackson
Music: Kim Baston
Multimedia: Lin Tobias
**Sampling the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras**

Keith Gallash & Virginia Baxter

**Osuala**

(Claudia Bendon, Pafo Frances) is my kind of street art—the kind to make you wonder whether you really need to be at that other place quite as soon as you thought. The appeal of the act of these two women generically demands that the barbershops’ ostensibility makes no sense at all—they set up a couple of hairdressing chairs on a little platform in the street, blast out some operatic encores and quietly invite random members of the crowd to let them have their way with them—or with their hair. The gathering crowd is drawn into a kind of thrill, watching in quiet fascination as ordinary citizens subject themselves to scissors, clippers and spray cans and beyond this to elaborate headresses with doll’s bodies and hair that is too thin to wash naturally.

Keith Gallash

**Lesbian National Parks and Services**

In the Studio we pick up Lesbian National Parks and Services Director Jonathan Parsons with a helpful brochure from Canadian artists (Shawa Neera, Lonnail Mills) urging us as we go about our busy day, to take a moment to question the nature and what is natural! Conduct your own research. Experiment Experience. Being careful “not to tread on the lesbian”—not easy at a jump-packed Mardi Gras!—to explore more inside the theatre for unbecomings and take out our Junior Woodchuck notebooks.

**unbecomings**

In her work with Playworks and now as Director of Performance Space, Fiona Winning is strongly committed to growing new work. "It fits into a broader strand into which we are developing the development of emerging performance makers, not just by giving them space but also offering artistic support so they can develop their own work." Jonathan Parsons, director of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has the same commitment.

Over 3 Mardi Gras now PACT Youth Theatre has each time successfully presented a large scale work involving young, queer performance makers. There’s a group of talented people there who are now in the upper age of PACT’s charter but who are not yet ready to simply create places for their own work. unbecomings is a joint project of all 3 organisations. The 6 works presented were chosen from 20 submitted. Says PACT Artistic Director Catherine Newton-Brown, “Each of these young artists has a body of work, a place they are heading and a chance to develop their practice.” These ideas and performance forms were matched with established practitioners who supplied dramatic, motivational and emotional support in the development of what was very much the young people’s own work. Within the production are the signs of a process which is clearly paying off. There’s a confidence in the performances and the material and, for Fiona Winning, “a greater depth. Rather than sliding across the surface, I had a sense they were diving deeper.”

In Showcase Dionare Quresma Emma Price and Técha Noble work with Celia White to produce a series of rolling major acts throughout the year. The evenings of the Horrifying artist collective, these two students from the College of Fine Arts specialise in the ‘exaggerated due, the flippancy, the gigantastic and the fantastic upon a stage of nostalgia.’ The performances are grand, the trick good, the unbridling of the tags thin, the potential terrific.

**The Diamond Nipple Affair** is written and performed by Shelly O’Donnell with mentor Chris Ryan. Shelley has been a strong presence in PACT’s recent work notably in Caitlin Newton-Brown’s The Dark Room last year. This is a hommage to lesbian detective with some nice writing that ventures too far into over-scope satire: it lacks the specificity that grabs. It’s at its best as she begins to divest herself of the tacky trappings and reveal the spiky persona (“too Bath for Fem”) beneath. Looking somewhere between a Newtsonian lesbian and Isabella Rossellini, O’Donnell tours us in her gase as she reaches between her legs and then runs her fingers through her hair till it stands on end and strides from the stage to audibly sighs of approval in the audience.

In the spirit of the evening, The First Rice Club is a supreme act of unbecoming. Phu Nguyen and Karl Velasco reveal themselves in everything from scenarios of growing-up Asian-Lo-Suibs to surreal adventures in the skin trade of gender and racial stereotypes. In a witty and seductive performance (mentored by Celia White) these two take us on a roller coaster from Western Sydney family life to a hotel room with a GI who reads Apocalypse Now, chopsticks blowing in a ceiling fan and a Vietnamese fish on the foot hold a streetwise Filipina. Kang fu and cooking demonstrations reach justifiable hysterical heights. The crowd cheers for the wigged-up, lip-synching fantas of Yoi, don’t out me but these two had won us over way before that.

If anyone needed evidence that contemporary performance ideas expand on the limitations of theatre, Creamy was it. Moving through the stages of griefing for a lost love, the piece mixed vivid nostalgia with vile hatred for the object of desire. In this performance (mentored by Damien Millier) instead of a stock, a spot and a microphone, Garth Bolwell delivers the words of self-confessed pathos (“It’s important you get something out of this”) while a couple of onstage hands hug big globs of whipped cream at him. Covered in the stuff, he keeps the eyes pouring up until eventually he hoists himself to the ceiling on a rope and hangs crucified by love—and the cream keeps coming. It’s a wonderfully sustained piece and against the odds it works because the form exposes the teudium, the pain of it all and at the same time the ambivalence of the audience-witness, waiting between hurtful revelations about love and its clichés for the next goey mistake to hit the performer-love addict right between the eyes.

In Unspoken and directed by Rosie Dennis, mentored by Annette Titterington, Johanna De Ruyter and Sarah Rodigari perform a strange little scenario of 2 women in a difficult relationship. With physical elegance and a kind of Siwoffian linearity, the two layer a veneer of calm on the heart, the distance between them amplified by a lack of eye contact, and by speech that suggests that they are talking about someone else quite other than the one they are sharing the stage with. Perhaps they were.

Peter Ramsay Krushing is written and performed by the altogether engaging Brian Fuata (mentored by Chris Ryan). It is a tale of crushes on fellow schoolboys and on Angelo Davis whose physical appearance he emulates with a wig. Fuata writes well using some of the familiar patterns and theatrics of performance poetry, but at other times releases into altogether stranger rhythms. His performance style is minimal but he draws the audience into his languid, hypnotic ambience. The only problem that work seems too short for the intimacy it has built and the personality you want more of.

The whole show is held together with some inventive staging by design team Chris Fox and Anne O’Sullivan, mentored by Anthony Babicci. The steeply raked flats, one offering a delicate texture, the other massive spines, are repositioned quickly to evoke new spaces. unbecomings has set a new benchmark for young performers in the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras arts festival.

**Bally X**

Campion Decenc’s widely applauded play is polished and deftly directed (David Fenton) account of the trials of a gay man fathering a child for a lesbian couple and trying to gain his hostile father’s understanding. It’s a comedy. It’s attraction is initially in encountering such rare material on the stage, a surprising reminder that even in Sydney you’re unlikely to see much about gay life on the stage between one year’s Mardi Gras and next. Its strength also lies in the distribution of its mayhem’s focus not on the women as the man. In fact they garner more interest because they are played more 3-dimensionally, as much as the script will allow. The writing is generally strong, especially the direction yield a high theatricality, bigger than life, and played often directly to the audience. Consequently scenes often feel too insistently like comedy sketches or something written for non-theatrical presentation. The set, which is cleverly constructed and expertly lit, evokes a disco world, a visual metaphor which doesn’t always fit, again when used incidentally (by now I was suffering lip-sync burn-out to the bargain). It’s a relief when the set magically opens up to the night skies when father and son go camping.

My disappointment with Baby X is that while it carefully maps out the 9 months drama of the negotiations, the pregnancy and the birth, and peppers it with humourous insights about gay culture; it also lingers on the frans of gay gender parenting, and of suburban normality, the play simply doesn’t deliver the goods on an issue it goes to great trouble to set up. Month by month, our couple constantly delights in a legal contract with the 2 women. Somewhere around 6 months it becomes a null issue, apparently a kind of abdication on her part, and preventable a loss of interest on the part of the women. But why? Unless I missed something. Instead we got an overlong, tory office scene about a cake and a new set of characters support, which the audience enjoyed, but which I would have willingly traded for something that would have completed the picture of this unique experience of incipient parenthood rather than take me away from it. I’m sure Baby X could have handled the weight of the issue with its proven sense of humour—ranging from dry wit to the father’s quizzing his son about “sowing his wild oats among the lesbians.”

**Transulence**

Bringing together Donna McKenzie’s set song of poems by the late Derek Jarman was a festival highlight, luck in every respect, beautifully sung and played by Voiceworks’ singers and instrumentalists. The material is otherwise simply very gently but without a minimalist insistence and refrain from dramatising Jarman’s texts. The tone is almost conversational, certainly intimate. I hope it’s the first in this line-up of Jarman’s Voiceworks repertoire and is preserved again soon. Better’s On this island was musically the ideal companion piece, a little over-projected. Let’s hope too that under the new Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras directorship (David Fenton who directed Baby X) that the innovative music programme which Parson Forsgren ensured from Marshall Magazine is continued.

**Four Some**

In this One Extra dance program from Phillip Adams, Dean Walsh, Trevor Patrick and Brian Carbee, theatricality rules, most convincingly in Walsh’s Retro Mauveonin, now almost at the apothecaries of its steady evolution, and Glorybody with its hypnotic trance dances gently but without a minimalist insistence and refrain from dramatising Jarman’s texts. The tone is almost conversational, certainly intimate. I hope it’s the first in this line-up of Jarman’s Voiceworks repertoire and is preserved again soon. Better’s On this island was musically the ideal companion piece, a little over-projected. Let’s hope too that under the new Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras directorship (David Fenton who directed Baby X) that the innovative music programme which Parson Forsgren ensured from Marshall Magazine is continued.

**Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival**

**Osuala** February 28 - March 3

**Queens House Square**

**Lesbian National Parks and Services**

**The Performance Space** February 20 - 27

**unbecomings**

**The Unfolding Network** February 23 -26

**Bally X**

February 23-24

**RealTime** 36 April - May 2000 10

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**Bally X**

February 23-24

**RealTime** 36 April - May 2000 10
The anniversary of the death of Sarah Kane

AlekS Sierz

The most shocking event in British theatre last year was not a new sex-fest, but the suicide, at the age of 28, of playwright Sarah Kane.

She was, says writer Mark Ravenhill, "a contemporary writer with a classical sensibility who created a theatre of great moments of beauty and cruelty, a theatre to which it was only possible to respond with a sense of awe." Within a year of her death, on 20 February 1999, academics already recognised her importance. For example, Dan Rebellato, of London University, says that despite her small output—"five slim, unflinchingly pared-down pieces of writing"—Kane "enriched British playwriting more powerfully and enduringly than any other writer of her generation."

Although her public career lasted barely 5 years, the notoriety of her 1995 debut Blasted—denounced hysterically by critics for its scenes of sex and violence—meant that her shocking stage images obscured the depth of her writing talent. Not only are her plays—Blasted, Phaedra's Love, Cleansed, Crave and 4.48 Psychosis—which will premiere in June 2000—among the best-written, most deeply felt of the 1990s, but Kane also pioneered a form of experiential theatre, which gave audiences a powerful sense of having lived through the events shown on stage, and tackled the large issues of love and war, identity, insanity and desire.

Graham Whybrow, literary manager of the Royal Court (which put on most of her work), says: "Sarah Kane was head in shoulders above other young writers in her uncompromising vision and her precocity. Her plays are tough in conception and terse in writing." Aware of theatrical traditions (she had a First Class Honours degree in drama) but "not slavishly tied to them", she dealt with raw atrocities but "showed a great deal of compassion." Each of her plays was a new experiment in form and an exploration of theatrical possibility—Says Whybrow, "Her plays aren't troubled by awkward local references or contemporary detail in a way that would date them—they will endure."

Had it not been for Blasted, the explosion of 1990s in-your-face theatre—from Ravenhill's Shopping and Fucking to Jez Butterworth's Mojo—would not have had the impact that it did. But Kane was much more than a leader of a brat pack of avant-garde provocateurs. Jim Macdonald, who directed Blasted and Cleansed, says, "The media painted her as a wild axe-girl, but actually she was far more theatre-literary than most writers of her age. "What was her role in new writing? "To make it up a bit—with an ambition and urgency and passion that's often lacking," says Macdonald. "She wasn't just symptomatic of the 1990s—what was refreshing was that she was up to something different from most of her generation. She was writing about politics in her own way. Her gods were Beckett, Pinter, Bond, Barker."

Kane's agent, Mel Kenyon, also stresses her individuality, although she sees Kane as typical of the 1990s in her desire to fragment form, to blow apart old forms" as well as in her anger. "The stage is one of the last places one can be genuinely angry. In comparison, screen violence tends to be stylised and anonymised, distant and unreal."

And Kane "was the angriest of the lot. But stage violence is also an expression of despair. People will look at her work and admire the boldness of it, the starkness of the images and she will probably encourage people to be courageously theatrical." But, says Kenyon, "I also hope that her death gives the lie to the notion that this generation doesn't care." And that it "reminds people that theatre is still a serious platform for debate. If her legacy does both these things, it will have been great."

It is too early to see her influence on young British writers, her effect on European writers is clear. David Tushingham, dramaturg and translator, says that "in Germany, she is regarded as one of the most significant authors of the decade. Their view of British theatre as very direct, very brutal and very in-your-face—a bit from Blasted and Shopping and Fucking." German writers such as Marius von Mayenburg, David Gieselsmann, Katharina Gertcke and Melanie Gieschen were directly influenced by Kane, who also worked in the USA, Netherlands, Bulgaria and Spain. But her legacy also has a dangerous side, says Kenyon. "Because of her death, some young people might think they have to live in despair to be proper writers. And that you have to kill yourself to become profound." Instead, perhaps they should learn from Kane's generosity and imaginative flair, from her life rather than from her death.

There is a chapter on Sarah Kane in AlekS Sierz's In Your-Face Theatre, published by Faber later this year.
Pitching product

Susan Strano

A performing arts market is an efficient and stimulating model for establishing overseas and Australian markets. It can be compromised by having to conform to 25 minute slots, which may not be long enough for most artists to show their best work. Another criticism was that the integrity of the work could be compromised by having to conform to expectations and stimulating models. However, it is clear that both the schools and companies that make the work want to make it and want it to be seen. It is about continuing the life of a work, taking it to new audiences. It won’t happen for any work if it is not pitched at an event every few months.

Research and development elements could, however, enhance the whole process: developing relationships for collaborative opportunities that may lay the groundwork for future touring work, audience development and creative possibilities. However, in the future, most of the real work in this area will be done strategically. The question is whether it would be approached formally or informally during future Performing Arts Market sessions.

Becoming a familiar face at the Adelaide Festival is not an event everyone can afford. The Australian Performing Arts Market, Adelaide, February 28 - March 3

Susan Strano is the Performing Arts Project Officer at the Australia Council for the Arts.

Writsites

Writsites returns in RealTime 37, in the meantime turn to page 24 for Kirsten Krauth’s account of VERVE: the other writing at the Adelaide Festival.

For Sue Thomas, Academic Director of the UK site trAce visiting the Adelaide Festival, writing about VERVE and the special role of Adelaide in developing hypertext writing. RT Festival Edition #4

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Fire and ice: the cinema of Catherine Breillat

Adrian Martin

French artist Catherine Breillat, whose brilliant, often controversial career began at the age of 19 with her erotic novel L’Homme facile (1967), likes to intermingle her media: prose, poetry, essays, cinema, even interviews.

As well as adapting films from her own books, she has, like Marguerite Duras, simultaneously produced certain works in 2 forms, 2 versions, for the printed page and the screen.

There is an intensive circulation between the elements of all these texts by Breillat—transpositions that call into question not only the boundaries but the very status of different modes of fiction and creation. Where does a coherent story end and the equivalent begin? Is there a "natural" limit to what a character's dialogue or voice-over narration can cite or express? What realms can the dreams and desires of imaginary beings open up for exploitation?

An example. In “One Day I Saw Baby Doll...”, an inspired reflection on Ilka Kazan’s 1956 film written for the magazine Positif and translated in Projections (1995), Breillat insists on the movie’s harsh truths about sexuality, its lessons about men and women, boys and girls: “Shame is what drives the girl towards Man as much as attraction. She is also sufficiently egocentric to realise that beauty must be her domain.”

But what is Kazan’s and what is Breillat’s in this sweet of films and texts, thoughts and memories? Whose ‘truths’ are these, and in what form do they reside—in Baby Doll, in 36 Fillette? When does the memory or analysis of a film go beyond appreciation or homage into full-blown recreation, into the imagining of a new work? Breillat finds herself, before Kazan’s film, both ‘transported’, transformed, and also confirmed, taken into her deepest self. And the circulation of elements does not stop with that essay: in 1999, Breillat tells a Cineaste interviewer that women filmmakers "add the point of view of shame" to the screen’s depiction of sexuality—and she places those lines about Beauty and the Beast almost verbatim into the mouth of Robert (François Berléand) in Romance (1999).

The general response to Romance among Australian reviewers has been, on the whole, rather dim. If one place side by side the press coverage of the film’s adventures at the Office of Film and Literature Classification, to which the new, Melbourne-based internet journal Senses of Cinema (http://www.senseofcinema.com.au) has devoted an invaluable dossier, Reviews harped on the supposed unlikeliness of the heroine, Marie (Caroline Ducey), and the implausibility or thinness of her psychology. What’s her ‘journey’ and where is its third act resolution?

The heavy-duty voice-over narration also caused much discomfort—occasionally the usual tetchy, defensive gang about how ‘very French’ is all this existential angst and ennui. (It’s just as well the media press kit didn’t brandish the respectful, deft summation of Breillat’s pre-selected subject matters offered by French critic-filmmaker Luc Moulot: “Objectivity, existentialism, behaviourism, the absurd, incommunicability”). One reviewer complained that Breillat was transparently putting her own words and thoughts (about men, love, sex) into the heroine’s mouth. And the film’s general, defining, relentlessly ambiguous mixture of existential solemnity, droll perversity and hallucinatory, escalating intensity obviously short-circuited more than a few local minds.

Why was such a vast, uncomprehending blank drawn on Romance?

Primarily because, quite simply, we do not see many French movies like this one on our arthouse and film festival circuits these days. Everyone remembers the French New Wave but, it seems, few understand its living legacy. That’s perhaps understandable (if not forgivable), given that the successive post-New Wave transformations in French cinema—the work associated with names including Philippe Garrel, Danièle Dubroxx and Jacques Rozier—have basically never been allowed in by our film culture gatekeepers.

As a result, Romance is judged against models of narrative and arthouse cinema to which it bears little relation—and if, of course, found terrifying wanting. Yet the necessary reference points for an appreciation of Breillat’s native tradition can be cogently together from local viewing experience, at least if we use our collective memories and imagination. Think of the free, interpolated voice-overs in Godard and Truffaut, yoked to the Cassavetes-like emotional intensity of Maurice Pialat’s films (L’oiseau, Van Gogh), assembled according to a formal, rivet-style dialectic of ‘real time’ flows broken by disconcerting ellipses, and an ‘internal journey’ narrative, grounded in restless, corrosive desire, that draws its ins, subtle dream logic from the cinema of Vigo, Bunuel and Oshima.

Breillat’s films draw their special tension from the pull of opposing impulses—here is a cinema of fire and ice. “Cinema is a mode of expression that allows you to express all the manaces of a thing while including its opposites. There are things that can’t be quantified mentally; yet they can exist and be juxtaposed. That may seem very contradictory. Cinema allows you to film these contradictions.” (Cineaste, Vol 25 No 1, 1999). The affinity between Romance and other outstanding, recent films about sexual desire and its vicissitudes—Cronenberg’s Crash and Kubrick’s Eyes Wide Shut in particular—comes from the adoption of a still, hushed, ‘glacial’ style that is new to her work.

Those who have seen 36 Fillette (the only previous Breillat film to appear here) are likely to remember its raw, provocative, deliberately vulgar evocation of impotent, frustrated, confused teen libido. The strong elements of her early cinematic work in the 70s (Un crave jeune fille) and 80s (Trapeze nocturne) were dually derived from the grand, lost era of ‘art porn’ (movies by Serge Gainsbourg, Walerian Borowczyk, Miklos Janco, Oshima’s In the Realm of the Senses), and the fiery, violent, ‘exacerbated naturalism’ of Pialat. At the same time, overlaid on this combo was Breillat’s rich and multiple literary mode: according to Luc Moulot, a juxtaposition of ‘traditional poetic vocabulary with geographic, scientific, geometric and medical vocabularies, as well as pornographic, scatological and advertising terminologies’ (Truffe, no. 2, 1992).

36 Fillette marked a breakthrough in Breillat’s film work because (Moslet again) an “excess of the clinical seems to create a sort of superior lyricisme”—the inaugural, successful meeting of fire with ice. Her first masterpiece, to my mind, came a little later, with Sale comme une image (Dirty like the Angel, 1991)—an utterly unique film that begins as an urban cop thriller and suddenly becomes a brutal narrative collage of transparent amour fou, going the distance where Pialat’s Police (1986), scemed by Breillat, fell short.

