Holiday
Drunkenness
Frying
Reading
CD-ing
Giving

Performance
Malouf on Cramphorn
Performing Indigenous
Sidetrack Kreckler

Visual Arts
Sewing up New York
Sydney angles

Film
Being Gena Rowlands
Talking to Priscilla

Festivals
Sydney
Perth
Greenmill

Music
Operettas
Improvising
Real Time 4 is a seasonal celebration of over-heating, inebriation, histrionics and wickedness. Bodies, indigenous, female, actual and virtual, in opera, film and performance shift in and out of focus. Some lateral holiday reading and listening to keep you ticking over when everything else shuts down. Life goes on in Real Time 4, the fattest edition yet. Christmas spirit in CD giveaways from Rufus Records and MdS, postcard art from Anne Graham & Pam Kleemann. And our first annual subscription offering six issues of Real Time, an ever-expanding and distinctive overview of the national arts beginning with Real Time 5, due out in the first week of February. It’s our Towards the Millennium issue, edited by Annemarie Jonson and Jacqueline Milner. RT5 will speculate expansively on the future of the arts in the Creative Nation.

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Theatre of Soak; Fear of Frying; Talking to “Priscilla”

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RealTime apologise to the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne for messing up their advertisement in issue 3.

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Theatre of Soak

Bernard Cohen on drunkenness as performance

Although the following represents hours of gonzoResearch, the names, dates and some concepts have been changed to protect the writer.

There's a shop in Oxford St, Paddington which sells party decorations. Its doorway is a popular hang-out for pink-faced men with paper bags over their faces. On this particular day, the window display consists of pink elephants sliding back and forth in a sea of pink tissue. The old man in the doorway is killing himself laughing. I assume he cannot believe it.

"They're really there, "I tell him, trying to be helpful, imagining that swooping pink pachyderms might produce certain cognitive dissonances for the inebriated older person.

The man appears to look at me, but does not respond to my revelation. He continues to laugh, to rock to and fro, more and less in rhythm with the movement of the mechanised elephants, clutching a bottle of methylated spirits.

Our relationship is of actor to audience: we can speak across this divide to each other but we cannot converse.

I cannot figure out which is my role.***

At a party, in the corner, a close friend is holding a half-bottle of red wine very close to his eyes. He is reading the label loudly. He tilts the bottle and some red wine spills onto the purple, green, red and blue striped rental carpet. "Enjoy wine to exceed" he yells. Another friend gulps expansively. He is attempting to make a pun about rumours/voomers and how he is scotch-taping those in his stomach. I am drunk enough to try anything (serenaded to in the closed bedroom). The music is 70s for some reason. A small number of shirtless men are dancing with their arms raised in 'I surrender to the music' poses, the floor having mysteriously cleared of the fully dressed.

I am explaining this gregariousness as 'research'. No one is too friendly or too snoozy about this claim. It is as if the limits of the Theatre of Soak are constantly renegotiating and no one wants to appear too surprised by its new directions.

At another party, someone on the lounge suite is saying "Shub, Shub, Shub."

A woman is explaining to me that her boyfriend is not a "testosterone moron" for his habit of flinging her and other people around the dance floor. I am suggesting alternative descriptions. Someone else is listening to our discussion, tilting her head from side to side instead of rotating it to face each speaker. She hasn't yet said a word. I am conscious of playing to her, protecting my voice more than is conversationally necessitated. I am slurring and so is the woman with whom I am speaking. I try to say things properly but I can't.

"He's just a prick," I tell her. "Tell him to fuck off.""He's okay," she claims.

I hope that my voice sounds concerned, but I can hear it spattering a little with righteousness. I am trying not to lean forward. Later, the boyfriend is gone and I feel vindicated. "Good on you," I tell him. But I find him on the front steps wiping his eyes. I kind of remember saying to him,

"Well you stay away from her" and him saying, "You wouldn't know."

Anyway, we don't have a fight or anything so gauche. I walk back in and try to find a mixer. A computer science postgraduate is trying to make a spinach disquair. There are toothpicks installed all over the kitchen floor, stuck down with something clear and viscous.***

I discover that people are anxious to share their own performances. It is a generous research area: I have had to make no promises of gift co-authorships.