In 36 Fillette’s other outstanding film of the 90s, Pourfard Amour! (Perfect Love, 1997) likewise starts in one mode—a true-blue docudrama about the fatal affair between a middle-class woman and a younger, streetwise guy—and spins into an almost metaphysical account of the absurdity, miscommunication and violence that pertains between the sexes.

Breillat’s philosophical debt to Bataille and Lacan is evident in the bleakness of this face. In interviews she happily expounds her theories of female shame and deasembament (sometimes reaching the other side of liberation and self-worth) as opposed to the possessive male need for control and violation—and women as beings who can be ‘trans­figured’ by sex in contrast with men whose ‘masculine demands’ never allow them to let the doll earth.

In 36 Fillette, the drama of adolescence already proceeds on these fiercely divided gender lines: at puberty, "boys are simple, no longer whole, knowing what they are, but knowing what they don’t want," whereas "a girl exists only by being existing. She is a being who com­mits suicide, who passes from a future where everything is possible to probable barrenness once her destiny has been sealed" (Projections).

The remarkable fusion of such musings with those mysterious flesh-and-blood incarnations called characters and the strange fantasy-romance known as a plot indicates, in Breillat’s films, we move closer to Pier Paolo Pasolini’s dream of a cinema of poetry that would speak and visualise itself in a ‘free indirect discourse’. Here, fictional characters and their worlds become vehicle or pretext or launchpad for the passage of some other consciousness: not the author’s mind, solely or necessarily, but certainly some thinking-organism that grows and recreates the world in its own impossible image.

Another, related way to conceive of Romance is as a special kind of ‘essay film’—not the ‘discursive’ essay film pioneered by Chris Marker and bladerooted to death by his army of pale imitators, but a dramatic essay film, an essayistic fiction in which words, images, characters, stories follow a line of inexorable mutation as they experience and provoke new ‘circulations’. “I create a film that surprises me because its meaning has escaped me,” remarks Breillat—and her movies bear witness to that extraordinary, enigmatic, transformative power.
World Cup soccer and Tibetan Buddhism

Veronica Gleeson

There are a few reasons that The Cup will gamer a good deal of cursory press attention when it is released here in April. The most obvious is that its writer-director, H. E. Dunger, Janyang Kyehnse Inopoche—or Kyehnse Norbu—is a Buddhist monk. In fact he's one of the most important incarnate lamas in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition today, and he just happens to be responsible for an expatiately balanced, gentle and witty piece of filmmaking.

Set in an exiled Tibetan monastery overrun with World Cup Paul fever, The Cup was filmed on location in India. None of the actors were professional, the bulk of the cast being drawn from Chocking Monastery, the Himalayan refugee settlement. Few spoke English and most rose at 4am each morning, pray after which they'd receive scripts and briefings for the day's shooting, none were to scripted action in advance. The traditional Buddhist practice of "no" formed the basis for decision-making, and Norbu sponsored several rituals necessary for the generation of auspicious circumstances.

Unsurprisingly the film bears all the hallmarks of an approach informed by discipline. What's arresting is the way in which themes of change and the inherently contradictory nature of devotional life are sublimely interwoven. It's also a compellingly simple demystification of monastic life. To put it crudely, The Cup makes She's In Love look like Amrish Puri's polemical tribute to the aesthetics and recent history of Tibetan Buddhism. It's possible to interpret the film as bearing witness to a generational quarrel between an exiled people, or as an even-handed appeal of humanity in a climate of technological change. Ask him about it, however, and Khenrut Norbu will insist that he has simply made a film like The Cup)—one he did set forth with a political or spiritual intention in that regard, but if people get that from it, I will take it as a bonus." Tenzin was in India at the time of this interview, preparing to fly to Paris for the film's French premiere. The form of the phonor was strange and technologically encumbered; there were frequent points at which the line would simply go silent, making it difficult to discern whether Tenzin was patiently navigating his way through the international connection dropouts or giving consideration before a response. And having phone-jacked my dictaphone to the receiver for the purposes of recording the discussion, I discovered that it had recorded only my voice, forcing me to replay my own questions over and over in order to salvage his answers. Ample opportunity to infer some kind of spiritual mystique (informed by all manner of Western misreadings of Buddhism) into the experience. If I ever have the opportunity to mention this to Tenzin, I'm fairly sure he'd simply tell me that the line was bad, and to test my dictaphone before phoning him like that. Following after this, then, is best read as a sketch comprised of remembered long-distance dialogue and recovered notes.

Is it your intention to be?
No. The older monks are very hesitant—they see films as being associated with sex and violence. You have to remember that these are people who haven't been home for 40 years. They're wary of the telephone, the fax, TV and cinema. I would do a film with sex and violence though, if the script was good. Are there any filmmakers who inspire you at the moment?
I think the Iranian films are very good, they're a very sophisticated country, which some people might find surprising considering what's going on there. They're very aware of what's happening in the rest of the world. A friend of mine posed the idea that cultures that enjoy international sports like soccer

ideas are such a material precept? [You] really have to have to get beyond them. They can be very limiting...

French premiere. The form of the phonor was strange and technologically encumbered; there were frequent points at which the line would simply go silent, making it difficult to discern whether Tenzin was patiently navigating his way through the international connection dropouts or giving consideration before a response. And having phone-jacked my dictaphone to the receiver for the purposes of recording the discussion, I discovered that it had recorded only my voice, forcing me to replay my own questions over and over in order to salvage his answers. Ample opportunity to infer some kind of spiritual mystique (informed by all manner of Western misreadings of Buddhism) into the experience. If I ever have the opportunity to mention this to Tenzin, I'm fairly sure he'd simply tell me that the line was bad, and to test my dictaphone before phoning him like that. Following after this, then, is best read as a sketch comprised of remembered long-distance dialogue and recovered notes.

How long did it take to write the screenplay?
Three years. Then I didn't have the means to make it, so that was good. I got to go back and rewrite. Are you viewed as being a radical by the older monks?
Yes.

real for the body?...
Tropfest: the hype test

Simon Enicknap

Tropfest...just keeps on getting bigger and BIGGER (weeeeee heeee hee)...

And, of course, many of the finalists have gone on to have careers in FILM & TELEVISION (wooohooooo)...And this year Tropfest is being transmitted all over the WORLD (yeeessssssssssssssss). Give everybody a great big round of APPLAUSE.

Tropfest continues to blow along on the winds of hype, breaking all records, defining the moment by sheer weight of numbers. You don't argue with Tropfest, stand in the way of a tech-bull, support-laden juggernaut with media mileage, particularly one which is giving local filmmakers a chance to strut their stuff before an estimated worldwide international celebrity audience of...I don't know what the number is but it must be a behemoth lot.

Tropfest is successful because it turns filmmaking into a participatory spectator sport: these films could be YOU, they may be next to YOU, YOU can do it TOO, let's hear it for them! YOU—and so the rave gets picked up by the stage mikes and fed out through the sound system, thereby closing the loop. Hear yourself cheering. All of which makes Tropfest...a filmmaker's heaven-on-earth with its mass audience of the young and mobile and afflu­ent...to the extent that every other person is attached to a phone...('Can you see me now? I'm wearing a brown shirt...') in a highly receptive state, a cool narcistic buzz—so many sexy people, says the MC, and it's true, we love ourselves for being here—and everything is free! The filmmakers do it for nothing! Brilliant.

AND...there (finally) are the films. This was the year when Tropfest was going to become more than just a Gagfest. There was 'serious' drama too. Weighty stuff. Not such a laugh. But can the funny man change his spots, can the food play a King? The gong tag is not so easily thrown off and, true enough, several films this year went straight for the belly-laugh button. It's not so surprising given that, in the middle of a park, on a big screen, watched by thousands (millions and billions probably), visual comedy always comes across strongest, leaps into the audience and does a puffalufa (waaahheeeeee). It's much harder to generate and sustain dramatic tension in this amphitheatre, especially with anything more than a few lines of dialogue (particularly if delivered sovo voice) ends up as mummburumbrumburundam...

So there's affin-shape-a-man-who...does a triple jump, a film about-a-man-who...gets stuck in his sleeping bag, a film about-a-man-who...likes to walk around in his underpants, a film about-a-man-who...gives himself a job, a film about-a-man-who...sees an image of the Virgin Mary in his bathroom. Can you see a pattern emerging here? This is fine so long as they joke work but not so good when they're stretched as thin as a cingline. Even a short tale can grow too tall, be bigger than Ben Hur (or longer anyway).

Tropfest...is the best advertisement yet for the need for affirmative action in the film industry, especially as the explicit message of the festival is that ANYBODY can make a film about ANYTHING—look, everybody can have a go, all you need is an idea and some energy and puff puff puff...and what do we get? A bunch of audition tapes for The Footy Show. Blokes being dads, blokes being dopes, blokes being blokey in that dismally blokey way. This is what happens when you laissez-faire it. Of course, there are notable exceptions too, works which disprove the rule, such as Deep by Heather-Jean Moyes, which shows what can actually be accom­plished with short drama, or Noise by Chris Bence, which shows what can be achieved collect­ively.

The gender imbalance in Tropfest and the sub-consciously slippage, which happens all too often, whereby the words 'best', 'new', and 'talent' invariably become linked with 'young', gives the festival a skewed focus and a depressingly narrow vision. It's not so much a showcase as a sideshow.

AND...so to the winner of Tropfest 2000...a film about-a-man-who...memories an eye­ight chart.

Cult offerings

Michelle Glaser

The recent REVolution Independent Film Festival, held in Perth, offered an iconoclastic 2 weeks of screenings.

Little seen beatnik flicks such as Pull My Daisy (dir: Alfred Leslie/Richard Franks, written and directed by Brakhage), and Brakhage's first feature director Richard Sowada 12 months to source. These jostled alongside a range of shorts, doc­umentaries and independent features, films old and films new.

REVolution is now in its third year with an audience that has doubled in size. In the face of diminishing funds for screen culture, REVolution borrows the spirit of independent filmmaking to put on a festival with a budget that finds only 10% of its total from Australian government sources. In fact, Sowada commented that more money was available from the US government who provided support as part of an initiative designed to promote US filmmakers overseas. Sowada is optimistic about the direction that this has allowed REVolution to take—he doesn't have to compromise programming and doesn't structure around funding guidelines.

Revealing a love of pop culture, REVolution emphasises fun as well as inventive filmmaking, with an eclectic mix reflecting Sowada's own personality and politics. This is a festival season watermarked with 'coolest' screen tests, each test is derived from a passion for the medium, an imaginative approach to both content and financing that is necessarily driven.

The inclusion this year in the Perth International Arts Festival lineup has lent REVolution credibility, with media previews attended too in previous years. See: The Amabel Chang Story (dir: Hugh S Cryer/David Whitney), and Waltz: The Life and Times of John C Holmes (dir: Carsten Pady) predictably excited interest from local media and punters alike with the promise of level sex.

The season opened with Catch, a Canadian black comedy directed by Chris Grismer. The comic book plot features a life­altering book that is thrown into the hands of an inadvertent and intellectual criminal, a female mechanic, a crime boss and others. Like many plots based on a comic (or graphic novel), the premise fails to make good on its opening gambit is being winning enough to keep the audience engaged.

On the Ropes is a startling documentary centred on Harlem's New­Bed­Stuy­Boxing­Center and focuses on a number of key characters as they attempt to box their way out of poverty and the limited prospects offered to inhabi­nants of the New York housing projects. On the Ropes emphasises the drama surrounding each amateur match, and the characters' struggles to train and stay focused in spite of other

Events that are playing out in their lives. It is greatly strengthened by the presence of boxers of both genders who have privileged filmmakers Nanette Morgan and Brett Bernstein with a high degree of access into their lives.

There's a Strong Wind in Beijing (dir: Ju An Qi) had its world premiere at REVolution. Made out of and all available 16mm film stock, this documentary has its crew wander in unannounced to beauty parlours, toilets, schools, to ask "is there a strong wind blowing in Beijing?"

Unexpected pleasure was to be found in the films that may not have been the main drawcards. Audiences were treated to a num­ber of shorts at each screening. Gems included Hideo Aoyama’s beautiful video work Scherzo, which used the human face as subject, digitally distorting the surface of the image to add a complexity to the emotions acted by a series of participants. Appropriately, Scherzo accompanied the documentary Brakhage, exploring the life and work of underground filmmaker Stan Brakhage.

Richard Sowada wants to change the way people look at the industry, throwing a gaunt­let down to newcomers wishing to enter the filmmaking fray. He claims that Australians aren't as hooked into independent exhibition opportunities as they might be. Media releases for REVolution garnered 80 submissions from around the world, with only 2 or 3 films entered from Australian producers. The growing corporatisation of the festival scene has seen distributors use the bigger festivals as launch pads for many ‘offbeat’ productions. With titles skipping from festivals to mainstream screens in a matter of minutes, Sowada insists that the value of a smaller festival such as REVolution lies in its independence and ‘death or glory’ approach to exhibition and filmmaking.

REVolution Independent Film Festival, coordinated by Richard Sowada (Dakota Films), presented by Planet Video in association with the Perth International Arts Festival, venues: Luna Cinemas, Luna on SX, Film and Television Institute, Mojo's Bar, Perth, February 3-13; New Zealand, Feb 20-22, March 20, www.ommen.net.au/~dakota/ rif.htm.

Michelle Glaser is an independent writer/producer working with linear and interactive media.
Cinesonic: Magnolia

Philip Brophy

**Part 1: Singing a new species of film narrative**

I have no idea why Paul Thomas Anderson’s film is called *Magnolia* (1999). Nor do I particularly care. This is but one of the near-countless incidental beauties of the film. I have a lot to say, but maybe you’ve already heard all that needs to be said. Pompous, Pretentious, Preposterous. Long-winded, Heartless. An embarrassment. At least Robert Altman. Tracking shots like Scorsese. Three goddamn hours long. Simply, what you’ve heard is wrong.

According to the film’s writer (1999) is undoubtedly a masterpiece, whether I wish it be or not. It is a carbon-compounded diamond of modern film narrative, compressing a decade or more of suspension, vocal stream of violent drama, not unlike the steaming spittle direct from Scorsese’s own beard. It is the end of a genetic line at the midpoint party of Boogie Nights (1997) or In the Realm of the Senses (1997). Robert Altman’s vocal stream of violent drama, not unlike the a century of telltale into an adrenaline-winded, cold-hearted. An emblematic cast like the near-countless blemishes of the film’s cinematography. Altman is about time and pace; about the attempt to listen to the notion of social drift. Robert Altman’s vocal stream of violent drama, not unlike the a century of telltale into an adrenaline-winded, cold-hearted. An emblematic cast like the near-countless blemishes of the film’s cinematography. Altman is about time and pace; about the attempt to listen to the notion of social drift. Atman is about time and pace; about the attempt to listen to the notion of social drift. Atman is about time and pace; about the attempt to listen to the notion of social drift.

When that ringing sound overcome Christopher Penn in a moment of murderous rage, Altman is about time and pace. It is his perpetual tape: he induces feedback as a profound statement on the looping inevitability of actions which decimate all that we—subjects and writers of our own fiction—wish to control. Scorsese is about voice; about the pace of its delivery, the heightened points of its enunciation and all the tragi-comic clashes which define its gaily camera work. The tracking shot of the opening to *The Player* is not the tracking shot of the rear entrance nightclub scene in *GoodFellas*. Nor is it the tracking shot of the anatomical precision of *Goodfellas*’ *GoodFellas* (1997) or in the TV station of *Magnolia*. P T Anderson’s tracking shots are dictated not by location value, character insight, plot machination or wannabe authorship, but by music, I contemplate that *PT Anderson* about song—and as such is virtually a new species of narrative when compared to the likes of Scorsese and Alman.


eral, song especially. Equally significant is the way these films employ songs, many of which would have yielded me decidedly less pleasure beyond their cinematic placement. Waging a critical battle against all sense of ‘taste’ in music, these films uncomfortably inhabit my mental space despite my measures hereunto. I am the windmiller of what my cinematic mind imagines them to be. From Lee’s fundamental reliance on the ‘r’/’soul ballad, to Zaneck and Goodtimes’ *The Big Lebowski* by Roy Johnson (Bayle Rayatta) does a drug run near the climax of *GoodFellas*. PT Anderson’s use of Goodbye Stranger is meant to create a psychosomatic space wherein we become ensnared by both the song and the cruel tragedy which unfurls around Donnie as the song reaches its own goady epiphany. Donnie is of course oblivious to the song, yet we share his trauma by having it amplified for us by a song to which he is indifferent.

That is what PT Anderson can do with songs. It is a device, an art, even, which he has doggedly honing since *Hard Eight* (1997) and Boogie Nights. Don’t take my work for granted. In the liner zone, *Magnolia* CD he writes: ‘Like one would adapt a book for the screen, I had the concept of adapting Aimee Mann’s songs into a film. *Magnolia* became even more apparent on second viewing, so reading this quote afterwards was gratifying and inspiring. This genre of film is one of my greatest touches and I will probably not like *Magnolia*.

It is working beyond your ontological scheme of cinematic cinema: it is working in the dense fibrous sonorum of pop music, record production, and the strikingly ambivalent evocation specific to lyric writing. And if you don’t know song—its filigree sociocultural point and plane—then you will likely have difficulty in comprehending the grain of *Magnolia*’s narrative voice and how it speaks to the audience. To muddle the two and song lines which define its story. *Magnolia* reaches new heights of ‘vertical narration’, where everything is told—as songs do—all at once. Despite all the claims to its liberating play with the imagination, literature is comparatively burdened by its own linearity, so when PT Anderson chose not to adapt a book for the screen and chose a set of songs by Aimee Mann instead, this unspoken—unmade—a mode of narration only laterally connects to those narrative forms we expect from cinema. *Magnolia* is thus a timbrel text which must be listened to in order to be read.

People who reductively and programmatic think filmmaking is about ‘telling stories’ really should just roll over and die. They say they want storytelling if it is some universal essential act, when what they invariably seek is a bourgeois mish-mash of classical Greek theatrical dogma, countless Judeo-Christian hang-ups about authorship, states left over from Joseph Campbell’s limp leaking dick, and a PDF file downloaded from a Sid Fields fanboy site. All this freeing over plot, structure, tension, space, time, truth, honesty, meaning—all dished out in mean-spirited, narrow-minded terms of condition. Territorialised, category-rationalised, fractured, in all the name of a cheap mimetic humanism which even dogs would find suspicious and unconvinced. Notably, *Magnolia* falls abysmally under such strictures. Following the surreal ‘preface’ to the film, the interior logic of a character-based movement to *Magnolia* unfolds. It fucks with your aural consciousness so deeply it’s like being shot at close-range and not feeling the pain until the dealer shoves the needle into you. It tells you so much and with such an excess of similarity you sense loss of narrative linkage and progression. Deliberately so. *Magnolia* is not about biblical resonances, chance occurrences, fatalistic ares and other linear logic which it soardonically quotes. It is about the dissolution of narrativity in the confluence of multi-

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Mixing with the whatsisnames at Popcorn Taxi

Kirsten Krauth

It’s the morning after the Oscars and Russell Crowe’s on TV: “It wasn’t as trying as I thought it would be...I’ve got to get this isolation honestly. Was he having a bad hair day? He didn’t have a smile planted every time Billy Crystal threw the camera in his direction. He didn’t even show up on the red carpet. He looked so very...alone. Where was Al? The cheersquad? Of course, I don’t watch the Oscars for the stars. I don’t give a stuff who wears Versace...giggle...giggle...Drew...my gown was made for me...designer...giggle...Cameron...giggle...clearance...blush—no, I’m there for the little guy, the whatsisname, the bespectacled buddy who won for The Matrix, the ageing hippies hoping for their bit in social justice in the short doco category, the Aussies who never get a chance to grab the mike off their Yank counterparts, the speech(es not in English like Wajda’s or in a garbled mix a la Almodovar) that are always the best.

Which brings me to Popcorn Taxi, a weekly e-paper by kids where the young becomes front-of-stage, a mix of short films, features and introductions. Cinematographers, producers, directors, editors, writers (and the occasional actor) come in for a fireside chat and Q: and A with an ideal, highly film literate audience (see Clare Stewart, page 18). Dion Boorke popped in last week and Saute Porter drops by tomorrow. Recent guests have included Win Wenders, Alex Proyas, Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, Bruce Beresford, John Sayle and Bryan Brown, along with the premiere of a new independent Film Four Jacks.

After Dion begins to relay his latest Jepson adventures, I realise he’s filmed some strikingly contrasting visions of Australian landscapes including a few of my favourites—Floating Life, Pratzie, Holy Smoke—you can almost smell these films. They linger. Chanting to John Curran (director, Pratzie), it’s apparent that Dion knows how to stamp his creativity on any project he’s involved with. He is an improviser who aspires to making it up as “you go along”, happiest when capturing the “essence of what a moment needs.”

In Floating Life, Clare Lavignes inducing perception of hard, glaring subarbia translated into overexposing 2 stops on everything, a radical process creating a burnt-out urban landscape.

Holy Smoke was shot in the Flinders Ranges (SA) where the landscape was “seductive but hard”, the “cutting” was a challenge compared with the diffused (poluted) light in Europe and the USA. Dion describes how Jane Campion gave him a big scrapbook prior to the filming, full of random references—fabrics, text, colours, photos—which helped him assemble the film’s style and colour palette, the rich pink and greens and coloured glass of the hut where Harvey and Kate are captured, the way the light plays inside as a series of fluid layers which work inside to a darker core. About Pratzie, he talks of the importance of “picking up the mood of the day” when you’re stuck in a small studio with a couple of actors and not much room to move. Smoke became the key, creating a tobacco-stained environment for the characters to play out their dissolving worlds. Both John and Dion agreed that the cinematography would counter the grunge element of the text, maintaining a sense of control and composition, revealing the beauty in decadence.

John describes Dion as “unflappable” and “slow” and I like his unwillingness to compromise, his refusal to be pushed, even when speaking to an audience. This too seems to fit into the Australian landscape and adds a counterpoint to the Hollywood ego he manages the star in a session with a gun collection in his trailer, the star who refuses to have his face filmed in direct sunlight.

If you want more than gossip, Popcorn Taxi is the pottery. It fills the gaps between the films and the hype, a rare chance to hear Australian filmmakers talk about their practice in detailed and practical terms outside the film festival circuit. It is expansionist and inclusive in its screenings of (often excellent) short films. It puts faces to names. Most importantly, it happens every week, fostering a sense of community and ongoing dialogue, and offering recognition for names not so well known. It’s what the Australian film industry needs right now.

Popcorn Taxi is an Initiative of filmmakers
Gary Doust & Matt Wheeldon, Wednesdays, 8pm, Vaillalla Cinema, Sydney.
www.popcorntaxi.com.au
The number of Australian screens has doubled since the beginning of the decade, from 851 in 1990 to 1748 in 1999 with the rapid expansion of multiplex and megaplex venues (www.afc.gov.au Fast Facts 2000). This figure is not mirrored by a corresponding increase in the variety of product. Of the 258 films released last year, 68% were American and they accounted for an 84% share of total box office while 13% were from non-English speaking territories accounting for 3.4% of the box share (www.afc.gov.au Australian Films—1999 Box Office Share). This hardy reflects Australia's multicultural make-up. The fact that there are markets for other cultural product is indicated by the Australian Film Institute's recent Hong Kong Film Festival, which saw a 200% increase in box office returns from the previous year, tapping a large Asian audience base.

The ideal audience, the audience that eludes Australian films and films from cultures other than America, is a cinema literate audience: an audience whose ‘lifestyles…conjunctions of habit, desires, accident and necessity’ (Colin Mercer, cited in Melbourne Women of Creative A divergence: Mapping Australian Cultural Policy, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000) are geared towards more global, less Americanised, rhythms of consumption. Debra Verhoeven, in her discussion of Scott Murray's Centenary of Cinema trailer, acknowledges the function of his compilation of Australia's cinema history. It serves as a reminder to the audience ‘that they are in a sense what the films have ‘missed’—an audience that is anything more than an ‘ideal’. (Deb Verhoeven: 'Introduction (pre) facing the nation', Twin Peaks: Australian and New Zealand feature films, Darnell Publishing, Melbourne, 1999). The Victorian state agency Cinema Victoria's development of Federation Square, continually acknowledges the market and cultural value of a well-educated audience. This value was reiterated by producer-turned-screen culture advocate Sir David Puttnam in his recent lecture: Screen Literacy and Cultural Morality in the Digital Age. Puttnam delivered the first Greigson lecture to be presented by Cinemedia in a decade, and the event represented a public commitment by Cinemedia and the Victorian State Government to the importance of an educated audience. It is also a concern shared by distributors. In the AFC report, Frank Cox, director of NewVision Films, claims that “the biggest change is in people's viewing habits, what kind of films they want to see. We don't find the same level of support for specialist or arthouse films as we did a decade ago… I think it's purely an audience thing.” State government agencies, commercial distributors and cultural commentators are recognising the value in developing the literacy of filmgoers. Federal policy must follow suit.

In her survey of recent Australian cultural policy, Art and Organisation, Deborah Stevenson refers to Simon Malloy's examination of the arguments for the value of government arts funding. Malloy claims that lobbying strategies are predicated on the belief that ‘the benefits which emanate from ‘cultural production’ are not recognised by market forces’ and “so governments have a responsibility to recognise the ‘market failure’ and subsidise their production.”

Inherent in this belief system, is a hierarchy which elevates the intelligence of producers/authors above the intelligence of the market/audience. Fine arts policy, particular -ly since Keating's Creative Nation, has become increasingly aware that this hierarchy is neither culturally nor commercially viable. There has been a broad policy shift which recognises the need to develop audiences through a more informed marketing and through education, reducing the distance between the art providers and the end users. Australian film policy has lagged noticeably behind and the gap between development funding for production, and development funding for consumption and reception continues to widen. The government must recognise the market failure and implement policy to address it. It must also implement policy which can inform the market by informing an ever expanding audience about the value of participating in a diverse cinema culture.

Clare Steuart is Screen Events Officer for the Australian Film Institute.

The South Australian Film Commission (SAFC) has also announced the upcoming production of a low budget flicks to be produced in SA. The film is called Energy Time. The story is about the youth market (straight to video): Scratch (young doco makers drawn into a deadly
game with their subject), Moosh (an outreach town whose residents have mutated due to a toxic dump) and Bodylockers (the horrific implications of residents of an outreach town coming face to face with their clones). The films will offer local crews and actors 40-50 weeks of work. For more information, contact Victoria Gooday at SAFC, tel 08 8348 9356.

The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group presents its Open Screening on the second Tuesday of every month. The screenings are open to all members of the public just by signing up for free. Recent events have included live soundscapes and the group just toured Darwin. There are plans for Sydney and other Australian cities. For more information on super80netspace.net.au or visit www.cinema.net/super8.
Adelaide Festival was an epic of invention, Archer hoped, give it a go. Works, a debate over ideas about an, price... Andriessen-Boddecker... A festival rich in commissions it was decided...AWR was inventive...Archer hoped, give it a go. A festival rich in commissions it was decided...

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The spirit in the body of the festival
Zsuzsanna Sobolcs
Architectural Forum: Peter Sellers and Ken Matona, Fezehah, March 17; Light Houses, Plaza, Adelaide; Fortuna, Botanic Park, March 17; Lokzhimriyana Subramaniyam, Adelaide Town Hall, March 18
How many angels dance on the head of a pin?
Something approaching thousands, I suppose: a towering, over-populated image which has never enhanced my spirituality. And what can an angel do with a sewing pin? Peter Sellers tells us, however, that the Sewing Pin is a small object, fashionable everywhere, everyone’s fingertips. Now she is existing. Is this a difference not just of mathematics, but of relation-ships? And is this not a huge gap in attitude about where the beatific side in our lives.
I’ve been struck at this festival: into hope, out of despair, into wondering about possible worlds, alongside wondering about existing ones. Gronowski says our bodies are organs, or instruments of thought: if so, then we’ve been quite a wortkout.
In this forum, Seller sways language about the upsurge, over-populated image which has never enhanced my spirituality. And what can an angel do with a sewing pin? Peter Sellers tells us, however, that the Sewing Pin is a small object, fashionable everywhere, everyone’s fingertips. Now she is existing. Is this a difference not just of mathematics, but of relation-ships? And is this not a huge gap in attitude about where the beatific side in our lives.

The Sewing Pin is a small object

Designer standards, mission accomplished
Diana Wekes
Robyn Archer, Paul Grabowsky, Keep up your standards, Adelaide Town Hall, March 19
There could have been no more fitting finish to Adelaide Festival 2000 than the Archer-Grabowsky fusion, Keep up your Standards. Physically, it is an ensemble of women (see where your hair is lower, and the world promenades through, or armchair in battle on screens), many women, backs arched in a dance of prune discomfort, or fascism when a child’s drinking of the varnish is
There is no doubt about Archer’s credibility as a performer. Despite the harrasing schedule of the previous evening (during which she planned to sleep), she seems to have managed. There is not the smallest indication that she is tired, out of form or menstrual phase. Right from the start her masterful delivery of Stevie Walker commands immediate respect and establishes an elegant, yet informal, conversational rhythm. The humour is grand, the sentiment genuine. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says.
As we enter the theatre, later that evening-the associate artist redefined, impeccable

The Theft of Sita

Ream me 36 April - May 2000

"in the morning the sun rises," she ends with everyone pointing at us. For this 400-year-old story of the abduction and rape of Sita, the wife of Rama, the festival’s central figure in the Hindu epic Ramayana, it is a moment of joyous liberation. As the episode of Sita’s abduction by the demon king Ravana is enacted, in the shape of dance, music, and animation, the audience rises to its feet and remains standing. For the last time, as Ravana is about to be defeated by Rama, the audience roars and hails.

The Festival Theatre

Nederlands Dans Theatre

Immersion

March 19

Theatre of light, pen, ink, milk, ink, ink inco the everyday moment. In this forum, Sellars speaks of the capacity of light to cut across the domestic world, eventually destroying it with an emotionally wrenching but plainly stated finality. These paintings, lenses, ink and paper, body and history and identity generating an engrossing world, another culture another time, richly and precisely coloured, contoured and lit, directed with an artist’s eye, written with emotion and composed with a glorious minimalist pulse (echoing visual recurrences and repetitions) surge over us and into us and transformed into rich, cinematic arcs and sweeps, converting simple handwritten observations into moments of sheer longing, love, anger and pain.

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Who wants to see something that is the work of a performer. Despite the harrowing schedule of the previous evening (during which she planned to sleep), she seems to have managed. There is not the smallest indication that she is tired, out of form or menstrual phase. Right from the start her masterful delivery of Stevie Walker commands immediate respect and establishes an elegant, yet informal, conversational rhythm. The humour is grand, the sentiment genuine. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says. "in the morning the sun rises," she says.
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Touching lightly
Virginia Baxter
Light/House, Adelaide Festival Centre Plaza; Red Dice, Bill Seaman, Contemporary Art Centre of SA, March 17; Convent of the Archivist, Glen Murcutt with Robyn Archer, Adelaide Festival Piano Bar, March 7; Robbery Without Ball, Lucy Guerin, Space Theatre, March 5

On the Adelaide Festival plaza there’s a display of lightweight structures—light houses. Architect Glenn Murcutt in a conversation with Robyn Archer refers to designing things as needing to have a level of transparency allowing legibility of landscape. He cites a knowledge of morphology, typology, and material as necessary for the architect wishing to touch lightly on the land.

Bill Seaman’s Red Dice quartet of Verse: The Coda of the Washing Pall, enshrined in a darkened room at the Contemporary Art Centre SA where there are cushions to lie, look and listen. It’s a beautifully complex work. A factory is explored in detail by the textures and patterns it produces in its mechanical heart. The film moves back and forth through lingering close-ups of machinery parts to long stretches of leafy windows, to waterfalls, birds in flight and eventually to a hand throwing dice. The editing a friend describes as “liquid.” The voices (Seaman’s own in English and another in French) are mellifluous. They remind me of other soft male voices of contemporary America, their musings are rhythmic and diffused. Percussion and metallic beans are the mechanical heart. The simple set of a wide ladder shaped stage and drums set as opposite corner downstage create an anticipation as the instruments remain unseen and silent in the unfolding work, their purpose suspended. Percussion is created instead by the bodies of the dancer; they shake their hands so that their fingers slap together, hit their faces against their shoulders. Banging on a drum the sound of metal, a hollow sound stamp, hit the ground with the weight of their bodies. But the rhythm is bigger than this—there is a staccato play of action and stillness that reminds me of the stardust of Zaki Dhiabat’s dancing in Pour Anjou, the blink of anticipation it caused. The waiting-for-something-to-happen is diffused here by any dynamic function that drives toward a climax, consisting instead of micro-dramas within the rhythm of the work. The whole piece is defined by an steady force that seems to kick it all along, stop go go go, manifesting in a frenzy of swinging limbs, then a quiet moment of mouth-popping. When the drums do come to life, they too were governed by an alien force, finally jumping out of Anjou’s hands altogether.

This all amounts to an improvised feet throughout the piece, although it is simultaneously apparent that this is not how the work is structured. It is this sense of something happening-as-we-watch, bearing witness, that goes as lost in contemporary dance, the choreography ‘taking the stage’ so to speak. These bodies seem to be very much in the process of doing rather than thinking. 2 steps ahead or operating from a distance through muscle-memory. And this isn’t a type of dramatic expressionism either. It’s as if the effort to articulate through movement can be seen, witnessed, and becomes intricately tied up with what is trying to be said. These faces don’t speak for the body but with it.

Le Silence is about a century of war and the violent oscillations from action to stillness, and the violent effort to speak through the body perfectly constant. A constant level of despair and hope for Africans. What is also striking is the interaction between the 2 performers which also seems to change, running the gamut from tenderness to rapaciously; one awkwardly carries the other, wips his brow, knocks him on the head, checks out his feet. Compassion, worthlessness, tragedy and pathos are all evoked in these moments that really make up the bulk of the action. Dancing is isolated into formal segments that suddenly burst open into joy and an undeniably life force. A very special performance...
ing a few blind punches at "arts wankers." This brought on the depressingly tiring argument about "elite" art versus the "art of the people." A para-
graphic from a review on Bill Seward's work was
thrown to the crowd and duly savaged. To his
credit, chair Michael Crichton gave right of reply to
Seward who with customary courtesy made a sim-
ple plea for plurality. Harley Streten from Urban
Theatre Projects in Western Sydney urged more
vehemently for community artists to embrace the
new or lose touch altogether with their communi-
ties. Rumour has it that this speech earned Harley
a post-fest hug from shockheaded Peter Sellars.

I've seen no more affecting depiction of com-
mony than in the new work by Les Ballet C de la
B, Joe Op Bach. On behalf of the artists Robyn
Archer dedicated the opening night performance to
the late Dame Roma Mitchell who had expressed a
strong desire to see this work. This is the company
who rattled and seduced us at the last festival with
La Traviata Compiler. In Joe Op Bach we observe a
community in all its poignancy and resilience. The
work mixes contemporary dance, performance and
circus tricks and by juxtaposition returns the music
to Bach to "the people." The classical music is
ignored, silently complained and occasionally
blasphemed danced to. It comforts and stirs. This
work about people living on the edge of heaven
and hell, in its turn created from the observations
in all its poignancy and resilience. The
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to Bach to "the people." The classical music is
ignored, silently complained and occasionally
blasphemed danced to. It comforts and stirs. This
work about people living on the edge of heaven
and hell, in its turn created from the observations
and experiences of a close community of perfor-
ners working with director Alain Plant. To disci-
then and then itien, the line becomes wavy in
full stretch, length, see its capacity for endurance,
balance, watchfulness, its peripheral consciousness.
We observe edge, that edge, and in this scene of
madness and serenity, an adolescent observer watches an
adult exhibition. A small child wanders the stage
and at one time or another is calmly attended by all
the cast.

Unlike the transient population of La Traviata,
in Joe Op Bach people who live in one place gather in
communal space, the roof of their apartment
block. Throughout this work we hear the burble of
human talk, the little girl cries, women shout
dogs, musicians chat between sets. An air-condi-
tioning duct interrupts the action and the glowing
renditions of Bach by musicians and singers. And
more, Automata, Automatons, groups pushing/unch-
ography, some mimic moves for a time, then aban-
don them. What slowly unfurls is the coherency
that emerges despite difference and just as often
because of it. There's no resolution and more
than just a few moments. In our sequence a girl
 dressed in white takes confidence to the stage
and then discovers there's blood all over her dress.
At first she's embarrassed then defiant, then she
washes her hand and resumes the conversation. The others
ignore her, a man tries to hide her, he helps her remove
the soaked clothes eventually torn from her while
a man shouts "Dirty bitch." Like many other
summary reports, this story gives an out
sense of predetermined stage time. It never really
finishes; there's no line between that and the next
when something equally captivating happens. This
is a sublime hybrid performance. "It was worth being
alive to see," said a friend.

As I watch La Ribot performing her Mad
Dedication, I'm thinking about the 25 Years of
Performance Art Conference at Sydney's
Performance Space in 1995, in which Noel
Sheridan and Mike Parr had laisy fin about the
incursion into the pure form of performance art by
people with more theatrical intentions. I suspect
Maria Ribot would turn their ears pink, I've heard
her refer to it (unofficially) a performance artist
with a sense of humour (yeh, yeh). But it's not
simple. Though she clearly knows her way around
a pair de bou (high art/classical dance) her pieces
excuse expertise (postmodern performance)
or obvious displays of artfulness (performance art).
Performing naked with only a dye for com-
fort (performance art) she sometimes looks like
Buster Keaton (pop culture/art) but without
the viruosity (performance art); one minute she's
in an intimate relationship with the audience, tim-
ing us as we successfully achieve one minute of
reflection, contemplation, meditation and silence
in real time (contemporary performance). "Very
well done," says she. Next she is a demonstration
model attempting a set of difficult instructions in
her rear-end suit or a grunge dress with foam
rubber wings running on the spot (theatre). La
Ribot also casts aside notions of ephemerali-
ity, and creates a tidy model of artistic enterprise she has
bit upon the idea of selling her distinguished perfor-
mances (commercial artist). Peter Sellars says money
is like sugar, you shouldn't spend too much time
thinking about where it comes from, but for La
Ribot her distinguished prophecies propel the
work and are free to attend any performance
anywhere in the world. In the end it's the brave
presence of this artist shifting across a millionfold of
definitions that holds my attention during her per-
formance. She reminds me of an exotic bird caught
inside the confines of the Space looking for a way
to get out.

Another day, another forum on community and
Robyn Archer deflects a poison dart from Michael
Crichton about artists as people in black who only
talk to each other and refer to French theory. She
believes in finding ways to take difficult or chal-
enging work to the community. However, for her
it is just as important for artists to talk to one
another—it makes for more and maybe better art.
The Adelaide Festival is, after all, a major meeting
place for a community of artists. After the forum
I talk to a performer/worker/community artist who
tells me about the man who came up to her
after a performance and told her he had a polka
 dot on point with an ugly device on which he
tried to hide his face. The piece for a while she
said. He wanted her to auto-
graph it: "To Eddie," This festival, she's signed up
for a workshop at the Playhouse tomorrow. Next
week she'll be talking about working with
kids at risk in her community project in Western
Sydney.

Art is about "not knowing," says Howard
Barker about "living the new life," says Sue
Thomas, who runs an online community writing
project (inAct) at Nottinghaim University (Verse
Forum). Bill Seward "encourages us to think
beyond what we know." For photographer
Brynwn Wright, (Essential Truths Readily to Hand)? Each mark is laid over by others. By their
marks cross bird, marks made by water, the
inscribed paw marks of my dogs and the bare
footprints of Mansingina women who walk beyond
the lines of mangroves in search of crabs. Their
marks will cross mine.

In the spirit of reconciliation I offer my own little
contribution to community improvement. What
we re-program all the poker machines
beyond what we know. But he does have rhetoric
to the church. The performer (and Antonio)
speaks to the audience, "This festival, on
his hear his voice, barely vocaled, we hear his breathing.
Barker intones to speak. Antonio exhales.
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 acclaimed performance by young local talent, directed by Alix Macarthur. The evening's programme included a selection of pieces from the late 19th century to the present day, showcasing the diversity and richness of Tasmanian music. The concert was a celebration of the work of female composers, with pieces by composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, Slow Love, and Slow Dusk. The evening concluded with a rendition of "Glorious, G/Supercillious, G," a work by Linda Marie Walker, a composer and visual artist known for her experimental approach to music. The concert was a testament to the richness and vitality of Tasmanian music, and a reminder of the important role that music plays in our lives.
happy to be in the mix. Not in a confused way, but as if about to shatter intended sense. Stevie Wishart composed the music, played violin, hungrily, and, electronics, and sang.

This atmosphere that music "becomes"—not an atmosphere that is "provided" by sound, as if part of the set, or of the conditioning which implies (implures) emotion, time, tense, etc—is here central to both works. And it is about the music "becoming" itself, and making itself separate, to be controlled as language. (In the case of Giulio Caneva, as rhetoric, as speech, and conversation, and demand, and statement, and declaration.) This sound is not A Scope, thankfully. Instead it's a world, transitory, restless, repetitive, focused.