"I was so drunk on Mescal I couldn't throw up," a friend tells me over dinner at the Old Saigon in Newtown. "The others left the room from time to time, but I stayed put." I think I probably respond to this description rather mean-spiritedly. kind of "aww I dunno". It's seeming to me like more of an egotistical non-performance. I get no sense of contraction and expansion which means no characterisation.

Iadilacy. Exclusion. Later, I realise I had missed the anecdote. My reading had lost the anecdote's anecdotes. I had overtheorised my area of study, made its parameters too narrow. I had failed to picture the choreographic diagrams, the exits and entrances. The patterns of potential eye-contacts. Stillness as performance retains representational axes: conjuring a sense of liquidity in a dry setting (even for the audience), in the instant. Anyway, I am not so discouraging that others at the table are dissuaded from describing their own endeavours.

"I was seeing a band and I was projectile vomiting. Someone took a photo," she says. No one was immediately theatre in that it was valued in another medium.

"Do you have a copy?" I ask, "for the article," but she didn't. (Note: The Theatre's expressionistic stream.)

The restaurateur - a former foreign correspondent for Newsweek - is getting me to ask for our BYO in a growler and more aggressive manner: "More beer."***

In another restaurant, I am waiting for a friend to return with wine. Because Sydney restaurant tables are too close together, a huge drunken man at the next table with his back to me is coming very close to upsetting the vase of plastic baby's breath on my table. There are four people at this other table. They are telling short anecdotes which I cannot quite hear. After each anecdote, the person who has spoken laughs loudly, and the others join in briefly and then drop off. Each of them has a distinctive laugh which I imagine resembles a specific piece of light artillery. I quickly become irritated, and am thinking of asking to change tables, despite the terrible snub this would be, when my friend returns. Suddenly, I hardly notice the other table anymore. My chardonnay has a lifted passionfruit nose and a melon/citrus middle palate with a dry, clean finish.

Fear of Frying

George Alexander

The door opens on a blast furnace. The light has its own aesthetic, burning off reality like acid, leaving only shadows. In the distance, the exhausted crash of the waves in a thin ribbon of heat.

It's hot. So hot the best you can do is crawl into the dark recesses of K-Mart holding your face to the frost zone over the milk and butter.

Summer crackles. There's cranky energy along the highways as hundreds of hairy-shouldered trucks sniff the chemical gas that ripens fruit and deliver Christmas trees in thundering juggernauts.

In Australia, summer Christmas is a cross-eyed metaphor of baked turkey and steamed tarmacs, boiled pudding and human skin peeling like layers of strudel. It's commercial and it's too hot to shop. Across the State, with December in double figures, there's armpit aroma, the compost perfume of Mr Whiffy an imitanion of baked turkeys, the rolling line curve of uncooked dunes and a sea of pappy willows dancing in a blazing heat.

Around the stagy rippled turquise of Campbell Parade at Bondi Beach, Optimum Health and Business Opportunity entrepreneurs gather. Everyone's watching everyone else. Tourists in polyester pants adjust their camcorders. Beautiful women wearing Jean Seberg striped gondolier t-shirts and tight skirts throw back their heads with video-ready reflexes. Beautiful women wearing the colour of puking chickens sit in parked cars sleek as Romans lighters, and brown over mobile phones: "Yup. Yup. Yup.

A mix of go-go dancers, part-time dominatrices and girls in bands work their tan in thong bikinis bottoms the colour of Fruit Tingles. Like dogged shrubs in shifting sand, these homegirls could run the world. They send Gavin the Slut Puppy down to the shops with crumpled bills for smokes, bottles of Evian, salad fronds and huge iced black coffees.

Kitty Boots argues with her booking agent while Baby Cake in a t-shirt saying PURE SEX reads the fashionable full of silver leather and articles on jobs books. Off the main drag thevariose veins of backstreet travel also hide the slobbly friednests from the Cross who whine their dividends in jail sentences, knife wounds, tricks, tatts. Around the poolrooms of the Hotel Bondi and the instant hunger: junkies buy and dealers serve.