The two 'scores' are not equational, although they both work a language, or make a language workable or active, impossible too—they are that sort of matter or material. Each, a rich 'thing,' sound as a thing, sonorous, crossing the space of seeing, A, and the, voice of 'everything'—and because it can't be single, being made-up of vibrations, it is already of the 'unlikely'. Romeo Castelluci writes in the program for GC, "It (awareness) is an awareness that borders on instinct (and inevitably ends up in tragedy)—It is being aware of lifting the game language to the unlikely, increasing the stakes to the limit of chaos, probably. Yet, and so it happens in the sound, even though it is composed, produced, timed. If Duchamp's 'The Large Glass' was sound, it might sound like Castelluci's composition: a condensed poetic language (the thing about this thing is that it is thing, and cannot be attended only via evocation—it's like the metal chair on stage which walks around, it is evocation (it's pretend) of 'nothing'—just itself). What (feeling, desire, love) comes about then is a need to consider (make-up) a language which with talk of sound—specifically this GC one. As it is spatial, like a room or a mad or a desert or 'history' (as met). But not analogous, this is in trouble, and a bad trouble in this work.

(The live music of Stevie Wishart is more easily witnessed as sound-track, less object-like, but is nevertheless a form of sound—a-week in parallel with another, creating a resonant 'between-ness'.) I'm sure Castelluci has read all of Duchamp's notes. Duchamp wrote: "One could find a whole series of things to be heard (or listened to) with a single ear." With a single ear... what does he mean? And... yet... I thought I heard a voice, so I came this way. (I was touched by Stevie Wishart's voice. It was, almost, the only low voice in Slow Loss.) The voice comes from inside, like a fluid; each voice its own voice, each a voice of possible voices—I answer, I hear, I ask, I answer, and someone says, that you, yes, it doesn't sound like you at all alright? The voice makes speech (and this was part of the rain of GC, more ruined than the 'landscape'—and maybe only another single ear; if there are two ears, then it is necessary to listen elsewhere with the other (with one ear to the ground, for example). Voice shared, and this sharing is not about meaning. It's 'thing.'

It might be that the sound for GC was the voice of invisible matter, or of matter long lost, of sound, for example). Voice is shared, space—and maybe only audible work in parallel with another, creating a resonant 'between-ness'.

Our one but one we are many

Stephanie Rodak
Beyond the Pale, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia

Who are these people? From which direction have they come? And how shall we know them? Beyond the Pale means outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Historically, the Pale referred to Calais when under English jurisdiction; or an area of Ireland under English jurisdiction; or the areas of Russia to which Jewish residence was restricted. It is a phrase related to restrictions and authority, borders and discrimination. The reference to the pale in the 6th Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art has many links: there is a paling fence made by Ian Abdullah who also includes a milk pulp in his work; there is pale skin painted by Julie Dowling, pale skin which is still Aboriginal skin; there are confronting works by Gordon Hookey who does a lot of swearing and paints a piggy John Howard humping Australia. Brenda L Croft end her catalogue essay: 'Don’t fence them (Indigenous people) out.' Well, Aboriginal artisans are certainly not fenced out of the gallery. Much of their artwork is about their culture, their history, their contemporary contexts, it has a strong didactic level as well as humour, such as Destiny Deacon’s dolls and gollies. Photographs show Darren Sissons as a ghostly presence in various locations in Adelaide; Michael Riley considers the arrival of Christianity; Rea's work replicates the aura of a museum display, Aboriginal people as targets of both ethnography and ethnographic. Through their artwork, the artists, communities and experiences come into the gallery and into the consciousness of the people who see the work and understand that Australia, the continent, the country, the nation, the land, holds all these experiences. The work also says a lot about the people living on the land, their history and social presence.

How long have I been looking at Aboriginal art?

My knowledge stretches back to 1972, when I was lucky enough to be shown care paintings on islands near Groty Eyland in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Respect, wonder, fascination were my responses. I remember travelling in a slow boat through a world of islands, the clear sea, tropical rain, and a small shark following us in the shallows, stoned like turtles on top of other stones. We fished, we cooked fish, we ate fish, saw frill-licked lizards and watched out for crocodiles. We visited Manningridges by light aircraft and boughed basking. I became aware of behaviour regulations when a man could not travel with or speak to or even look at his mother-in-law. There was segregation. I saw Third World living conditions. There was knowledge and revelation, power and powerlessness. I took away and kept with me the notion of another country, another prior country in the 6th Adelaide Biennial. That this was what they were posed/ clarified voices: this work. This area that music 'becomes'—no other music in the world, it was one long interlude, one long work in parallel with another, creating a resonant 'between-ness'.

Aboriginal art poses a problem precisely because, since it is defined only on ethnic grounds, it is extremely heterogeneous and eclectic. While some works in the category are readily identified on formal grounds as 'Aboriginal', many others are indistinguishable in formal terms from paintings produced by a community of European descent. Through its diversity, 'Aboriginal Art' as a category challenges the traditional boundaries of the Western paradigm of representation of world art without the categorical subdivisions; it is a denial of traditional art-history. The global significance of the category 'Aboriginal art' as presently constituted is that it includes, in an ethnically defined category, works that would equally fit into that dominant unmarked category 'contemporary fine art.'

I pulled out this quotation from Murphy because he goes on to argue for the removal of boundaries between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art. In coming down the stairs to the Biennial the first work that you see is Fiona Hall's 'Occupied Territory' (1995) which is not really part of the Biennial, a marvellous work, a work of marvel, in which small glass beads and wire form the shapes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous plants, fig, pear, angophora, acacia, oak, banksia and Norfolk Island pines. The next thing you see is the sister basket made by Aboriginal women in mission in the 30s. Links and interlockings. The strong Adelaide Biennial that I see, perhaps for 2002, does not divide the Indigenous but mixes them together. Clinton Nairn's spats of bleach connect with those of Dale Frank, Mann's Adam Cullen upstairs in the Male Painting Gallery. Hey. How do we evaluate artworks, decide what we like and why, in terms of sense and sensibility, urgency, passion and justness in paint and canvas? If I am told there is meaning in a work, will I find it there? Or do I need to feel it against my own senses, my own experience?

To my mind the most outstanding works in the Biennial are by Long Tom Tassapanaka. These paintings visualize Arabic writing do that of Usbi Napsaram. Kitay Kamella and Lena Nyaibhi also show strong works. Gerrie Huddleston's essentially native paintings are imbued with care and detail. Then there is Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley's No Shame Productions video, I don't want to be a badge.

This Adelaide Biennial of Contemporary Art provides a portrait of a people, a nation, diverse, wide-flung, capturing tradition, striking out into the future. Who is the audience for the Adelaide Biennial?

And how shall we know them?

Dismantling chance

Kristen Kranitz
Verse: The Other Writing, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, March 3–10

Desire

Want to do something: Do it

Do something without wanting to

Do something wanting not to

Be done to

Done

Cornelius Cardew
Sclerodrine compositions, 1967

I'm cooking with Ronald Brodsky. We're dismantling a cake. First we remove the cherries, "scrape off the butter cream", disassemble, separate the filling using a rubber scraper, and then video plays backwards. I'm in the reading room at CASCA, navigating through Suzanne Treister's eccentric art world. It represents the diversity of world art without the categorical subdivisions; it is a denial of traditional art-history. The global significance of the category 'Aboriginal art' as presently constituted is that it includes, in an ethnically defined category, works that would equally fit into that dominant unmarked category 'contemporary fine art.'
for sardonic, everything. For Fluxperformer number 8, it’s enough.”

In Australia there is a popular term called ‘limping’. It permeates everything from horse racing to budgie racing. The term is used to describe something that is not working as it should. In this context, it is used to describe something that is not performing as it should. Then sit down. Gee up and bow it’s evolved. I..."

...in its playful use of such, I refuse to perform.” Then sit down. Gee up and bow it’s evolved. I..."

...in its playful use of such, I refuse to perform.” Then sit down. Gee up and bow it’s evolved. I..."

"For breakfast; Habits; A Relationship trace a lineage “ in realm of hypnecct, to help people..."

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afther looking at a word for an extended time (said George).

The beauty and excitement of Fair is its running of 4 spatial scenes, as if it were
increased incrementally, as if it is always (in the end) in the moving-body. There is little to look at,
except the height and width of the stage, and the movement. The manner in which the pleasure of performing
for the sake of dance—not for the telling of a story with dance. Dance for dance,
the dance as itself.

The pleasure is dance itself, or a particular
type of dance that "builds" a world by geomet­
tical means. A dance of "a poetic" vision, visual
which opens up inside one, a presence which is
personal and startling (as one returns from some
state of "emptiness", where you are lost or disoriented
in one's absence): "Taken to its extreme,
the pleasure of space leaves towards the
right into the distance, to the edge of the madeness."
(Bernard Tschumi)

The relationship between De Keersmaeker's
cost designer and the music is close without
being illustrative or suggestive. There's a similar
strength, like a holding pattern, in both forms:
they leave each other alone. This I liked, as it
assisted the time (timing, bear, rhythm) of
the space-becoming (becoming an experience
of strange-faces, of face-events). The body was
overwhelmed by the "sudden" (which is too
humanly bare, slightly off-balance now and then,
and drawn to one's attention to effort, work,
and ethereal, suggests that it deserves more of our
attention than we are allowed. Even so,
and Cantonese. utcides seem a must and would
(while sitting in a chair) doesn't matter, up,
the moment. Furthermore, black stage,
and the Monkey King cartoon, tumble and
twist in a continuous way, driven and
embracing the meaning of his passion for
history and myth, and
its beauty and excitement of

This 4 phases looked like this to me:

Phase 1: low stage, few words projected large: Viola Phase, for instance.

Viola Phase, the third movement, is a solo, a
work for the Viola on the stage, the dancer's
domain. A circling, lyrical, phase, which edged
toward abandon, only to withdraw, and fade,
leaving balance look in the rectangle of light in phase 4 a counter ro the
close, light fall, and bringing the arms
aqua. For the rest. He didn't want to see
dancing in one's absence) : "Taken co ics
And then word came that the "good things"
which opens up inside one, a presence which is
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Eastern Connection 2: new realisms

Mike Walsh

International film movements generally spread first through the established pattern of isolating a small number of auteurs. In 1998 the Australian Media Resource Centre inaugurated its Eastern Connection series with a collection of films by Wong Kar Wai and Takeshi Kitano. For EC2, the MRC's curator, Ruth Cross, has assembled a group of films which adopt a more social realist orientation. Cross explains that her objective was "to show what is happening in those regions now, how it is affecting people on a social and cultural level. It is quite dark material dealing with social disintegration."

The films were chosen from the Age of Independents sidebar of last year's Hong Kong International Film Festival. Jimmy Choi, a director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre, who played a major role in that event, accompanied the films to Australia. He defines independent filmmaking in Hong Kong thus far, as consisting of only a handful of filmmakers and a mere 2 feature films.

One of those features was included in this section, Love Will Tear Us Apart (dir. Yu Liik Wai, Hong Kong, 1999) takes as its subject matter the alienated lives of economic migrants from mainland China to Hong Kong.

The aim is to produce a dystopian vision of Hong Kong in line with what some critics of postmodern culture would say are the prevalent conditions throughout Western society: the reduction of any sense of historical continuity to a series of isolated images, the commodification and alienation of sexuality, and the resultant dispersal, or flattening out, of subjectivity. Yu attempts a return to realism through purging away stylistic elements to signal his rejection of melodramatic forms. He rejects elaborate staging and cutting as well as linear, dialogue-based narrative and emotional performance styles. Most importantly, non-diegetic music is replaced by a heavy overlay of atmosphere tracks consisting primarily of instrumental andronic noise. This leads to a thematic resolution through the opposition of silence and electronic noise for the 2 central protagonists.

Yu's 1996 documentary Neon Goddesses looks like a sketch for Love Will Tear Us Apart, as it tackles the same broad social terrain and even contains several anecdotes which are fictional in the later film. This time, Yu deals with young women who have left the countryside for the socialist disco infernos of new, enterprise-driven Beijing. "People no longer address me as Young Lady, one of the subjects asserts of life in the capital. As much as Yu's fiction film attempts to de-dramatise its fiction, this film takes its orientation to documentary form from Jean Rouch in presenting an anecdotal and static view of life on the ways its protagonists emulate wider social change.

Rounding out the emphasis on Yu Liik Wai as a central figure within the new Chinese realist cinema is Xiao Wu, a 1997 co-production between Hong Kong and China, on which Yu functioned as cinematographer. The main character is a pickpocket, a petty criminal who has been unable to make the subtle transition to entrepreneur. At one moment the pickpocket summons up all his historical self-consciousness in describing himself as "an artisan—I work with my hands." Many of the traits of Love Will Tear Us Apart have been tried out here, with pared down long takes and a sound mix which brings forward atmospheric tracks.

Swimming on the Highway (dir. Wu Yao-tung, Taiwan, 1998) evokes metaphors of documentary as a blunt instrument with which the filmmaker flails away at reality. In a series of intertitles, the director keeps on telling us that he doesn't know how to proceed in relation to his subject, a friend dying of AIDS. Both Wu and his subject conceive of documentary as being a confessional space akin to the psychoanalytic situation, though neither is able to improve the therapeutic scrips necessary for transferece to take place. André Bazin once wrote of reality yielding up its truths under the unblinking gaze of the camera, but here the existential encounter between camera and subject yields only the consciousness of an unfathomable space and a despair that can never be reached.

Kai Ng's Dreamstripes closed out the section and presented a marked contrast to the films which preceded it. The film begins from the familiar analogy between film and dream but puts a new spin on it through the introduction of virtual technologies. Ng (who was also a guest at EC2) sees Hong Kong as an ap; place from which to consider technological change as he explains that it "has always been a place of transition. You can look at yourself as dislocating but at the same time you can see yourself as travelling very light, and I think technology implies that you can put away your attachments and be a disengaged mind. But that can be scary too. People have to put issues aside like: 'These are my roots. This is where I'm settled. This is my reference point in the world.'"

The film fits into very current themes of exile and diaspora as it deals with the potential for technology to allow the exile to imagine herself in 2 places simultaneously. Although the mechanics of the sci-fi plot get a little unwieldy as the film progresses, the heroine uses a computer program to enter her dreams but ends up losing in the dreams of her elusive lover, Charles. Ng deals with the opportunities and dangers of occupying what we now like to call hybrid places, as the film moves between Canada and Hong Kong, and between female and male subjectivities. Perhaps the most interesting places that the filmmaker tries to inhabit are the surface of the image and the psychologies of his characters. He seems impressively at home in the former, laying a great deal of care on the wide screen compositions and vital blocks of primary colours.

As Australia's film funding institutions grow increasingly closed-minded about screen culture and particularly screen culture activities not directly related to local production, it is important to stress the value of seasons like Eastern Connection. Not only do they give us insights into social worlds different from our own, but they allow us to consider filmmaking models different from those currently employed in Australia.
WriteStuff: writing screen images

Hunter Corday

Each year the Oscars highlight the particular isolation of the screenwriter. Over the course of several hours a large number of prices will be given, but only 2 will be for writing—Best Screenplay and Best Adaptation from another source. Only 2 writers will stand in the spotlight alongside the many actors, directors and producers, editors and supporting others to be acknowledged for their work.

Unfortunately writers are not stars on the night of nights, not seen as central to the process of making movies in the way others are; though, as the introduction to William Ford’s The Screenwriter looks at the Screenwriter puts it, without the writer nobody works.

This book consists of a series of interviews about the craft of screenwriting and also the jockeying of working in the film business, of haggling to deal with others who are in the spotlight. Those interviewed are both young and established, successful and struggling, they talk openly about the big issues: why names are removed from the credits of films; the problems and benefits of close collaboration with a director; how to cope with the lure of dumbed-down television; why critics should be ignored. What emerges from these conversations is that the experience of writers in the major industry, Hollywood, hasn’t substantially altered from the early days of Nanadell Johnson. Certainly what might have changed, in career terms, is the focus of a writer’s life—few cross the screen for theatre and back again (David Mamet is an exception today) and most struggle with TV as a way of earning a living while writing screenplays.

The problem of television is central to the lives of contemporary writers. Louis Carlini puts it clearly: “there’s only one reason you create whatever you’re creating on television and that’s to sell a product so when you buy that set of circumstances, then you also buy all the censorship and everything else that takes place.”

In almost all new feature film viewed as “proper” writing and working for television as a compromise, and the core problem for TV writers is lack of control over their work. Stirling Silhillan, a writer and producer with credits from The Village of the Damned and The New Centurions to the Naked City TV series, says, “There’s no possible way for a writer to control his work. I think the most he can do is try to preserve as much of his original intent as he can, therefore he should wear as many hats as he’s able.”

Nanadell Johnson agrees, using the analogy that once the writer hands over the script to the director it is like launching a ship, and from that moment the captain takes over and the ‘builder’ has no rule in sailing the ship. Of course there are degrees of collaboration and the old studio process, where often the writer and director didn’t meet, has gone, but even in the moment of success the writer can be sidelined. Richard Roundtree recounts that when MASH was screening in Cannes and went on to win the Palme d’Or, we were only invited to France after some considerable pressure was applied, but was not included in the press reception for the film when the main prize was announced. For a once blacklisted writer who had suffered enormously during the McCarthy era, this must have seemed like a return to the bad old days.

The interviews also chart a change in what writers put into scripts, reflecting a gradual disassociation with literature and a more succinct image-based form of screenplay writing. Silhillan recalls that when he started writing, his scripts literally described the snooker holes in the film but now he writes master scenes only. For example the script of The New Centurions has the following: INTERIOR APARTMENT—SHITTY.

Walter Newman says his screenplay describes characters or action on a “need to know” basis only, and Louis Carlini tells of writing: I Never Promised You A Rose Garden where scenes were constructed like haiku poetry. What this suggests is the power of the image, for its own sake, and the resignation of the writer to the process by which others also imagine what the image might look like.
AOL-Time Warner: bye bye freewheeling web?

Ashley Crawford

In 1995 the outspoken American author Kathy Acker was taken off-line by America On-Line.

"The real issue in the merger is who controls broadband," says Sydney media theorist McKenzie Wark. "The cable systems are going to get broadband up before the phone companies do, and so the Internet/TV merger will happen first on cable systems. AOL Time Warner are positioning themselves to control cable access, Internet subscribers and content. It may be the usual messy merger that bogs a company down for years, or it might provide the kind of monopolistic leverage that the shareholders want and that the rest of us should fear."

According to BU Sinha, the founder of the cyber magazine *Mondo 2000*, there is a real danger of people being seduced by the giant body, but, he says, given the changing nature of media it will be a short term problem. "There is a very real chance that there will be a substantial pocket of clueless people for whom AOL will be the Internet," says Sinha. "They won't know the difference between the two. But in the cultural and business environments we have now, how long can that last? Less than a single generation certainly."

Richard Metzger, editor of the New York-based online magazine *Datalformation* (www.datalinfo.com) believes the internet is already overly crowded with cultural detritus. "Well, look at the current state of the Internet... it's a vast wasteland... cultural landfill. I think that all of the punditry chattering about the AOL Time Warner deal neglect to ask themselves: 'Do I care about this content?' And I think most people will answer 'No, I pay it no mind, I only use email.' Beyond the MGM movie catalogue and CNN, the value of this stuff, content-wise is, to my mind, fairly negligible to AOL."

The fear many express is that this will allow the mainstream to dominate the internet. Music that might be defined as alternative will be crowded out.

Metzger points to the failure of *Time Warner Pathfinder* site and asks why anyone would "want to look at the same exact stuff with a different URL?"

"With the amount of sheer white noise going on with all these newly minted.com spending millions of dollars on prime-time advertising campaigns where their product or service is only distinguished by whether it's 'Whoopie Goldberg or Gena Davis advertising their product, what chance do these businesses have anyway?"

"The Internet was always just a delivery service, a better conduit than a fax machine... Anyone thinking that they can start on the WWW now and garner an audience is dead wrong. It's a way too crowded field and let's face it, turn on the TV and see just how thin the talent pool has been spread? The herd has been thinned, already, and it's all gonna be downhill from here for the foreseeable future..."

Even the technology editor for *Salon*—an AOL content partner—saw the merger as a disastrous precedent, writing that "AOL Time Warner's interests are now aligned opposite those of a freewheeling, independent Internet."

With its substantial music and cinema holdings Time Warner will inevitably gain greater power to move to new markets. And many express is this will allow the mainstream to dominate the internet. Music that might be defined as alternative will be crowded out.

"I don't fear the mainstream," says the lead singer of US band Pere Ubu. "I fear the people who fear the mainstream. Media, politicians and general public have dedicated themselves to retraining the ignorant mass of ordinary people. The internet is an exciting tool. History can be rewritten, science invented, political thought channelled, morality redefined. These are the people who succeed in companies like Time Warner and AOL."

"It's hardly surprising that corporate policy is to marginalize protestism. So the real danger is not to pornographers and social renegades, but to the mainstream by means of a process in which the 'authorised' reference sources become a handful of authorised internet sites rewriting history to tickle the market and conforming truth to avoid offending.

Genius P Orridge, whose bands Psychic TV and Throbbing Gristle are renowned in alternative circles, is even more apocalyptic. "Financially we are in the throes of hottest passion. Everyone is doing everything else in a corporate manner, a bunch of a barricading organ, complete with intrigues and perversions. We would do well to recall the last days of Rome when everything was possible and the sacred and profane unified in power."

"What we are witnessing is the copula of gargantuans entities whose tendrils probe into and feed off almost every living being on earth. It should come as no surprise that these various entities occasionally absorb each other like amoeba. What once were corporations are now sentient beings a little like feudal warlords in the Middle Ages. They have their iconographic banners, their heraldic crests, and they wage wars of consuming attention until new territories succumb to their power. A great, and ironic difference from the previous Middle Ages is that in years old, soldiers and camp followers were paid salaries. Now the grunts, serfs and strap-hangers pay their Feudal Lords for the privilege of wearing their Lord's icon in return for their service."

"AOL and Time Warner merging is part of this catastrophic process, as is the ethnocultural tribalism everywhere. We are entering a new feudal system in which corporate super-entities will wage Jihad upon each other until one blue micro-chip bond conglomerate is positionally to encompass omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence and digital infallibility on behalf of all remaining human beings."

We are watching an anti-intellectual coup of a willingly sedo homo-sapiens by entities we imagined we created, but which really are independent entitiy at this point with their own agendas and megalomaniac cravings."

However the internet is an inherently anarchic environment. Individuals have already claimed the domain names anti-intellectual.org and anti-intellectual.net and of course they've even installed a pornography page at aolubameister.com with the slogan "So steady, no wonder I'm number one."

AOL Power Play may have met its match in Georgia resident Christopher Alan. He claimed the domain stephenbence.com (Stephen Case is the chairman of the new entity) and then composed an online rockabilly song about it:

"When you bought 'Time Warner' we were all impressed/How come you can't buy your web address? You may be a big shot down at AOL but I'm the one that got your URL!"
In the liner notes to retArded Eye’s 1997 film Superpermanence, Experimenta’s Keely Macarow notes that the film’s digitally rendered appearance as a hand processed experimental film “confounds the populist myth that digital = slick techno geekdom!”

This aphorism neatly sums up the spirit of Experimenta’s signature program of 1999, Manifesto. The title of this film (part of Experimenta’s 1999 screening program in September) was suggestive of one of the key themes of Manifesto, longevity. Macarow’s didactic use of the film as a rejoinder to public opinion on the subject of digital art also anticipated the sense of challenge in Manifesto.

Manifesto was a series of events aimed at reviewing 20th century experimental media arts and its continuation in digital practices. Manifesto literally captured the art of the present and sealed it for posterity in a purpose-built pit that will reside at Melbourne’s Scienceworks for 100 years. It is fitting that in its last program of the 20th century, Experimenta made a commitment to the future, a commitment to its own present.

It’s difficult to know what the late 20th century will make of the digital prints of Brook Andrew and Brenda I. Croft, the video installation of BIT (Bureau of Inverse Technology), Chris Knowles’ soundscape Beam—Me—Back, or the web-based installation Greylands, produced by KIT, an international group of artists based in Australia, Canada and the US. These pieces are part of a collection of 8 works deemed representative of their time. But time present may be very different from time future; the mediating technology that (in most cases) is required to run them may be dead media in 2009. Curatorial issues of inclusion must have been a breeze compared to the archival decisions about what would actually survive for a century in a time when we will have include a VCR! Digital video will probably be a memory in 50 years. What about wooden boxes? Too combustible. What’s enclosed state of the art iBook or the clay writing tablet of the 21st century?

The time capsule was designed to be more than an archaeological midden. Macarow and Louise Whiting (the project’s research co-ordinator) have tried to second-guess the future by including the technology that we will rely on to view the presentation of the work. But more importantly they have retained a sense of temporal, of what was (is) required for the work to be experienced as it was during the time capsule installation itself (designed by Lifford/Smith) is less an archive than a kind of memory theatre, a means of reconstructing a particular cultural event (the installation of the work as an exhibition, originally held at Span galleries) and a specific historical moment (the Australian digital arts scene in 1999). Like the manifc to of ancient Egypt, the time capsule will hopefully be more than a store of treasure for the future custodians of the past; it will be a vibrant key to understanding their own world.

Also included in the capsule were reproductions of other events in the Manifesto program, such as the outcomes of the internet media laboratory Hothouse (co-ordinated by Steve Ball). Conceived as an interactive means of exploring new media arts, Hothouse began in late October as a subscription-based discussion list and developed into a collaborative web space, in which participants could include samples of the media art they were discussing (although part of this event has been included in the time capsule, Hothouse is an ongoing project: www.experimenta.org).

Also present was a CD-ROM version of Experimenta’s first online edition of Mesh. The theme of Mesh 13 was ‘cyberbutly’ described by Macarow in her editorial as an ‘omniscient entity that may be found lurking in the cyber corridor of the school yard, the nation state, the digitised corporation or your email discussion list.’ In a very general sense, Mesh contributors set out to reveal how cyberbullies “disseminate, regulate, dictate and infiltrate digitised information, software and hardware.” Specifically, this culture of cyberbullying was evidenced in a range of online discursive practices, such as Dean Kiley’s brilliant expose of the powerplay of academic mailing lists. Using the discussion of the death of Princess Diana and JFK Junior as exemplars, Kiley constructs an hilarious and ingenious taxonomy of the postures, gestures, rhetorical moves, subject positions, intimidatory tactics, self-characterisations, other-caricatures, disciplinary gambits, administrative threats, and plain old verbal bashing-up’ that manifest when academic communities get together online.

Zen Cinema provided a real sense of the coalescence of the past with the future that Manifesto was trying to achieve. It was successful in reminding us of the synergies between historical moments of experimentation in media arts, which implicitly established the premise of projecting the digital arts scene and its avant-scene into the present of another century. Combined with Manifesto’s September screening program, which featured the work of contemporary Australian and international experimental filmmakers, Zen Cinema reinforced the convergent nature of our engagement with and critical understanding of the emergent digital arts scene (fittingly, Convergence was the title of a series of forums on art, culture and technology presented by Experimenta at OPEN/Channel during 1999).

Manifesto was a successful event that culminated an active and fruitful year for Experimenta Media Arts. As an event it was a commendable and memorable expression of Experimenta’s commitment to fostering an active and informed media arts culture. Manifesto’s singular contribution was in its determination to see that new media art carries with it the historical signatures of media past and present. I feel confident that when that time capsule is opened in 2099, those present will feel an uncanny sense of familiarity with the past of their own present.

Manifesto, curated by Keely Macarow, Experimenta Media Arts, November, 2-13

"Generative processes have been used by artists for decades. Now, as the computer becomes the medium of choice for many artists, composers and designers, process acquires new form and meaning in the computational realm."

So ran the blurb in the call for participation in First Iteration—Australia's first ever conference addressing this important area of artistic research and development. Almost immediately a flame hit the recoule email list with a complaint about the 'testosterone' orientation of the event—mainly I think due to a misunderstanding addressing the definition of the adjective 'computational.' However on the day males certainly did predominate.

Why? Women are very well represented in the arts and Brenda Lauser has put to rest the 80s chestnut that computer science is a male 'need' domain. Women can and do make excellent programmers and analysts and they make up a significant proportion of the workforce. So how come men seem to be attracted to computer programming (or, better, computational methodology) as a 'metamuseum' for artistic creation? The answer is complex and I can only summarise my opinion here. The art mainstream and, in particular, the art education sector have to accept much of the blame.

Many of the arts and humanities (psychology, social science, philosophy etc) have significantly adopted the computational paradigm, the practical arts, by contrast, lag disappointingly behind.

Nationally in the visual arts there has been little attempt to address this area with the funding and staffing that it needs. Few art lecturers can do more than push a mouse around with productivity enhancers like Photoshop. This only reinforces traditional attitudes rather than encouraging a more meaningful engagement with this new metamedium. In general, the idea of science—or a meaningful relationship between art and science—is anathema. I recently attended one research planning meeting at a tertiary institution where the visual art theorists made it clear that they had no idea what theory meant in the context of science or of the relationship between theory and practice in a quantitative discipline. For obvious reasons they were reluctant to include these concepts in their syllabi.

Music, with an established history in permutative and generative techniques, fares better. In animation too there has been a significant development over the past 20 years of tools that overcome the prescriptive and limiting aspects of traditional keyframe and inbetweening methods and stop-frame claymation. So it's not perhaps surprising that the conference keynotes reflected these areas.

Altaar Biddle, currently a researcher in the Music program at QUT's Academy of the Arts, presented the first keynote address, "Data Culture Generation." In it he considered how computational methods might alter the perception of music and lead to a new music aesthetic. He discussed process as a "way of thinking about music with an initial (...) absence of sound..." and concluded that the "creative design of musical processes might become an art in itself."

Kurt Fleischer is best known for his work in texture generation. His early animation "Knoll Real" (made with Andrew Witkin and Michael Kass) won the Grand Prix at Paraphr's '86 and received honourable mention for Prize Arts Electronica '87. He now works for Pixar ('Toy Story J & II and A Bug's Life'). In his keynote address, 'Who's Driving? Control Issues for Generative Media', Fleischer discussed the dynamic relationship between computer visualisation professionals and the animators and designers in motion picture production. Fleischer and his colleagues are able to generate animation of a field of grass in a rainstorm or armies of ants. However the results have to be flexible enough so that the designers can frame and combine them with the foreground elements that the story prescribes.

James McCarthy gave the last keynote, "Designing SuperCollider—a real-time audio synthesis language" was a first hand account of his development of this powerful digital synthesiser. As those who stayed for his workshop discovered, it's also an extraordinarily difficult tool to learn and McCartney joked that he puts people off buying it. His lesson was simple—if you want to mess around and do a few interesting things get a WYSIWYG "shrink wrapped" app with some nice sliders, dials and buttons and fire it up. However if you want to achieve something a little more significant and at the bleeding edge, you're likely to find yourself on a long and challenging learning curve.

Many artists from Europe, the USA and the Asia Pacific discussed their work and methods. I particularly enjoyed the presentations by David Chesworth and Sonia Leber about 5000 calls—their large scale sound artwork for the parklands surrounding the new Olympic Stadium. Public art too often devolves into compromised clitch as vested interests 'negotiate' the outcome. 5000 calls success this process and demonstrates a role for new media arts in this area.

The artists said of their work: "5000 calls can be seen as a kind of crowd made up of many individual voices which constantly combine and recombine in different ways. When new voices are introduced by visitors travelling through the space, they contribute to the ever-changing libretto, which is occasionally punctuated by the extraordinary sudden roar of the stadium crowd."

US artist Steven Rooke described his work: "my software begins by assembling random programs in a primordial soup consisting only of mathematical functions. Over eons of simulated evolution, increasingly complex image genomes are created, occasionally merging to form new levels of organisation." His animations, in particular, were mind bogglng! They did however prompt the expected question: "yes, but is it art?"

The final keynote was by Mitchell Mclean in "The Absract Organism: Towards a Prehistory for A-Life Art," traced the 'detailed engagement with particular processes and structures' into the arts of the 20th century, offering Paul Klee and Kasimir Malevich as examples. It's good to know that such a lucid and thoughtful theorist is creating an historical context and descriptive framework for this area of work.

First Iteration was an important event that brought together practitioners from around the world and confirmed Australia's participation and profile in this new area. Documentation, which includes the Proceedings, a CD-ROM and CD audio, can be ordered from the conference website which also announces the not-to-be-missed Second Iteration which is planned for 2001.

First Iteration, a conference on generative systems in the electronic arts, Monash University, December 1-3 1999. For more information, go to www.cse.monash.edu.au/~iterate/

Paul Brown (www.paul-brown.com) is the recipient of an Australia Council New Media Arts Fellowship for 2000/01 and is Artist-in-Residence at the UQ's Centre for Computational Neuroscience and Robotics at the University of Sussex.
Junk: the art of mindless diversion

Alex Hutchinson

Possibility: Videogames are not yet art, but they could eventually become art. Possibility: Videogames are art already but we don't have the right terms of reference yet to define them as art. Possibility: Videogames are a mindless diversion best left to children and backward 20-somethings without girlfriends or things to do on a Saturday night. Probability: No matter what I say in this little article most people will lean much harder toward the third option than either of the first two.

The first step in convincing anybody would be to throw away the term 'videogame.' There's too much baggage attached. It gives the wrong impression of the medium in the same way that 'comic book' hangs like a stone around the neck of graphic art. If you want people to take you seriously, ditching the whole 'game' scenario is probably a good place to start. But what alternatives do we have?

Entertainment software is fine as a stop gap but is unwieldy in the long term and 'interactive art' (although a pretty useful definition of modern games) sounds far too much like a header in an undergraduate essay. Which leaves us with nothing, nought, zero and nowhere to go without confusing most people or keeping the whole 'game' mess which is what we're trying to avoid in the first place.

I am not about to invent a new term. People have been trying it for years and they rarely succeed. Harlan Ellison tried to turn science fiction into 'speculative fiction' and while the term is still popular in the SF scene, the mainstream will give you nothing but a blank stare. Comic books on the other hand have been trying for years to be called graphic novels but the term has been poisoned by literary critics who wish to separate the comics they read and review from the mindless crap they mistakenly assume is the comic industry's staple diet.

We are, unfortunately, stuck with videogames for the foreseeable future. I just want you to be aware of my misgivings and the idea that neither 'video' nor 'game' necessarily apply. Whenever you read the term in this piece please replace it with a term of your own devising with a version of the following definition: an interactive amalgamation of animation and/or 3D modelling and/or text and/or live acting and/or music and so on and on, all of which conspires to make videogames very difficult to pin down, explain or illustrate as art. It might be made up of artistic media but is the result itself art?

It's probably best to look at the problem from a different angle. The one concept which both binds all these different styles of games together and sets videogames out as a different art form is interactivity. Hypermedia has already clearly demonstrated that interactivity is not an obstacle to artistic acceptance, although many people will tell you it is right out of the gate. The difference of course is that hypertext offers you passages from one lump of tradition to another, whereas a game offers you the ability to choose how you get there, when you get there and sometimes why you get there as well as where you're going.

The problems this poses in creating a traditional artistic scenario are immense. How do you create an emotive storyline or moment when you can't even be certain players will choose to follow the path you've laid out for them? How can you communicate a specific idea or message when you are not certain of how much the player already knows? These are problems all evident in hypermedia, but they are magnified in videogames. Think of it as a novel where the reader doesn't just believe she's the lead character, she can walk the protagonist off a cliff if she feels like it. Whatever your intent as the creator or author, it can always be subverted by the player.

Which brings us to the question of whether the creators intend to make art or simply entertain. It's the rather tedious art vs craft argument again and most people are ready to toss videogames in with needlecraft and be done with it, but what they don't realise is that in an idealised sense videogames are all about creating scenarios, not describing a finished product. They are not about showing the player a scene with the aim of dictating a mood, rather they immerse the player in it and allow the process of making that choice create the mood.

Videogames are not a passive medium like novels or films. They require a fresh set of critical tools if they are to be properly understood. We cannot look at videogames and say they aren't art under our current definitions because the honest truth of it is that they never wanted to be. Are videogames art as we know it? No. Not at all. Should they be seen as an art form? I honestly believe they should. I also believe that with the evolution of better technology and an eternally growing user base, the whole concept of games-as-art will eventually become a non-issue. And it's worth remembering that most everything which is art today wasn't yesterday either.

digitalSHORTS

A new searchable catalogue of the AFI Research and Information Centre's holdings is now online with access to 550,000 news clippings on Australian and international film and TV, and industry databases. The new web interface means researchers worldwide can access previously unindexed material from Australian film journals including RealTime, Metro, Movie Trader and Encore. Log onto www.afi.org.au and click on the Search Our catalogue button. Also on the website are a selection or papers from Inpog99, the 1999 AFI conference on digital technology and screen culture.

Film Australia has also launched plans to improve access to its extensive archives; the collection spans 60 years of history, comprising over 5000 productions and 8,000,000 feet of footage. The photographic collection dates back to 1911. A telecine program transferring from film to digital betacam has commenced and searchable databases will be available online by late 2000.

The Side On Short Film Festival will this year host Australia's first international interactive online film festival, Adifer (October 9 - November 2), a joint venture between Sydney-based Side On and ITV World.com (a streaming content specialist). Online voting by the internet audience will make the awards accessible to all and the festival is now calling for entries for its 3 awards categories: Best Comedy, Best Drama and Best Animation. Deadline is September 1 and all films must be submitted in digital format. www.side-on.com.au

Drive-By Film Project is a screen-based installation looking at the driver culture in Perth. Seven new works by WA new media artists in collaboration with practitioners from a variety of disciplines (Rick Mason, Malcolm Riddoch, Vikki Wilson, Erin Hefferon, Cam Merton, Yvette Merton, Sam Landels, Sohann Ariel Hayes, Marcus Canning, Emily Murray, Jo Law and Redmond Bridgeman) will be projected from 7 shop-front windows in city locations so they can be viewed by pedestrians and drivers passing by. If you're in Perth, walk on in, if you're not, go virtual, www.imogo.com.au/driveby, April 15 - 29.
John Baylis and the performing community

Keith Gallasci

What interested me over the last 3 years with Urban Theatre Projects (in western Sydney) is that I've come into community-based work with no background in it at all—in fact, having all the usual experimental theatre artist's important contempt for that type of work. And then finding out what's possible and what isn't, all the issues involved—also finding the clichés and unquestioned conventional practices within community work that have grown up over the years based on its political activism beginnings and which have become entrenched. A lot of community arts practice became embedded within the community services offered by government, local government and so on. So a lot of community arts happened through salaried officers in migrant resource centres, youth centres, in local councils. And it's delivered like a government service. There's a way of doing it and you do it. And there hasn't been a lot of questioning about what exactly is hoped to be achieved. It's still tinged with political activism but of a very nebulous sort, it seems to me. I'm more interested in the indirect, avant garde approach which is a politics of very subtly changing the way that people think about things. It won't have an immediate political outcome and it may not have one ever. That's probably the best an artist can do—shift the perspective a bit so people's imaginations open a little so that they can see something from a different angle. The political impact of that is for the people involved to determine.

What do you give to people who participate in Urban Theatre Projects?

Part of the ethos of the Sydney Front (a performance company of which Baylis was a member—ed.) was that being skilled wasn't an essential part of the work. It was more to do with the situations you set up, the imagination you'd bring to those situations. That's what I've been trying to emphasise with the participatory work here. It's been interesting artistic experiences from your imagination. You don't have to have the skills of a trained actor which, for a lot of people unfamiliar with arts practice, is associated with the NIDA-trained actor with the rounded voice. We try to downplay that and use the qualities that people actually have so that hopefully they don't come off as well-meaning but had actors in but in fact their own approach gives their performance a quality that couldn't be achieved by a trained actor.

For your audience, that means a different kind of what theatre and performance are about.

Our audience is probably about 30% city-based contemporary performance audience, 70% locals from the community, whatever that may be. A lot of them wouldn't identify the work with theatre. It's interesting that they bring it to a less pure expectation whereas the city audience may see it as an interesting branch of contemporary performance. For the locals it's just an event that's happening compared to the other things that happen at the centre stage at the local shopping centre but hopefully more interesting.

There is a strong focus in the works on local spaces, environments. To what extent does that drive the company?

It's fundamental I think. Especially the idea of local spaces, taking spaces that already exist and especially working spaces. Often in site-specific work by contemporary performance artists, the site is chosen for aesthetic reasons, the romance of the old factory, the water race, the desert. All very nice, I'm not criticising that. I like that kind of work. But our emphasis is on working spaces, spaces that people are actually in, spaces that are generating meaning every day. They're not blank. When we were doing habitation, when we were first looking for a place to set it, one possibility was Villawood, an almost derelict shopping centre. There are probably about 5 shops still open in a shopping centre designed in the 50s for 50 shops on the edge of a site for a housing estate. Anyway, we decided against that purely because the attractiveness of it was the urban desolate landscape, Mad Max, tumultuous. As artists, we could feel ourselves being drawn to it, thinking yes, we can create our own fairytale land. That's precisely why, in the end, we rejected it. There are more interesting possibilities in having a space which is covered in meanings that people are putting on it every day in their interaction with it. And it's full of people who are using the space in other ways.