Around Carlewis Street, grim-looking ducks from Livestock or Christchurch shiver, jump, shoot into pay phones, bounce off buildings. A bug-eyed Tongan man in a crowd trailing a suede jacket, "Only $10". A skinny girl in a tank top and tulle skirt pours 20 cents pieces into the jukebox. A hooded-metal, the migraine tone, the middle-finger-for-all, distorted guitar notes stretch to infinity.

Summer is the marriage of Henry and Hell, of homeliness and catastrophe. In the soul-dissolving noon heat, the sun presses down on your shoulders. Through slits for eyes the Pacific looks like stretched silver vinyl. The noise it makes is a zipper hissing.
What “Priscilla” Said

What did Priscilla say about Cynthia? By phone and fax, Helen Gilbert, Jacqueline Lo and Merinda Bobis examine how the film Priscilla Queen of the Desert constructs the female and the Filipina Other.

HG What I like about Priscilla is that you get an incredible mood and ambience created by the Australian landscape, but, at the same time, there’s a lot of comedy derived from positioning these very urban drag figures and their fabulous costumes in that landscape, and drawing parallels between them and the unusual native animals. This works really well both as a celebration of the Australian landscape and as a parody of our uneasy position in relation to that landscape.

MB Yes, it’s a kind of camp road movie and, if that’s the only intention of the movie, it’s quite successful — like a drag version of Thelma and Louise, especially because it foregrounds the landscape.

HG There’s also the sense of an enormous unwritten space and, by positioning the drag queens going through it in their pink bus, there’s a chance to rewrite that space with a kind of camp politics, which is great.

JL The boundless blue sky, the endless expanse of land and rock make an enormously theatrical space which enables transformations of stories, identities and space itself. The Australian landscape, which has historically been the domain of the Bushman/Crocodile Dundee, has now been recontextualised by drag, the antithesis of the “ocker”.

MB Another significant aspect in this transformation of space is the fact that, at least for a while, “the exotic” is no longer located in the distant East. The exotic is now within Australia, which is predominantly a Western culture. One other point: The whole movie is actually about making space for differences — sexual, social, cultural, etc. I think this is one of the reasons why it has been so well received by the public.

HG The film is really about presenting stereotypes to an audience and then humanising and subverting these stereotypes. The characters are exaggerated from the first moment the movie opens with all the camp posturing, the voices, and costumes. We’re presented with the Other, but then the film goes on to centralise these characters, so that we are always in sympathy with them, and their way of life becomes something we can understand and celebrate.

MB No doubt about that. You see, the film consciously solicits our sympathy and facilitates our understanding of sexual differences. That’s why I actually disagree with producer Al Clark’s claim that it’s only a musical comedy and a “gentle satire with enormous affection for its characters.” (The Age, 7 Oct. ’94) I think the film is more ambitious than this, which is why I feel that the character of Cynthia, the Filipina bride, is out of place and offensive. Certainly no affection there.

JL None whatsoever. Even before you actually see her, you hear this high-pitched grating voice insisting, “Lemonsade, here I make, lemonsade for yous.”

MB Her incompetence in English is played up. Coming from a country where English is almost like a first tongue, I find her use of the language unrealistic. I had a problem determining her nationality. I only realised that she is a Filipina because I am one, thus I can understand her dialogue in our language. Other viewers have thought that referred to as the “Mail-order Bride”.

HG What is so horrible about her character is that she never gets beyond the highly sexualised Asian temptress cum angry, savage child who whines and throws a tantrum when she can’t get what she wants.

JL Cynthia is portrayed as victim — not of her environment and her status as an ethnic minority in an ocker town, but of her sexuality. Even when she leaves her husband in an act which may be read as a reclamation of will and agency, her final parting words still limit her to the sex object role. She tells Bob that her reason for leaving is because “You got a little ding-a-ling.” Bob can’t satisfy her sexually.