What's the future for your performance ensemble?

The logic behind it was that when people come into community-based work they may be interested in the subject matter, an issue concerning their community. Once they're in the work, they become interested in performance and want to continue. This company has always had a history of, you know, we put on a new work and there'll be 4 or 5 people from the last work who want to be involved, which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't—sometimes, you have to say, sorry, you're not Aboriginal. Also it's at odds with the philosopher of the work to have this ongoing group of people when it's supposed to be about different communities. But obviously we were pro- voking some interest in performance and as long as we stuck to the rigid idea of moving on to another project, another community, we weren't able to take the interest any further. So the idea of the ensemble was to create a new level of people who were interested and who'd done one show with us. They could then join the ensemble and it's no longer about the idea of community empowerment and development. It's about professional development. It's about opening those people up to other possibilities of artistic expression, developing their artistic sensibilities. Some of that will be skills, but more interesting to me is opening them up to a variety of ways in which performance can happen. This weekend, we're doing our first intensive workshop with them. On Saturday they'll do a full day's workshop with Tess de Quincy and then on Sunday, a day-long workshop with Nico Lathouris. That will give them 2 very different approaches to performance.

It reminds me of that VCA notion of the animator. There's a possibility in there that these people might engender their own projects or help you with yours.

I'm encouraging them to develop their own performances and looking to the various outlets for that—Performance Space, Carnivale and the like, culminating at the end of the year at Performance Space in a show we'll develop over 6 weeks.

What about your life with the community. How exciting, how fraught is that?

Each show plunges you into a world which is in some ways quite a privilege. While I'd known individuals, I'd never quite understood how communities see themselves, how they interact, the issues involved, the hopes, fears, aspirations. I find that a humbling aspect to the work. Of course, people, for example, from a Vietnamese background will have a number of identities and strategies for interacting. If you know them in the context of a contemporary performance space, they'll relate to you in that way whereas they have a whole other life within their own community—like we all do.

Like the sociolinguistic notion of code-switching. When a project finishes, is the relationship between the community and Urban Theatre Projects finished?

It varies from show to show. It depends who the community is. The groups we've worked with have been as conventionally described as say, "the Vietnamese community", ie people who regularly use the word "community" through to something as ephemeral as the hip hop community, the club community, or with shows like Speed Street, the Speed Street community. Who was the Speed Street community? Just people who happened to live in that street...but to tell the truth, the word "community"...I don't really know what it means. I've used it so much...

What usually happens is that the show starts as a community project but after the first, second, third week of workshops, all that drops away and the community is the people who show up. Whatever they bring is what the show becomes. That becomes the concrete community you're working with rather than the abstract one that may be in your fancy or your funding application beforehand. So the way we keep contact is usually through those people and, for example, within the Vietnamese community there was someone a number of people we've stayed with. About 5 of the ensemble are from Vietnamese backgrounds. And they've been sufficiently inspired to develop their own project quite apart from the ensemble. They got some Ministry of Industry funding to do a project in Bankstown which we're helping them with but it's their project. Something like that was beginning to happen after an Aboriginal project (The Other Side) we did in south-west Sydney. It's currently stalled but we're hoping that it will start again and an Aboriginal Youth Theatre will grow out of that.

You don't feel like a service provider?

We've managed to avoid that. In all areas of artistic practice, I think it's in a unique space that we are. Most community arts practice is trapped in its funding sources...UTP gets most of its money from the Australia Council and the NSW Ministry for the Arts. So it's pure arts funding which means we can range widely. It gives us a great freedom. We have the continuity which most contemporary performance companies don't have. But one thing I miss is the ensemble. We have the community-based performance ensemble but ideally I'd like the company to function as an ensemble too—an ongoing group of 4 or 5 artists with a manager so things you learn can be held rather than...

...being invested in 1 or 2 people who may forget...

So that's an aim for the future, maybe in the next 2 or 3 years. It's partly a funding thing and partly that I would have to abdicate some of my authority as artistic director, which I haven't done in the fiction. It's a matter of finding a way to make that happen.

John Baylis is Artistic director of Urban Theatre Projects, based in Bankstown in Sydney's west. For a longer version of this interview visit the RealTime website.

Material is © UTP-Platform 27 co-production, Performance Space, May 2-14

UTP performance ensemble L-R: Anna Nguyen, Khue Do, Tona Nguyen, Edwina Smith, Sean O'Brien, Claudia Chitacu, John Baylis, Bac Khamb, Cicely Ponnor
Kennett's wake

Anni Davey

Melbourne and Victoria have recently endured the reign of former Premier and Arts Minister Jeff Kennett who maintained that the health of the theatre industry was reflected in its major production companies.

His doctrine was, look after the top end of town and the middle size and small theatre companies, the independent and freelance artists will prosper in their wake.

Conventional thinking about the state of theatre in Melbourne is that Jeff's penchant for importing big musicals, art emulating sporting events, caused a slow withering of the smaller, innovative, fringe or freelance companies and performers. It's true that funding has not been particularly forthcoming but theatre makers and companies are tenacious. The current state of Melbourne theatre is generally underfunded, self-subsidised but some of the work going on is inspiring in its innovation and exemplary in its development of new and traditional audiences.

Physical theatre and circus work is notable. While Circus Oz remains the only company operating on a full-time basis with funding at a respectable if not entirely adequate level, there are companies and individuals creating a fascinating body of work as remarkable for its inventiveness as for its lack of visibility. The Melbourne Fringe Festival, after 5 years of nurturing its outdoor program has sadly moved inside, commissioning only 1 or 2 pieces for the street this year. Some of the companies that emerged over those 5 years are examples of remarkable and independent success.

Strange Fruit, with their theatrical use of swoop poles, are currently rehearsing 3 companies for touring through South America, North America and Europe. They (and other companies like 5 Angry Men) are rarely seen in Melbourne any more, having developed a busy touring schedule overseas.

Discotope are Geoffrey Dunstan and Kate Fryer who first came to attention as Host Moon with flashy, acrobatic treatments of A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest. Last year they teamed up with Rudi Minier (best known from his Rock 'n Roll Circus performances) and Michael Wolpert (as writer/director/motoring) to present Risk Reduction a work-in-progress which will appear in its full-scale version at the Next Wave Festival in April. Speed Crunch Bus is Discotope's pure 'entertainment' lovechild. These stunt people bungle the stunt. It's an outdoor acrobatic piece commissioned for The Melbourne Fringe Festival and also seen at the Penfold Festival and Moomba this year.

The Melbourne Fringe Festival continues to throw up quality stuff and 1999 saw the most successful festival yet with box office returns increasing by around 30%. The number of shows presented was up too. Contributing to that success is the City of Melbourne's encouragement of the use of the North Melbourne Town Hall by smaller companies. During the Fringe for the last 2 years, it has become the major hub venue, housing 4 performance spaces which program through every afternoon/evening.

SNAP! (Catherine Barry and friends) was at the Melbourne Fringe using projected images and computer generated sound with dance and acrobatic skills. Mita Farazdjian designed the costumes. Separate at Earth involved some of the same people opening at Melbourne Town Hall by smaller companies during the fringe.

In Business as Usual, The Business (Kate Kauffman, Penny Barne and Claire Borthwok) do fantastic clown work based on Le Coq for documentary photojournalism - a cascade of envelopes bearing instructions from the performers of war with the 3 bumbling apparatus in business suits drinking tea under an umbrella. Parallax Island won the Best Drama Production at the Fringe Festival 99. A 45-minute piece about 2 people on an island, written, devised, performed and sung by Annt Davey and David Pidd, it's already been recorded for ABC Radio Drama and will go to Hothouse Theatre in Albany in August this year. Also performing was Yumi Umiumare in Tokyo's DasStoku Girl mixing the butoh form with a contemporary take on dance as cabaret.

Other work to look out for comes from companies and people who have been nurturing theatre in Melbourne for years. Shadows and Light is a one-man show by John Bolton who has recently closed down his performance school in Williamstown. This is an ode to his family and his life as a performer and teacher. John's school produced some very fine and funny performers. The 4 Nights (Josee Griffin, Caroline Grant and John Fomison) are John Bolton grads. These 3 boys do brilliant, aborsur, macaroni, musical and physical comedy. Their 5 shows - Nofy Namof, A Space Odyssey, Brian the Musical and The Magnificent Seventeen, are at their best, really fine, totally performed-genius comedies.

Zeal is Tom Lycos and Steph Nansout. In 1996 they devised a simple piece of theatre presentation in schools based on the true story of 2 boys who get their kicks out of throwing cars off verges onto a busy freeway. They hit the windscreen of a car and kill the driver. STONES has been hugely successful, it won an award for best Performance at the Festival of Theatre for Young People in Norway in 1999 and in 2000 Zeal goes to Europe for 5 months of engagements. They have a second show about teenagers and drugs called Fixxin' Bart and Magg a which has also been in great demand for touring schools.

The Smull Puppets are always confronting, vulgar and brilliant, and have a new Artistic Director, Ian Pidd, who has recently handed over the Artistic Directorship of Back to Back Theatre to Bruce Gladwin. Back to Back is the last remaining company in Victoria which supports a full-time ensemble of actors. This stability shows in the very high quality of their work, the development of the actors, and the devising process which is apparent from one show to the next. Mental is about perceptions of intelligence, and is as confronting, as funny and original (these guys sometimes shoot from way left of any field) as Back to Back always is. It is hoped Mental will feature in the Paralympics Arts Program in 2000.

Lack of funding for small companies is one problem, audience is another.

Devising strategies to solve problems, town planners use a 'fuzzy' spatial management method. If we didn't have a litter problem, in 10 years we wouldn't need rubbish bins on the street. Ego, one possible solution to the litter problem is to remove all rubbish bins from the streets (apparently this has actually been applied in North Sydney with some success). We can extrapolate on this and apply it to the problem of diminishing audiences, the bunmosseats dilemma. If this wasn't a problem, then in 10 years we wouldn't have enough seats for the bands. It follows then that a possible solution might be to create theatres with smaller capacities so that there literally aren't enough seats. There's nothing that breeds good word of mouth better than a sold-out season.

La Mama thrives on this very solution. In 1999 the company expanded to program 3 theatres, the Carlton Courthouse, Trades Hall and the original 40-seat La Mama on Faraday Street. The Keene/Taylor Project's enormous success reflects the force of work being created and not compromised by the arts-as-sport, arts-as-marketing, arts-as-product push of recent times.

Anni Davey appeared at the Adelaide Festival in the premiere season of Crying In Public Places"'s new show Skin, and with Rock 'n Riddle Circuit at the Adelaide Fringe in Love Stunts.

1999 was the year of White Collar Project. It's an idea which, after 3 years of life, seems to be on the brink of reaching a new scale. The company and people who have been nurtured in White Collar Project, have come up with a new sound and performance event that takes the audience into the heart of the CBD at night for a sensory event blending the atmosphere of a real city roof-top with the fantasy landscapes of great cinema cities, city myths with personal secrets. White Collar Project will be staged on the roof of the Hotel Coronation in Park Street, Sydney.

Nerveshell is a group of DIY artists making multimedia works which combine live performance, the spectacle and fantasy space of cinema sound and the experience of the site-specific. Nerveshell is Cathie Newton-Broad (Artistic Director PACT Youth Theatre, assistant director Company's Caucausus Chalk Circle [1999], co-creator of works with St Martin Youth Theatre, Urban Theatre Projects) and Gail Priest (sound artist, performer, singer-songwriter), joined for White Collar by Regina Hellemann (Siadtrack, opera Project), Samuel James (video artist, Space 1999, Performance Space), Shane Wynter (technical concepts, dirtyhouse.net), Drew Fairley (performer Throttle and Rantanka's The Eye 2000 Adelaide Festival) and Ben Rogan (performer Natural Life, 1998 Adelaide Festival). Through April Nerveshell is company in residence at Performance Space.

For all these people who take work home, who dream of skyscrapers, fetishile photsolutionaires, finally something to take you out of yourself. As the inescapable Olympic spectacle threatens to swallow up everything, imagine some kind of audience into the heart of the CBO at night for a sensory event blending the atmosphere of a real city roof-top with the fantasy landscapes of great cinema cities, city myths with personal secrets. White Collar Project will be staged on the roof of the Hotel Coronation in Park Street, Sydney.

Gail Priest and Cathie Newton-Broad, White Collar Project

Q: What does the white collar workaholic ask at the perfume counter?
A: Have you got anything that smells like a desk?

The team that conceived the unnerving Dead Girls Party (1997) are back with White Collar Project, a new sound and performance event that takes the audience into the heart of the CBD at night for a sensory event blending the atmosphere of a real city roof-top with the fantasy landscapes of great cinema cities, city myths with personal secrets. White Collar Project will be staged on the roof of the Hotel Coronation in Park Street, Sydney.

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Out of Cairns and off to Townsville, Brisbane and Tokyo, and from a long line of projects since 1994 focused around the body in the environment and how to transgress the constraining of the landscape, comes Bonemap—the wild edge. It’s a site-specific exploration in collaborative art-making where audiences will enter the ‘wild edge’ between tropical Australia and urban space. Field trips across North Queensland in 1999 and a movement research stage at the Choreographic Centre in Canberra in early 2000 have allowed the artists to develop the work as a set of discrete modules of performance, dance video, photographic and object-based exhibition, audio CD and temporary sculptural treatments of different environments—the Tanks in Cairns, Magnetic Island and the Brisbane Powerhouse. Rebecca Youdell says, “We can present Bonemap in myriad situations, indoors or outdoors, responding to the environment.” Russell Milledge says, “We’ve photographed and filmed in a lot of messed up places that have been abandoned, and, through our work, tried to regenerate them as sites for cultural inscription. We can still give a place cultural relevance without having a big impact on the environment.”

Certain modules will suit some sites better than others. For example, Milledge says that The Tanks in Cairns is a round thousand square metre theatrical space where film can work. At the Forts on Magnetic Island, power might not be available so film or projection is probably out, but film or projection is probably out, but certain modules will suit some sites better than others. For example, Milledge says that The Tanks in Cairns is a round thousand square metre theatrical space where film can work. At the Forts on Magnetic Island, power might not be available so film or projection is probably out, but film or projection is probably out, but

The principal artists are Russell Milledge—digital media, video, performance, lighting and staging design, Rebecca Youdell—choreography and performance; Glen O’Malley—photography, photographs, slides and exhibition; Michael Whicker and Paul Lawrence—sound score and music performance. For Milledge and Youdell, “Living in tropical Australia, environment is a lifestyle choice which seriously informs our practice. This is a work aiming “to observe Australian cultural identity through ecology.” RT


**Marinheiro**

*The sun has bleached the blood away...*

At Performance Space 2 - 14 May (Tue - Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm)

Buried in the dunes at Warrnambool is the wreck of a 16th-century Portuguese caravel... so it’s said. Forget Britania. Portugal ruled the waves. Its mariners, conquering the world in company with spices, oil and rum, were linked to a high culture defined by Luis Carmona, poet and imperial myth-maker. Marinheiro revisits his epic poem The Lusadia. In the sight of all that’s happened since. Join us on a voyage of exploration into that teakensous space on the map where myth and monstrosity blend.

199 Cleveland St Redfern. Bookings: 9686 7235 $18 full, $12 cont/groups of 6, $10 Tue/Wed/Sun. $10 CFMEU/MUA members.

**My Beautiful Laundrette**

*12 >15th april 2000 performance/installation justine poplin melanie velarde*

10.30pm-midnight My Beautiful Laundrette 161-163 Brunswick Street Fitzroy 3065 with support from The City of Yarra and Rento

**Shaken**

*an opera for the body*

Created by Natasha Moszynski

A 21st Century Fairytale. The dead of night. 9 vibrant bodies storm the zone of sleep.

Sydney Season 4 May to 14 May @ PACT Theatre 228 Railway Pde, Emuville 8pm Wed - Sat, 6pm Sun Bookings: 02 9550 2744 Melbourne Season 23 May to 27 May @ Irene Mitchell Studio at St Martin Lane, 5th Floor 8pm Tues - Sat Bookings: 03 9693 0760

199 Cleveland St Redfern. Bookings: 9686 7235 $18 full, $12 cont/groups of 6, $10 Tue/Wed/Sun. $10 CFMEU/MUA members

**Next Wave Festival & PACT Youth Theatre presents**

in April...

POULTICE/bride residuum 6 of 6 an exhibition/performance by James McAllister April 6 - 19

Runt a riveting tale of suspense and intrigue starring Frumpus... Wed - Sun April 12 - 16

Cenacolo Secondo [the second last supper] showing of a work in development by version 1.0 live arts project Sat April 22

White Collar Project by Nervecell plug into the veins of the city... rooftop, Hotel Coronation Sydney Wed - Sun April 26 - 30

in May

Marinheiro by Platform 27 & Urban Theatre Projects a performative exploration of Portuguese epic poetry & imperial myth Tues - Sun May 2 - 14

The Smiling Prisoner Australian Theatre of the Deaf a new work by Tony Strachan Tues - Sun May 17 - 28

whores, flicks & action chicks showing of a work in development by Alicia Tolbot Punters, please wear clean underwear Showings May 18 - 20


R

RealTime 36 April - May 2000 35
Frank: between method and performance

Brad Haseman

Three Frank women: 5 performers acknowledging a debt and drawing on the same inspiration—Caroline Dunphy, Jo Lloth and Lisa O'Neill are long standing members of Frank: AustralAsian Performance Ensemble, established by Jacqui Carroll and John Noble, and committed to the Suzuki Actor Training Method. Those who have followed Jacqui and John’s ensemble over the years know this is not the place for dilettantes: their physical training is rigorous, demanding expectations are set and transcendent performance is the goal. They have been enormously successful too. They are regularly invited to perform in the master, Tadashi Suzuki, at his annual international arts festival in Toga Japan and at festivals around the world. All this has been achieved against the odds from Brisbane, where they have carved out a devoted following for their shows, which use the focused and intense Suzuki performance style to evoke and re-stage texts. Their production of *The Romance of Orpheus* for example brought these forces to bear with mesmeric power. These three Frank women performed in Japan last year and will return for more performances in May. The progam is made up of 3 pieces, 1 from each of the performers, bound together by a shared design and creative impulse.

The design of the performance space in the intimate Metro Arts theatre is immediately arresting. Designer Jodi Cox is a visual artist who specialises in creating installations and our first encounter with the piece comes as a stunning tableau of the performers frozen in Cox’s installation. Clustered in two groups, long elastic tendrils hang from the ceiling to meet the floor in white puffies and evoke a crisp Japanese minimalism. The lights shimmer off these suspended tendrils and between them Jo Lloth in white satin babydolly pyjamas, Lisa O’Neill in sleek, red evening wear and Caroline Dunphy in a long white bridal gown, further sculpt the space and take it to the audience, silently demanding ‘here we stand, now watch us.’

Jo Lloth’s piece *Insme* brings the forms and stylitics of Suzuki to elaborate the lives and circumstances of 2 sisters Antigone and Ismene. These twin characters are set up as binary opposites and in a focused and elemental way Loth, armed with a single umbrella and length of rope, enacts the struggle between them. The movement has many of the Suzuki trademarks, the stooped body, intense and deliberate, fused with stillness and penetrating gaze. This heightened performance style suits the high emotions of the Sophocles text. But for all these physical and emotional fireworks, the piece fails to engage. The slabs of text are too large—the sources of tension obscure and the characters insufficiently differentiated to allow the specific dramatic context to breathe. As an acting method Suzuki seems best suited to detail the lingering anguish and pain of known and specific moments rather than the emerging subtleties of characters and their interdependence. This lingering on a moment provides the basis of Caroline Dunphy’s piece *Waiting for Yunghi, waiting for Hamako*. Dunphy has drawn from a Mishima work to investigate the psychological state of a woman during her 3 year wait for her lover at a train station. Not unlike Jenny Kemp’s *Black Sequined Dress*, which examined the psychology of a single moment (a woman slipping while visiting a nightclub), Dunphy examines eternal waiting and repeated disappointment as empty trains arrive and depart. The strength of this work is that it is both specifically and metaphorically grounded in the space that she defines with newspaper and fan. Dunphy alone uses the design installation too. In a moment of poetry she moves behind it, waiting but hiding, hoping but fearing.

In *Sweet Yofi* Lisa O’Neill achieves a succesful melding of Suzuki and contemporary dance in a swish, virtuosic display of technique and control. She moves from full-on Suzuki stamping to her own idiosyncratic wall play. Working from a centre of gravity in the body pivotal to both forms, O’Neill has taken the power of stillness, the focused gaze and crisp articulation from Suzuki to write her own performance. Unfortunately this remarkable achievement is not amplified in the piece as a whole as it remains a stitching together of earlier, discrete works.

The performers seek a deeper understanding of the internal physics of the Suzuki method in performance. For Lloth it is in relation to characters and their interrelationships, for Dunphy it is in the detail of a repeated dramatic moment and for O’Neill it is in the intersection of Suzuki and contemporary dance. By the end, it appears the Suzuki method will only allow itself to be used on its own terms. It seems too complete and codified a system, too monolithic, to really come under the agency of other forms. In Lisa O’Neill’s work we can how see her contemporary dance language has been extended by incorporating and appropriating Suzuki but it is hard to see how Suzuki as a performance method can be transformed by contemporary dance or by the psychological exploration of dramatic characters or contexts. Monolithic systems can change and perhaps will change, but a glimpse of this may happen in *three Frank women*. Just once or twice we witnessed the performers taking libraries with the form. The quacky almost parodic way O’Neill removed her Suzuki slippers and Dunphy’s most extreme fan work introduced a playful and self-referential hint to the performance. In these moments, the reverence that surrounds Suzuki is uncovered and the earnestness with which many approach the method and keep it inviolate is exposed. Just as William Empson has repositioned classical ballet technique so the Suzuki method awaits its transgressive genius. Maybe it’s about to happen in Brisbane.

three Frank women, performed by Caroline Dunphy, Jo Lloth and Lisa O’Neill, set design Jodi Cox, Metro Arts Theatre, Brisbane, February 23 - March 4

Fooling with the panopticon

Keith Gallasch

Everyone wants one. What’s a performance work without one? A panopticon a la Foucault out of Bentham. Paranoia plus entertainment and politics. Let’s turn the watchers into the watched, the audience into unwitting performers. Get in a specialist, Denis Beaubois, who’s turned watching the watchers into an art form, shooting and confounding those cameras that track us in the streets, or relaying images of the surveillance to a screen at the front of The Performance Space. Next, look where you’re at. Tasmania. Port Arthur, one of the first model prisons of the 19th century designed after Bentham’s proposed panopticon. Get in an historian and a cultural theorist. Consider how surveillance, a mere architectural point of view, can replace physical with psychological punishment, can anticipate, a la McLuhan, the camera right to the point that technology replaces architecture. Okay, that’s the conceptual stuff sorted out. Time to get Roar Films in to work with Beaubois to extend his surveillance artist explorations onto a larger scale and to recreate some of that 19th century prison ambience. Think. What are you going to do to the audience? History reveals the prison chapel, a mini-panopticon in which every inmate was separated from the other, but each still in view of the chaplain. Perfect. Designer Greg Methé can build a chapel, every audience member under surveillance, each in their separate world (sounded by PK Khut). But what do the audience-inmates see? A chapel? No. Three clowns (Katia Molina, Adam Broinowski, Deborah Pollard). A puppet? No. A circus ring. Don’t ask. See it for yourself, though ‘experience’ seems more apt. Over breakfast, mid-Adelaide Festival, I can sense Salamanca Theatre Company Artistic Director Deborah Pollard’s fervent desire to put on a red nose and torment a captive audience. “Are these clowns vicious?” I ask. “They’re innocents,” she smiles. The ideas are big, the talents are big, the mones are big, the paranoia is justifiable. What else do you want? Get along, suffer, laugh and learn.

Salamanca Theatre Company. What is Panopticon? *HMAS Huon Drill Hall*, May 9-20
Transgressive tragedy

Douglas Leonard

Fractal’s Orestesia, presented in conjunction with the Gods and Gladiators exhibition, was a one-hour adaptation of the first 2 plays of Aeschylus’ trilogy at the Queensland Museum. Their 1993 Orestesia was done ‘Butoh style’, but this densely penetrating, stylistically hybrid and humanity darker reworking, after an uneven first showing, made good sense in the intimate amphitheatre space.

Elements of Butoh were elided into movement modelled on friezes on Greek vases, but costumes and music score exhibited an Asian influence, evoking the distance of the Homeric age from Classical Greece. Experiments with delivery of the text paid off, especially in the hands of diva Alison St Ledger who handled beautifully her transitions from speech to oratorio to soliloquy. Greek drama has inspired opera, ballet, and traditional theatre. This production aimed to fuse these forms in a contemporary context.

Greek tragic theatre is linked to notions of gender. If the house is the property of the mate and his heirs, it is the proper domain of women. Klytemnestra, avenging the daugh-
ter, sacrificed by her husband, Agamemnon, entrusts him to enter the house, to go to his death. Only Kassandra, a woman with second sight, perceives, but cannot convey, what lies behind Klytemnestra’s guile. If Orestes succeeds in entering the house to avenge his father, he does so by joining forces with his sister, Elektra. Even if his resort to trickery and disguise entails further risk to his masculine stature, he nonetheless achieves his own uncanny insight. Although Klytemnestra is tragic, she is also the mistress of minnes, heart and soul of theatre. Fractal characteristically extended the purloins of the feminine: the Chorus of citizen-ry became entertainers ‘inside’ the house. Klytemnestra’s seducer, Aegisthus, seeks to consummate his father’s curse on the house of Atreus for having been tricked by Agamemnon’s father into eating his own children. Fractal’s production took this to its heart, along the lines of Alice Miller’s post-Freudian indictment of society’s betrayal of the child, and had Brenna Lee-Cooney’s Elektra die clutching the red cloth issuing from between her murdered mother’s knees as if still attached to her birth cord; Eugene Gilfedder’s Aegisthus, surrounded by invisible Furies, speaks with the sombre bafflement of a hurt little boy: both victims of a poisonous pedagogy.

Alison St Ledger’s Klytemnestra was voluptuous and feral, a primal force defending the house against masculine violation of its integrity. Eugene Gilfedder’s Aegamnom had equal stature as a nightmare figure from childhood: you could still smell the blood of Troy on him. The Chorus (nicely articulate) were like younger siblings, questioning and mirroring their elders. Andrew Cory’s brief but strong portrayal of Aegisthus was a suitably creepy ‘uncle’. But it was Kassandra, the ‘other’ to this family, masterfully under-played by Brenna Lee-Cooney, who brought home the social consequences of all this bloodthirstiness: she was as authentically haunted and haunting as those weary faces on the television news fleeting from a war that never ends.

Aeschylus’ trilogy, through the God Apollo, restores paternal authority. Fractal’s truncated, transgressive version seems of our times.

Aeschylus, The Orestesia, adapted by Eugene Gilfedder, director Eugene Gilfedder, Fractal Theatre, Queensland Museum Theatre, Brisbane, March 4 - April 2.
Performing Hitch

10 am, Saturday March 25. The Performance Space, Sydney. The usual performance suspects and a crowd of curious strangers gather to reflect on the often lateral but always significant links between Hitchcock and performance. In an appropriately Spellbound space (Nigel Kellaway, Simon Wise) of curtains and screens, we are immersed in performances and performative papers on the subject of seeing and hearing the world through Hitchcock eyes and bodies. Open City (Virginia Baxter, Keith Gallasch) introduce the cast and between acts and perform Hitchcock-Influenced moments from their work. Produced by Performance Space, sponsored by the Humanities Research Program, UNSW. Photographs by Heldrun L6hr.

1. Looking like Mrs Bates on a good hair day, Nigel Kellaway unnervingly recreates the murder exchange scene from Strangers on a Train.

2. Nerveshell (Caitlin Newton-Broad, Gail Priest) resurrect one of Hitchcock's female icons from the 50s. Mamie sets her shoes on fire.

3. Clare Grant is all threat. Dressed in a suit, walking a little like the man himself, she authoritatively makes her way from the stage to confront the audience with nothing more than a look. As John Gilly's slow-mo Psycho score crescendos, she takes a pen from her pocket and ticks off a list of... what? What!!!

4. With an eye to the cut, the fit, the stitching, Simon Rees expounds on the grid of a new wave of modernity in the 50s manifest in Cary Grant's impeccable, ever-resilient Brooks brothers' suit in North by North West.

5. Against a backdrop of food scenes from Frenzy, Lesley Stern takes us on a meandering circuit through Bondi. There's Hitchcock in the everyday but if you leave your hysteria at the door you can avoid treading on plot.

6. Karen Pearlman, with an expert AFTVRS crew, recreates scenes from Rear Window from the perspective of the dancer "Miss Torso". With one eye on the dancing and one on the theory of the gaze, Miss Torso heads off decapitation, confounds Hitchcockian ambiguity and throws up a few ideas of her own about suspense.

7. A besuited Edward Scheer re-enacts Cary Grant's stunt fall beneath the cropduster in North by North West, diving beneath the screen which soon shows us Vincent Gallo doing the same thing in Kusturica's Arizona Sunset to demonstrate, among other things, that North by North West is really a film about acting.

8. "I can't bear suspense. It terrifies me" says Jane Goodall. Slipping out of her suit and into a Blair Witch beanie and a windcheater, abetted by the dark and a soundtrack of screams and cries for help, she re-lives a reverie which was writing itself as she exited the MCA's Hitchcock exhibition, longing for a shower.

9. Recasting Rear Window as a 'silent' movie, John Potts re-scores Bernard Herrmann and re-frames some of Hitchcock's images to make us look again at the ethics of watching and our deep ambivalence about surveillance and privacy in the new millennium.
Fusing with techno-ness

Esther Milne

Have you heard the pop song that goes something like ‘I give myself permission to shine’? After the fetching subsides, what’s interesting about it is its dissemination and popularisation of an institutionalised lexicon. Admittedly, the language of Californian psychology is already widely disseminated, but increasingly academic sound bites are part of the practice of everyday life. Think ‘cars’, for example, and pretty soon you’re sharing a chariot with those hyperbolic grease monsters Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio. Cars and culture also invoke figures like Maimeri, Ballard and Cronenberg all having ‘fun fun fun’ at Autobarn. Two recent exhibitions in Melbourne speculate about the car’s theoretical and aesthetic lineage: each deals with this history in quite different ways.

On the Road—the car in Australian art draws from a wide set of media—photography, painting, drawing, sculpture—covering 1930 to the present and including about 80 works. Curated by Ted Gott and Kelly Gullett, the exhibition is an eclectic assemblage of sleek design, iconic Australian images, highoctane theory, and whimsy. Underscoring the exhibition’s preoccupation with notions of representation is the work: ‘Everything it takes to make you happy’ (1987). Stephen Bush’s oil painting is a portrait of Harley Earl who, in 1927, supervised the Art and Colour section at General Motors. Earl is shown clinging to a car from clay, one hand resting possessively on the seedy curves of his new design. Forging itself an own construction—an image of an image of a car—Bush’s painting is a production in vertiginous spectatorship. Functioning in a similarly self-conscious manner is Brian Tanti’s (1996) oil painting named ‘Alley. Streamlined, a sculpture of aluminium. As Jeff Koons’ Rabbit, the reflective surface of this piece captures the viewer within the object viewed. Tanti’s work also references Futurism with its cliché conflation of motor and matter; erotised speedwalking bodies and what David Cronenberg calls ‘the desire to fuse with technos’ (Introduction, Crash, screenplay, Faber, London 1996).

Critiquing the automotive body is a primary concern of this exhibition. In particular, CéCé de Medici’s Bodysnatcher Group (1998) explores the connections between female sexuality and instruments of destruction. Nicknamed ‘bodycatchers’ for their ability to pierce human skin, these large photographs of car hood ornaments contrive the body’s fleshliness with the machine’s sharp pomposity. But the artist complicates the fetishism by calling them “Cellbots.” These are, she maintains, “objects without a context...removed from their dangerous whole” (On the Road, Catalogue).

Similarly detached from their whole are the garishly painted bonnets and car doors occupying one of the spaces. A curious mix of irony and kitsch, these disembodied objects recall a world of beach ’n’ babies. The Ted Mulry Gang and that well known tnummer beam dont laugh, your daughter’s inside. The gloriously named Rod Ramage exhibits a psychedelic rear door of a Holden Sandman called Tropical Ianmit (1999). And Frank Lee’s airbrushed car bonnet, Women & Tigers (1987), is a cartoon confection of gils in small bikini and fully-grown bears. The stallion, one presumes, is on another panel. A highbly charged line between female and metal bodies is, of course, well articulated in the exhibition. An overt instance is Jon Paton’s Flaver Girl (1997) where a glam woman’s body is fused with a Vailant body. A homage to Pop Art and a pastiche of the garage pin-up calendar. Paton’s piece raises some interesting interpretive issues. Is this pastiche or perfection? Personally, I think it’s group. One of the problems with critiquing the ‘cars n’ girls’ motif is the reluctance of critics to recognise that girls can do the desir.
The ephemeral makes its mark

Ned Rossiter

Ten sets of headphones dangle from the ceiling, suspended over a standard issue, black leather gallery bench seat. A wall trim of red LEDs pulsate a minimum of light as hesitant visitors slide the door closed, shuffle toward phones awaiting heads, and greet for a cord of location. Dock in and butt-down for a trajectory through the sonic terrain of Anita Kocsi's installation, Inevitable Viridian.

A fighter jet roars overhead, and does it again, and again. Water trickles through the buzz of insect wings, the jets tear my belly open, my insides vibrate with the coming of warmth. A car engine ignites. Space Invader blips interject the acceleration of game arcade motor racing, index my age and reminding me how churny I am in such contexts of sensory dexterity. Electronic swamp-bugs blowflies hovering over the steam of jungle decay. Bird, water. Headphones vacilate. A twinkle of harp performs its magical segue to the loopy trip hop scratch of Indian rap. Crash! A Sunday lovecouple leak light as they enter the installation; the woman breaks: "I'm not going in there!" A hound barks, a diesel engine chugs into flight departure instructions. Waves and a gentle soprano, flight transfer and more game-blips, touchdown at Melbourne. Remain.

These samples of otherwise disjunctural places are fused into a mutable sonic terrain, refraging geocultural and historic places as a spatial ecology of sound. Inevitable Viridian underlines the primacy of vision and its sensory capacity to discern spatial limits. Space is articulated not so much as a geometric regime—though the surrounding LED's work in part to recall such governance—but as a singular encounter with ventriloquial fields of sonic association. While a physical proximity between visitors attends the site of listening and the negotiation of exchanging headphones, the immersion in sound is distinguished by the programmatic stage of the audio-loop and the solitude of listening.

It is this dual aspect of collective presence and singular encounter that differentiates Inevitable Viridian's contribution to current experiments undertaken in Melbourne in 'sound immersion'—a project, you could say, figure-headed by Philip Brophy and Philip Tammatos, exploring the sonic dimension of cinema. I don't know if there's any formal association between Kocsi and Brophy & Samartzi (also known, on occasion, as PH2), but Melbourne's a small enough town to warrant the comparison.

PH2 foreground the way sound composition and forms structure and preclude the affective and semiotic potential of the image, whereas in Kocsi's installation the image is not so much a symptomatic outcome nor a point of departure or elision. Instead, the image is simply assumed redundant through its own over-coding. Both PH2 and Kocsi seek to contest the predominance of vision and reclaim the potency of sound. Such a concern could be seen as a timely intervention into the normalising tendency of image based information economies. As Scott Lash and John Urry have written, "A visual culture is publicly controllable in a way in which a literary culture is not" (Economies of Sign and Space, Sage, London, 1994). However, inquiries into the immersive experience of sound quite obviously do not wish to reinstate the bourgeois cultivation of a critical, private self peculiar to literary culture. PH2 and Kocsi part company in the realm of reception. The collective assemblage of PH2 audiences in a cinema, an art gallery, bar or public space inevitably incorporates the noise of the location, be it audience rustling, passing traffic, or whatever. Inevitable Viridian does not architectonically construct an 'audience'. You are not positioned as collective witness to an event, singular as the perception of such events may be. While a physical proximity to others may prevail, the various orders of encased sound waves ensure an hermetic sensibility like no other.

Perhaps the appeal of sound installations lies in the relatively uncoded flow of information, and the variegated sensations evoked by processes of remembrance and invention through aural association. The idea of un-coded sound might seem an absurd and stupid point to make because we 'know' sound, and any producer of sound, be it a musician or even a child howling, is aware of the rules of composition which enable an affective dimension. Nonetheless, the capacity of sound to structure and create space is largely overlooked by many working in media arts and theory. Maybe Anita Kocsi is sensing a weariness with a certain repetition of visual codes within new media. The novelty of the ever present 'new' has become a tired refrain, and, judging by the relative popularity of various instalments of sonic experimentation in this city, the ephememeral of sound persists in holding our interest.

Anita Kocsi, Inevitable Viridian, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), February 5 - March 12 2000.

Fri 21 April - Sun 21 May

nissan perez

public lecture
Tuesday 2 May
6.00pm: FREE
UNSW at COFA
Breaking with Myth
Coping with Memory
Contemporary Photography in Israel

Nissan Perez is Curator of Photography at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and a leading authority on photographic practice in Israel.

This seminar and lecture are presented in partnership with the University of New South Wales at the College of Fine Arts.

UNSW at COFA
Seminar & Lecture presented in Lecture Theatre - ground floor/E Block of the new South building at the College of Fine Arts
[Entry off Selwyn Street] Paddington

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Fri 23 April

Painted Spaces

Chris Heaphy, Richard Kirk, Phil Jones, Simon Morris, Sabina Ott, Wilma Tabacco, David Thomas

Lucy Orta Nomadic Village

Supported by the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique and the Alliance Francaise de Melbourne.

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

to 23 April

New Republics

Artistic responses to issues of post-colonialism and republicanism by contemporary artists from Australia, Canada and South Africa.

May 3 to June 3

CLovE Hart Ladies & Gentlemen, Mr Bernie McGann

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

3 May to 4 June

Painted Spaces

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Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

to 23 April

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Helen Herbertson: the place where things slip

Phyllis Rothfield

Helen Herbertson was Artistic Director of the Melbourne-based company Danceworks between 1989 and 1997. For the next 2 years, she received a Fellowship from the Australia Council (Dance Fund). This assisted the creation of her extraordinary new work, Delirium, which won a dramatic award in 1999, and has recently been shown in Glasgow as part of the New Moon (new territories) dance festival.

But I saw a dance being done in Australia or did you go away?

All my training is Australian. Classical ballet as a little one. Then I met a couple of Sydney people, Brian Cobham and Jacqui Carroll. I got involved in the independent scene. There wasn't a lot of funding around then and people just had ideas and did them. Eventually I moved to Adelaide where I started doing a lot more teaching in institutions. I did a lot of choreography for the Centre for the Performing Arts and that was when I really started to think about myself as a choreographer. I probably spent 10 years or so in that market making work, until Danceworks happened, where Beth Shilton and I began as co-directors. Beth left the company after a couple of years, and then I left at the end of '97. I made a lot of work there.

I think Danceworks was a great opportunity to deepen my work. I remember that first year where we had blocks of 10 week rehearsals, and I said, "What are we going to do, we'll be finished in 2 or 3 weeks?" It didn't take me long to really start to appreciate that amount of time and working with people continuously. It was fantastic.

How long did it take you to make your current work, Delirium, then?

Two years. I mean, to me, it feels like it's part of Danceworks (Danceworks, 1996). That was the beginning of this particular team of people: Trevor Patrick, Jenny Kemp, Ben Cobham and myself. Simon Barley was also there.

Danceworks was about making relationships with parts of practitioners and finding ways to collaborate, whereas what's been in the last 4 years is about bringing myself as the performer back into the work. It's a very complex thing, directing it, choreographing it, performing it, collaborating in it.

Yes, looking at the credits for Delirium, you see all these names. It was like a sort of macromus or a platter.

Every component is integral. Often the way a performance is made is that you make the dance material and then you put the lighting on top and then you decide on the costumes and it's made in a linear way. Whereas all through Danceworks I was moving towards another way of operating.

Could you briefly describe Delirium? When I saw it I felt I hadn't seen anything like it. It had its own little quality. I say little because it felt small, like looking down a telescope backwards.

Where to start, what to say? Well you'd see light and dark, you'd see 2 figures sliding between entrapment and freedom, you'd see a kind of lighting interplay that allows figures to appear and reappear, in places you don't quite expect because it's so dark. Or sometimes, figures are floating as if they're off the floor. There are elemental sounds in it, you wouldn't say there's any music there. The soundtrack uses things like the sound of fire or the ticking of bells or things that are really evocative, quite pure sounds. The sound of water dripping or a landscapable or bird. Imagine if you watch it, it might feel like you're entering some kind of internal world inside people, as if you're traveling a time line or something with them.