MB There are other dimensions to her character which are signified by the use of costume. The first time she comes on, she looks and behaves like a housemaid in this blue housedress. At dinner, she’s in this skimpy red thing, and, of course, later there’s the go-go outfit. You see, her “dressing up” echoes the findings of research in the so-called Filipina mail-order bride phenomenon. Apparently, some Australian men go to Asia in search of a housemaid cum sex-partner. Obviously, isn’t it? Cynthia is first located within a domestic setting and later in the pub as a go-go dancer. Incidentally, the pub scenes clearly show a performance competition between her and the drags.

JL Oh, yes. The competition is based on who is the more authentic woman, and is judged from the reaction of the predominantly male audience. The ping-pong ball act is literally a hit with the men and back, predetermines our reaction. So it’s not just the natural response of the audience saying, “Oh, yuk”, but, more so, the very construction of the film, which leads us to this preferred reading. Her performance is being framed through the drag’s ‘representation’. At the end we don’t see what the bar audience sees; instead we’re mirroring the misguided responses of the drag/competitors.

MB Look, if the drags are initially positioned as “freaks” by, say, a prudish or even homophobic film audience, later, the same audience will find drag or even homosexuality less threatening to conventional morality when paired against Cynthia’s ping-pong ball trick. The “freakishness” of the drag queens dissipates as their individual stories develop, but Cynthia is never given this chance. We are never allowed to go beyond the freakishness of this woman who uses her sex organ to, as one viewer remarked, “play ping-pong.”

JL Yes, the character of Cynthia remains one-dimensional. She’s alcoholic, sex-starved, opportunistic, a gold digger, and a freak! She’s infantile and she’s “animalistic” — in the film-script, her entrance into the pub is precipitated by “the howl of a she-devil.” In other words, she’s quite mad!

HG And the only individualised character constructed entirely through negative images! Even Shirley, the butcher woman in the pub, is not a redeeming quality. In what is a shockingly misogynistic line, Bernadette says to her, “Put a tampon in your box and light it, it’s the only thing you’ll ever get.” So Sheila’s sexuality is used to absolutely silence her, but then in the drinking competition with Bernadette, she is favourably presented as a local hero, since she’s usually the one that can drink anybody out of town. And although she loses that particular competition, she’s nonetheless shown to have something else besides our initial image of her.

MB It can be argued though that if you’re complaining about the portrayal of the Filipina, one might as well complain, as an Australian man, about the stereotyping of the ocker woman who was used to casting Felicia. But then again, we still have Bob as an alternative.

JL That’s right - he’s very much presented as one of the boys who turns good. He’s the positive representation, the one who redeems the image. Though, they though initially might be seen as rather “freakish”, turn out to be people who care about each other.

MB Another point. If you look at the film in terms of its representation of women, you have only three figures. There is the butch, the Filipina and the lesbian wife. Isn’t this a rather limited range of female roles?

HG I know, but, more than that, the film erases from its narrative any real sense of a fully developed female character and substitutes a drag queen as the preferred representation of femininity. For instance, we define characters such as the transsexual Bernadette in opposition to the Filipina, thus the transsexual’s feminine qualities can be delineated and celebrated. In this sense, woman is absent from the film for the most part, and signs of femininity are very present all the way through.

JL Why I take particular umbrage at the representation of Cynthia, is that her construction as a fixed character on the springboard for the celebration of other sorts of identities, at her expense. Cynthia doesn’t actually function as an individualised character, but rather as a foil, first to explain and justify Bob’s
position as a good guy/victim, as one who has been exploited. This gives him some depth of character and motivation. Furthermore, Cynthia is the foil for privileging the sort of femininity Bernadette displays.

HG It's interesting to look at how the costumes of the two are designed to set each other off. There's Cynthia in a skimpy, sexy costume; Bernadette, on the other hand - except when she's performing in drag - is generally veiled with a scarf around her neck, an umbrella, and all the accoutrements of femininity. Hers is a very genteel kind of femininity. It seems that transvestism is not about men trying to assimilate any female characteristics, but is much more about men getting a huge thrill from hiding a mysteriously male body underneath female clothing. There's this phallic woman who can take on the powers of woman, but she never has to give up any of the powers of being a man. She can still fight on the streets, can still drink anyone under the table, has never lost one scrap of his manhood and yet manages to carry off womanhood as well.