Jude Walton: movement's third eye

Phyllis Rothfield

How do we know where we are and what our bodies are up to?

To what extent do we rely upon how our bodies feel ( proprioception, kinaesthetics), and to what extent do we depend upon a sense of how they look? Whilst some dance forms privilege visual display, and others the felt experience of moving, clearly both factors are in play at the art of movement. Jude Walton's recent exhibition, Looking for Pierre, part 1, is more than an investigation of these matters. It is an intervention, a Darwinian leap into a possible future, through which Walton is (unexpectedly) able to play God.

It begins with a group of porcelain figures, which are a curious kind of discovery of artificial or scientific perspective. Perspective drawing systems sprang from the Renaissance drawings of Alberti, who is credited with the discovery of artificial or scientific perspective. Walton's exhibition begins with a room lined with a series of computerised, perspectival drawings, twisted and warped in myriad ways. You begin to wonder whether the objects presented a re-presented are real or not. Are all those oblique lines of perspective how we actually see objects from various standpoints, or have we been trained to see these lines as reality?

Room 2 contains another kind of 'discovery' on perspective, this time our perspective upon our own bodies. Through the use of equipment (courtesy the biomechanics laboratory, Victoria University of Technology), Walton has been able to fiddle with our means of bodily perception. Room 2 is an empty space, containing a set of video goggles that can be strapped on. The headgear has little screens a few inches from the naked eye. These screens provide an external visual perspective on your own moving body (a camera linked to the goggles has been set up in the corner of the space). Visitors to the gallery are invited to experiment with these goggles.

It's quite extraordinary to see the back of your body as you dance, to watch yourself moving from quite alien points of view. I spent some time, dancing, whilst watching myself dance, combining my feelings of movement with this external visual information. Walton moved with me to offer the experience of moving with another person, and also video taped my activities just to offer yet another perspective on the experience.

Not everyone deals with this new set of 'eyes' in the same way. Some felt that they were seeing themselves from the point of view of the camera, that they were outside their own bodies. Others tried to maintain their regular field of perception. I found myself flipping between my usual feelings of movement, and this 'other' visual look which enveloped those feelings. Then I started to wonder what I looked like doing this, what others would see of me, yet another perceptual take. To see oneself live is different from viewing a record; the virtual feedback is immediate, thus, there is a sense that one can respond to the information within the ambit of the event itself. The usual closure of time is absent here.

By providing a new organ of sight, as it were, Walton has been able to provoke some kind of a new body, a new structure of perception. I remember one of my philosophy teachers asking us whether we thought Martians would perceive the world just like humans. It's clear that animals have different perceptual structures. What I find interesting about Walton's experiment is that a changed perceptual structure does not lead to the same experience for all people. It just goes to show that even God cannot anticipate the quality of individual perception.

Jude Walton, Looking for Pierre, part 1, Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, February 5 - 23
Dance film: the art, the market

Keith Gallasci

Erin Brigance is strongly motivated in organizing a festival of dance film for New York. It's not only a form that fascinates her, but it's also subject of her Ph.D.in-progress, and as reported in the pages of RealTime, she's visited overseas dance film festivals. Brigance said, "I was quite overwhelmed by the amount of support for the form in Europe and America. I felt that Australia was below the flat line in terms of the rest of the world." With limited funds, Brigance curated the Dance Lumiere project for Dancehouse in 1998. This time she's got a bit more room to move and has found a home for the festival at Sydney's Reading Cinemas—a significant move designed to reach a wider audience for a burgeoning form. She also feels for filmmakers: "there's not much impetus to make dance films if they're not going to be screened. I want to provide a platform for the work to be screened and for filmmakers and choreographers to get together and talk. The inter-disciplinary nature of the form requires an interface between the two."

While the transfer of plays to the screen is rare and most open on screen in a higher form of documentation, dance and film have joined to create a hybrid where experimentation is fundamental. What is it about dance that invites filming? "I was speaking to Damien Cooper, and he talked about the kind of limitless scope for creating spaces for dance through light. And I think that dance somehow offers opportunities for exploring different ways of staging that theatre doesn't"—purely because dance can be a lot more abstract and it open up different possibilities for context. And then there's the pure compatibility of the movement of the body and the moving camera. Dance is a challenge for film in terms of capturing the kinetic impact of human movement. But I also think it's an archival thing. From the beginning, I think the possibility of capturing dance on film was always such a boon for dancers and choreographers because there was no other appropriate way of recording or documenting their work."

Brigance, however, is not architally motivated. "It's about looking at the most successful combinations of the 2 forms rather than something that's dictated by the dance performance." Brigance has decided to hold a competition. After an initial slow response, she now has 30 entries. Competition, she thinks, is a sure way to attract filmmakers, especially since "there aren't really good networks of get-things-done." Because of the cost involved, the increasingly significant nexus of screen and live dance won't be represented by performance in RealTime. However Magpie Media's film for Sandra Parker's in the Heat of the Eye (see RealTime 35) will be shown. The film is "really interesting in terms of what they're trying to do with the camera and the performer's eye. Even just seeing the film there's a very strong link with a particular performance. But for me, screen in performance is almost a completely other genre. What I'm interested in is a festival that is at looking at films and the way that dance operates within film."

To make RealTime work, Brigance needs to attract a hybrid audience of film fans, dance additives, filmmakers, choreographers and dancers. "I've got a very high profile of choreographers because I think that's going to be an important drawcard. There'll be work by Philippe Decouflé, film Vandekeybus and Alain Platel of Les Ballets C. de la B. I think that will attract a dance audience but also dance practitioners. Most choreographers who work in film seem to have strong connections with other art forms and a lot of them have very theatrical sensibilities—such as Vandekeybus and Platel. I think there's something about the narrative history of film which appeals to those kinds of choreographers. I think we'll also get people who are specifically interested in those companies (especially after the 1998 and 2000 success of the Les Ballets C. de la B. showings at the Adelaide festival). I'm hoping we'll get the short film crowd that are interested in the potential that dance film offers for a different type of language. And people studying film, and of course filmmakers who are interested in the possibilities of dance on film. I'm hoping for a cross-disciplinary audience."

RealTime is a real live-in event, not only numerous screenings but also forums. Brigance's international guests are the joint winners of the IMZ Dance Screen Festival last year in Cologne—Pascal Magim in Switzerland and Miriam King from the UK. "Their films screen on a double bill on the Saturday night. On the same program is Mura Deb's The Spirit Moves, a documentation of jazz dancing in America in the 40s and 50s. Prior to that we'll have a forum with Pascal and Miriam about the international dance film circuit. On the Sunday, we've got a retrospective American program screening some films from AFTPvR and also the Screensound collection. Then we'll have the shortlisted Australian film-makers talking about the practicability of making their work before we run the films on the big screen on the Sunday evening."


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Sacred geometry: John Rodgers

Robert Davidson

When you started to read Dante, you'd just been reading a lot of ancient Greek texts—Esop, Sophocles, Aeschylus.

That's right and then Liza said, "Why don't you read the Inferno.?" I'd been reading the Oresteia, Oedipus Rex, reveling in the intensity.

Was it a similar intensity which attracted you to Dante?

The intensity and the structure. Partially because I had just worked with South Indian musicians (Karkanth R Mani), who have a strong connection between philosophy, geometry, music, religion—they are all interrelated as they are in Dante.

Dante worked within the concept of sacred geometry, and his poem is extraordinarily architectural in its proportions. Can you talk about how this is reflected in the scenes.

One overall thing is the use of the "specrum" for all of the rivers of Hell.

You're referring to the electronically generated sound, using pure sine tones, which is heard throughout the piece, and gradually builds to a climax over a long time frame.

Yes. It came from the idea of Hell from the bottom up, and thinking that none of that would exist (for Dante) if Lucifer hadn't been proud, fallen to the centre of the earth and so on. From this very fall, which happened in one motion, the whole possibility of human suffering and human redemption were simultaneously created with the yawning gap of Hell and the mountain of Purgatory on the other side of the earth. Satan at the bottom of Hell breathing out this contamination, resulting in the endless fall of human tears down to him, structurally that defines the whole piece. So I imagined an endless drone that is always just below our hearing, its partials mildly distorted.

You mean distorted from the 'pure', naturally occurring harmonic series?

Yes. The spectrum can be conceived of as something which reaches eternally upward in pitch from its fundamental, which you might think of as an analogy to the heavens. I distort this, illustrating the idea of bending the will of God or the truth of nature, leading to limitation and catastrophe. The distortion, which is very mild and almost imperceptible at any point, results in the fact that the series doesn't reach eternally upward, that it факt there has been a fall back down and the sound spectrum into potentially white noise, if you take it far enough.

This idea of distortion, which gradually grows, is carried through to many other aspects of the piece, such as the manner of playing the instruments.

There are a lot of means used to make each instrument's sound world a microcosm of Hell. And distortion increases through the piece—the string instruments, for example, gradually loosen their strings and become flatter and flatter, until completely slack, which creates very interesting sound. This expresses the impotence, the frozen state that exists at the bottom of Hell. The drone is distorted by increasing its length, resulting in very complex multiphonics sound, and making it almost unplayable by the third Circle of Hell.

Then of course you distort the very material of the instrument when you reach Cocytus, the frozen lake which fills the bottom of Hell, and actually replace the wood with ice.

Indeed. The flute and oboe are made out of ice at the end of the piece and are played until they melt and break.

You've made a great many specific connections to details in the poem. In Limbo, for example, you have a lot of crystalline sounds, which is a contrast to the sounds of the lower parts of Hell.

When you first see the Devil, it doesn't look like the Devil at all. And when Dante first gets into Hell, in the first circle, it's a place where he meets some of those he considers to be the greatest people in history. Limbo exists in stark contrast to every other place in Hell, but it is Hell.

Then in the circle of the Lustful, Amor, containing the figures of Paulo and Francesca, you have a very symbolic use of the instruments in which the flute is inserted into the oboe, suggesting coitus, while both are played to create a strange hybrid sound. Paulo and Francesca are eternally bound together—the flute and oboe always have to breathe at the same time—they never play overlapping phrases, they always play together. They try to stabilise themselves and fail repeatedly. Eventually everything stops, they do their act, and then get swept away in the wind again.

As you are dealing with the time art par excellence, I imagine you were interested in Dante's many motions of time.

One which really struck me was that the spirits in Hell can very accurately see the past and the future, but as it comes towards the present, their vision becomes increasingly slavish, and at the point of the exact present they've got no idea what's happening at all. This is a devastating thought, that at the end of time, when there is no more time, they will be completely shut out of existence, because there is only the present and they haven't got one.

Were there other ideas about time?

Movement is increasingly reduced towards statics, and all of the music is struggling to survive against a constant slowing of time. That led to the idea of magnification—that what looked like a dot on the page at the start of the piece was like the universe at the end of the piece, because it had been magnified by the slowing of time. Things which sounded together turn out to have great gaps between them, and show all manner of further information inside that. I was thinking of them as wounds in skin, which appear faultless, but open up as you go further in. Revealing the fraud, looking at things closer and closer.

The music tries to stay active and alive and in motion, but it's set up that eventually it starts to die and there's no way for there to be any more motion. The middle of Maldeloge there's no way according to the composed techniques I was using for there to be any more motion and the only way to go on (as in the poem) is by improvisation.

You have an interesting interaction between strict, noted music and free improvisation. This mirrors the relationship in the poem between reason and intuition. Reason begins to fail in Maldeloge.

Yes, the poem's idea is that reason would fail on its own. If Dante hadn't panicked, if he hadn't questioned Virgil, who represents reason, he may well have remained in Hell for eternity. I found it very interesting as a composer to mix improvisation and music which is noted to the hilt, having not put them together so much before, having done one or the other.

Do you think that many of the details you're discussing will be missed by most of the audience?

Yes, I did try not to lose sight of the fact that I was ultimately writing a piece of music that must not need to have any relationship with Dante's poem for the audience to appreciate it. I felt like I succeeded in that by having fundamentally musical things in operation. It must have its own musical line of discussion.

Is Hell relevant today?

Well, Murray Kane states in the program note that if you take away a mythical Hell, it will reappear through thoughts in the mind and lead to insanity (laughs). Hell has to exist in some way. If we try to get rid of it, it will turn up in ways we are less likely to be able to control.


New Music Notes

The New Music Network is about telling audiences and performers where, when and how to hear the best in new music performance around Australia. Real on and visit the NMM website for more performance details and a full calendar.

Australia's award winning ensemble Synergy Percussion continue their excellent subscription series this year by presenting some very fine performers from around the world, as well as showcasing the unique talents of Synergy's own members. Their upcoming concerts this year present such international masters as Fritz Hauser, Aly N'Daye Rose, Glen Veled, Satako Ootamura and Matthew Doyle performing heaps of Australian and world premières. Kicking off in April, a must-see is Fritz Hauser. If you missed the subscription concert on April 1, get down to The Studio at the Opera House, April 4 for a very special guest, The New York Times claims he's "one of the best drummers alive." Call the SOH box office for tickets ($31) on 02 9250 7777.

At the Eugene Goossens Hall (ABC Centre), the Sydney Alpha Ensemble will present a program of works including ex-export Vincent. On Shortages, which will be performed by other composers featured will be Finstringer, Herize, Benjamin, Berg and Gausuin. Friday May 5, 8pm. Enquiries on 02 9250 7777.

Machine for Making Sense has been pretty busy lately, and continues to evolve with Organism in May. See these creatures at the Harbourside Brasserie Thursday May 11, 8pm and the Wollongong City Gallery Saturday May 13, 8pm. Rik Rue—digiphonically played tape machine.

Stevie Wishart—violin, hurdy gurdy, voice + electronics; Jim Denley—wind instrument(s), voice, loop machine; Stewart—voice and text; and surprise guests. This is what a UK reviewer had to say about MMS recently. "Though MMS sounds like a single complex organism, it isn't synchronised like a school of darting fish. Within the group the degree of independence, dependence and interdependence are hard to fathom—much like human consciousness itself."

The 3rd Totally Huge New Music Festival 2000. A 9 day adventure inside the world of new music, Perth's premiere new music event returns with a city-wide program of premieres, world premieres, impressive line up of international, interstate and local artists, the festival offers Perth audiences a world-class program of performances, workshops and master classes on the cutting edge.

This year's Totally Huge features the work of New York innovator and percussionist David Golosfield in combination with fellow New Yorker, guitarist Roger Kleier. Other guests to be featured this year are David Threussell, Duo Contemporane, NMM members Ensemble Offspring, and Paul Lowin Prize-winner Michael Smetanin. For info go to NMM's website calendar.

The 2000 Sydney Spring Festival of New Music is seeking new or recent compositions from professionals under the age of 26 years on 26 August, 2000, for the 2nd Young Composers' Salon. One of the highlights of the festival will be the world premiere of Acoustic Pot, the Sydney young composers' performances take place prior to the B I 8pm program each night of the festival. For more information contact Barry Pews: sydney.spring@reckless.net.au

Watch this space for information on the Peggy Glenville-Hicks Annual Address to take place later in the year. If you'd like to receive the NMM's email bulletins, and for more info on times, prices and venues, visit our website: www.nmm.org.au.
Place and re-processing in new music

Jonathan Marshall

Philip Brophy claims that his reprocessing of film soundtracks on The Cavern of Deep Tones "turns the music inside out to uncover the deep rumbling at the core of the orchestral machine prior to it being forced to make grand symphonic beauty," a project common to the new music movement as it developed after World War II. Sound was stretched and deconstructed into pure noise. Tone overtook melody and rhythm as the single note or scratch became a signifier of minimalist depth, returning silence to the acoustic centre.

Music is that with which one structures the sublime vacuum. Despite fitful resurgences and continuities by artists using traditional instrumentation or novel tunings (notably Sonic Youth's retrospective of the New York avant-garde Goodbye 20th Century or the work of the Illusion ensemble and Aphids), such ideas are more likely to now be realised through contemporary sample-based music. Turntablism like DJ Spooky and Ken Ishii rarely let a single bleep of an original musical phrase enter their corpus without extruding and morphing it, imploding the moment into cut-up microcosms.

David Chesworth rehearses this dichotomy between electronica and post-classical/post-punk music. A former member of techno-instrumental band Essendon Airport (often somewhat simplistically described as Australia's answer to Kraftwerk), Chesworth's composition characteristically takes the form of creative editorial. "I like music to have been on a journey," he observed of his take on the score to the film, Badlands. "Music becomes more interesting as it collects more baggage. I don't think I'd feel as comfortable sitting down with a blank page or a blank computer screen and writing something." Unlike Elena Kats-Chernin—who claims that the referential quality of her music is primarily strategic; a consequence of the emotional and theatrical effects she wants to achieve—Chesworth embraces chamber composition as a form of "classical sampling." Chesworth's collaboration with Sonia Leber on the Olympics acoustic forest project—a spatial realm of strangely dissonant yet related human action sounds—is therefore consistent with his general practice. Mental composition microprocesses found acoustics, be they scores, recordings or programmed noises. It is thus appropriate that Badlands includes Robert Gooldie's dance-floor-friendly, ambient reworking of a Chesworth Ensemble track, which transforms the original Reichian pulses into pure electro-acoustic tones.

New music cannot however be assimilated into Zen-inspired minimalism à la Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Even much of their music features a distinctive 'shimmer', a polyrhythmic layering of tone, force and texture producing a motile mesh of sound. Electronica now seems better at creating this effect also. Darrin Verhagen's Zeros/Stars for instance is a superactive example of electronica featured in recent South-Eastern Australian Post-Modernist dance (others include Franc Tetraz—who also masters Brophy's material—Jivva Rustic and Voiteck).

Verhagen's work shifts from intensely atmospheric, sonically open spaces invaded by light rumbles and crystalline white-noise, to slamming', crunchy beats unsettled by smears of back-tracking. Where early new music and subsequent spurtant turntablism from John Cage, John Zorn and even Brophy tends to place single sonic events in broken, dispersed aural environments, composers like Verhagen, who are closer to club culture, create an impossibly complex inter-weaving of thousands of tiny elements, coalescing into a crankily, pulsating wall of noise.

Philip Brophy's collaboration with Philip Samartzis—bridges this apparent divide in cinematics. Where the primary logic of The Cavern of Deep Tones lies in an acoustic-spatial separation within an overall textured unity, Ph2's Bionic Blue Bubblegum Sharpie is, by Brophy's own admission, "schizophrenic" in how it matches sounds and music styles. It is a neo-fluxus, LA-style suburban dream of sub sonic rumbles, crisp high frequency buzz, driving neo-percussion and alienating, apocalyptically space-age realms, perpetually haunted by spec- tres of Hollywood like Michael Mann. Few techno releases (with the exception of S10's drum'n'bass urban ethnography The Dirty Risper) traverse such a range of sound and tempo.

The neo-Dadaist happenings and Fluxus events of early new music were immensely the atical. They were nevertheless 'post-humanist' in character. The introduction of chance, spon- taneity and dissonance challenged the proposi- tion that either a rationality or a unified emo- tional sensibility underlay composition. This separation between authorship and art is now more effectively dis/embodied in electronica. The artist-as-processor recedes further from the work than the curious yet absent-minded dice- thrower of early Cage. It is significant that Verhagen, Brophy and Chesworth all refer to other sites: the dance floor for Verhagen, acoustic spaces for Ph2, clockwork universes and physical actions for Chesworth. Only the more traditional instrumentation of Chesworth's Ensemble actively embodies live action and gestural playing in performance; console artists disappear behind and into their work-stations. In contemporary electronica, the body is allusively and elusively dispersed.

The Cavern of Deep Tones, Philip Brophy (Sound Punch: 1999); Goodbye 20th Century (Sonic Youth Records 4); Sonic Youth et al (Sonic Youth Records: 1999); Reich Remixed, Steve Reich, with DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, Ken Ishii & more (Nonmusic: 1999); File Under Future, DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid vs. the Freight Elevator Quartet (Calfbirdena: 1999); Badlands, David Chesworth Ensemble, (W.Music/Fido: 1998); 5,000 Calls, Wax Sound Media (David Chesworth, Sonia Leber), Sydney 2000 Olympics Urban Forest; Zers/Stars, Darrin Verhagen & Shiqiuas Fihq (Trumida: 1999); Bionic Blue Bubblegum, Ph2 (Philip Brophy, Philip Samartzis), (Sound Punch: 1999). The Dirty Risper, S10 (Leaf: 1999).

cable k reports from New Media and Electronic Music, Metro Screen, Sydney Film Centre, Paddington Town Hall, Federation Square, The Dirty Risper, File Under Future, DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, Ken Ishii & more (Nonmusic: 1999); Grime, Scott Horsecroft, Wade Marynowsky and David Rogers talked software, machines and noise.

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