MB A genteel kind of femininity. Gentility - of course! There is certainly a big class in the representation of the drag queens vs. the Filipina. The drags demonstrate all the social markers of the middle class - linguistic and social competence, finesse, etc. - whereas the Filipina, with her bad English and her coarse usage of the Filipino language, her social ineptness and her "sluttish" clothing, defines her as lower class.

HG Listen to us carrying on! Some of the critics might dismiss our complaints about Cynthia's portrayal with, "Well, it was only a couple of minutes of film - a storm in a teacup", but that's incorrect. Cynthia is absolutely necessary, functionally speaking, to the narrative. She's a catalyst for Bob and Bernadette's romance and a constant reminder of the unfavourable alternative that Bob has escaped.

MB I agree. Even after Cynthia leaves, there are recurrent references to her within the dialogue as well as in the flashback scene where she dupes Bob into marriage.

HG That flashback establishes the mail-order bride as someone who tricks poor, unknowing Australian men into marriage. The victim is the male. You've got to watch those mail-order brides because you might send away for item A in the catalogue, but get item C, a demon woman who tells you you've got a tiny trick!

MB Bad for the business, that flashback. Well, I have another quarrel with that scene. It also justifies the repulsion which the drags feel towards Cynthia, and which has already been absorbed by the audience. She's a bitch, a tramp and a whore who'll take you for a ride.

HG The other really important thing about the Cynthia character is she's not given any degree of self-irony which the other characters have. All the others, even in their repulsive moments, have some kind of self-reflection on their own inadequacies. I'm thinking of the kind of glance we get from Mitzi as he performs the macho Dad for his son. Similarly, when the guys are in drag, there are constant undercutting comments about the fact that they are performing. Even the butch woman, says in a comic moment, "All I can see are female impersonators." Yet the Filipina character is never given any kind of humour which would leave her situation. There's never a sense that she is self-consciously playing a stereotype; rather she is that character.

JL And listen to this. A friend tells me that in America, it has become an audience participation activity to bring ping-pong balls to this film and to throw them at the appropriate moment. So the film's not just this light-hearted, fluffly, gentle satire; it actually has a social impact.

HG And it's a social, even political, statement. It does try to be very supportive of difference, to counter all kinds of prejudices. For instance, a great deal of thought has gone into how the Aboriginal characters would be constructed so that the result would not offend anyone. The Aborigines are well integrated into the narrative.

MB It's interesting to look at how the film-makers have been very careful with the representation of the Aborigines, they've been less careful with the Filipina. In the last ten to twenty years there has been increasing sensitivity to the representations of Australia's indigenous people, but we are less careful about the Filipinos, and Asians in general, because they have less social power, and therefore less of a voice in mainstream society.

HG What is interesting is that critical discourse on the film has been mainly celebratory and, in the post-AFI awards, centred on the relative merit of Australian film-making. There has been very little mention made of the racial/gender issue. So again it foregrounds the point that opposition - when it comes from a minority, such as the Filipinas in Melbourne - is immediately categorised as a minority 'whinge', and barely raises an eyebrow amid mainstream critical circles. I suppose our conversation might even be labelled as a feminist 'whinge'. But I like to think that we're challenging the film's blind spot.

MB Exactly. And what a big blind spot. This film, which elicits affection and even compassion for differences and affirms the legitimacy of sub-groups, actually denigrates another sub-group. I really cannot dismiss the film as just a musical comedy. It's obviously making a statement. Especially when the sign "AIDS fuckers go home" is consciously highlighted and Mitzi says, "It's funny, you know, no matter how tough I think I'm getting, it still hurts." I want to respond to the film maker in the light of the fact that 14 Filipinas have been murdered, while another six are missing, with many others being subjected to domestic violence in Australia (The Age, 7 Oct. '94): "We Filipinas can say the same thing - We're used to abuse, too, but it still hurts!"

The film script of Priscilla Queen of the Desert is published by Currency Press.

Helen Gilbert teaches at the English Department of Monash University; Jacquie Lo, at the Drama Department of The University of Newcastle; Merinda Bobis, at the Faculty of Creative Arts of The University of Wollongong.
Christmas Stocking: a swag of holiday CDs

Catholics Simple Rufus Records 1994 Good time, summertime jazz. Carefully cradled and forcefully played. A sharp sound including a piano and percussion highlight track. Profuse yourself with a desk lamp, take up smoking Paul Mamara my theories of granny's Christmas pudding.

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Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: A Short Film About Glenn Gould Sony Music 1994 It doesn't matter what you're eating, you're who, what the weather is like, how loudly whenever someone turns on the cricker. Here are some of Glenn Gould's best recordings of Bach, Hindemith, and Schoenberg. Strangely enough, the collection has omitted Gould's radio work which was so fundamental to his conception of sound and music. So the album seems incomplete, and not a little presumptuous, in its relation to an extraordinary film.

Vangelis Blade Runner Warner Music 1994 So you're caught downtown in a thunderstorm and the only thing around is a noodle. It seems so hot and the streets are crowded. Someone beats up Santa Claus. Thankfully, Vangelis has done us all a favor. Released for the first time, these sketches in sound based on the original movie recordings are best heard with a score of light, like the summer drizzles by ‘like tears in rain.’

Ross Edwards: Symphony Da Pacem Domine ABC Music 1993 As the soundtrack to Lawrence Johnston's film Eternity, Ross Edwards’ Symphony Da Pacem Domine is the answer to that mid-afternoon indolence and irritability. Breeding and melancholic, the work reaches towards hidden doorways, abandoned factories, tiny alleyways, through a gradually emerging orchestral chant that traverses the city like that longed-for weatherly.

Rhyse Flying with my feet on the ground Arachne Music 1994 A little overlaid with musical metaphor and metaphorical with music, this is music to sit under and think about doing the garden. It seems to long for a visual image to accompany it, and could possibly inspire the listener to bake vast quantities of cream-flamed scones.

Diamanda Galas with John Paul Jones The Sporting Life Mute Records 1994 Shredded flesh, singer with throat and a half octave range meets ex-Led Zeppelin heavy-weight bassist. Jones makes spectacular George W. Bush imagery come back to slither with Diamanda. No holds barred except for a winful At the dark end of the street. When obscure relatives and friends forsake battle for residence on the sofa bed, and you want to maintain the rage ...

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- TP034 Machine for Making Sense: An unusual release of text/music improvisations performed by Jim Denley (winds/voice), Chris Mann (texts/voice), Rik Rue (tape), Amanda Stewart (texts/voice), Steve Wiskar (violin/electronics/hurdy-gurdy/voice)
- TP044 In the Atmosphere: Scintillation! Improvisation by Roger Dean (drums), Daryl Pratt (vibes), Adam Armstrong (bass) and Cameron Warrington (acoustics). Guests on this album are Dan Brown (flutes) and Mike Nock (piano). This CD was nominated for the 1993 ARIA Award (Best Jazz Recording). Forthcoming release

- TP039 Night People: Steve Hunter with first CD ever recorded by a solo electric bass guitarist - a beautiful set of pieces played with inspired artistry (available August 1994)

These CDs are available in all good music stores. Catalogues available from Tall Poppies, as well as a mail-order service.

Tall Poppies Records: PO Box 373 GEELONG NSW 3217

Operotics

Virginia Baxter in tune with Annette Tesoriero

In 1995 Sydney will host the Third International Vocal Symposium. Kirsten Linklater will be there along with a gaggle of laryngologists and other voice specialists. On the desk awaiting consideration of the Symposium is the following proposal:

Title: One woman’s investigation into the essential eroticism of the sung voice, as experienced through-opera and contemporary performance.

Presenter: Annette Tesoriero.

I had a taste of Annette’s Cheesecake Cabaretta at Siderack’s Contemporary Performance Week in October this year. In a Rossman display of opulent and gorgeous proportions, he sang from The Italian Girl in Algiers with Deborah Hart on French horn brashly on a tall plinth at one end of the performance space. Graham Jacobs on viola equally imposing on his plinth formally dressed to the waist, underpants below. Annette herself, ornately bodiced and bloomed, strummed among the audience alternately singing in her rich mezzo soprano and speaking matter-of-factly about the mechanics of the body that produced this voice. How thrilling. I was thinking, to be so close to a voice thus, in the midst of this sensuous sound, to feel the vibrations through you. "we must develop the "muscle," interrupted the singer, answering the question on my lips.

For the full version of this work (Performance Space Gallery), other material was added. Derek Kreckler edited and treated footage by Bruno Mauro of a ten foot tall model of a woman in a red dress Annette saw in a Museum of Mechanical Devices in San Francisco. Put your money in her mouth and she beavers out a huge Ha Ha Ha. The video images will eventually be really big too. There were also some striking photographic images by Heidrun Lohr combining imagery of the goddesses Vac with huge tongue and four arms, and Kaari filling the skins with her tears. To these are added opera texts and images from pornography, classifieds from Opera and Penthouse. Annette’s aim is to have the images vying for the audience’s attention with the physical performance, the sound of the instruments and voice.

Annette Tesoriero thinks the current emphasis on the physical in opera invites some questions. We read about the physicality and colour of Baz Luhrman’s production of Midsummer Night’s Dream but not much on the music. Yvonne Kenny made page 3 by slipping naked into a milk bath. There’s a lot made of the “exciting young” singers in La Boheme. At the same time there’s the recurring gay male fascination with the diva. And it’s usually the image of Callas from the 60’s when she was pale, thin and lovesick that fascinates them. It’s back again in the film Philadelphia – the dying diva. It’s like they’re saying “Give us the voice, the passion but not the real body”. “Feel the hear” says the Australian Opera’s advertising for The Marriage of Figaro. “Discover the power and the passion at the world’s most dramatic venue”

“I am interested in the critical discussion of this issue raised by people like Catherine Clement (Opera, or the Undoing of Women, Virago Press), Wayne Koestenbaum (The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire, GMP Publications UK) and David J. Levin (Collected Essays: Opera Through Other Eyes. Stanford University Press). These new look operas like La Bohome and Midsummer Night’s Dream are setting the agenda for discussion of Australian opera. Choux Choux Baguette and CheeseCake Cabalaetta can be seen as a discussion of those discussions. I’m concerned with the actual body of the singer, especially the female singer – her voice, her vocal chords, saliva, genitalia, all that plumbing! What actual power will female performers have within this newly created opera world of image and youth? What happens when the essential eroticism of voice is transferred to the body – a place where eroticism is more easily marketed but is also more easily led towards pornography? Naughty Susannah from The Marriage of Figaro becomes chamber-maid porn? No, I’m not out to proselytise. No, I’m not anxious. I like to sing and this is the area I like working in. The analysis comes with the territory.”

Annette Tesoriero collaborates on and creates works in contemporary music/performance. These include Did You Hear What He Said? and Stolen Time with Derek Kreckler, Balancing Acts by Anne Graham and Lovers by Barbara Blackman and Andrew Ford. She created the roles of Scarletta in The Remedy by Raffaello Marcellino and Marguerite Bunce, The Woman in Volcano and Vision by Rainer Limp and Paul Greene. For her Claudia in Sweet Death Annette was nominated for a Victorian Green Room Award for female artist in a leading role. She co-authored the music theatre work Tales of Love (Sydney and Perth) with Richard Vella, John Baylis and Nigel Kellaway. She was guest performer with the Sydney Front for their production of Don Juan. More recently she has collaborated with Nigel Kellaway on Choux Choux Baguette Remember and Santa Lucia Does the Balmain Folk. The Goethe Institut commissioned her to produce an Intimate Keynote Address and in 1993 she launched the recital program "The Gift to be Simple" with pianist Gerard Wilmens. In January, Choux Choux will pack her baguettes for the Hong Kong Fringe Festival.

Improvising the Future

John Potts speaks with Peter Rechniewski, president and artistic director of the Sydney Improvised Music Association (SIMA)

SIMA commenced its activities in 1985, under the auspices of facilitating the performance and recording of contemporary jazz and free improvised music. I asked Peter about SIMA’s other objectives:

PR To facilitate the formation of quality ensembles, to support collaborative projects withmusicians from interstate, to support women musicians and young musicians, to facilitate film and video recordings of jazz. We can’t cover all those objectives all the time, but we try. We want to divide our energies between free improvised music and contemporary jazz, but there’s a much bigger jazz scene. Our involvement with free improvisation has varied over time, depending on funding. Few clubs want to put it on, so there are problems with venues. We have a project, which we’ll submit to the Australia Council in the next funding round, for a large concert series, one a month over eight months. We want to spend a lot of money on promotion, so that it’s an event each time this thing happens, involving artists from all round Australia.

JP How does SIMA work as an organisation?

PR We’re an incorporated association, non-profit. It has a committee of nine elected by the members every year. Membership is open to everybody.

JP What links do you have with venues?

PR We wanted to put on at least one performance of contemporary jazz every week, and from 1987 we were funded to do that. After various attempts at different venues, from 1989 we’ve been at the Strawberry Hill – that’s our home base at the moment.

JP And your interstate links?

PR We keep in close contact with the Melbourne Jazz Co-operative. If you’re going to create a national scene, it really rests on the shoulders of Sydney and Melbourne, although there are very promising things happening in Brisbane, and WA has some very good young musicians.

JP What input do you have into national tours of overseas musicians?

PR We toured Dewly Redman most recently. With the Wangaratta Jazz Festival we have a special arrangement, where they offer us an artist, we get first option. Last year it was Sam Rivers, who was very successful, so we used that money to bring out James Carter, whom I heard in New York. This year we also picked up Steve Lacy from Wangaratta.

JP What are SIMA’s plans for the near future?

PR Next year is the tenth year of our activity, so I hope to organise a number of international tours and some special events here, some collaborative events. We’ve been writing to the Canadian government to try to get a Canadian-Australian project off the ground, as it’s the 100th anniversary of trade relations between Canada and the then colonies. There’s going to be some high-level diplomatic exchange, as well as artistic exchange, so we want to get into that. I’d like to bring out a major improviser from Europe, perhaps with the Geetho Instituit. Locally, there are sketches of projects for ensembles doing settings for Australian poetry. I’d like to see the free improvised scene get a bigger boost; we need a space for this music. We also need more collaborations between Australian and overseas musicians, to put us more into the world circuit - Wangaratta has started collaborative projects like that. And I’m encouraged by the amount of recording that’s going on at the moment.
Poet Without Language

Rufus Records' latest perhaps signals the arrival of CD-recorded 'Spoken Word' in Australia at the very moment US product trickles in ahead of a flood. 'Spoken Word' is a bit too broad for Hazel Smith who sees herself as belonging to a small group of Australian artists, like the Machine for Making Sense, Amanda Stewart, Chris Mann and, in some ways, Ania Walwicz, who explore sound-text relationships and relate to poetic tradition.

It's a small but very active, if hard to define, group. Smith, who came to Australia in 1989 has performed in London, the US and recently in the Queensland and Perth Writers' Centres, as well as with austral.YSIS (the music improvising group she formed with husband-collaborator Roger Dean. austral.YSIS hold three concerts annually, release CDs (see the Tall Poppies catalogue) and have appeared on ABC FM's The Listening Room.

The CD title, Poet without Language, is intriguing: the reliance on language is obvious at first listening, even where words are clipped, re-shaped and sprung through sound-processing by Dean or strung out in hypnotic lines. Hazel explains by example: her current interest is in feminist linguistics and constructed languages. Language, she says, is our greatest means of expression but also imposes tremendous limitations, therefore the poetic and musical invention of new languages can be liberating, replacing syntax with musical structures, strings of words notated rhythmically. She's proud of this latter development which she sees as distinctively her own.

Hazel enjoys making her creative work analytical and her analytical work creative, writing about sound-text work as well as performing it. Her piece on Amanda Stewart and Ania Walwicz in Patrick Fury's Representation, Discourse & Desire (Longman Cheshire 1994) shows a fellow performer's as well as a scholar's alertness to the workings of those distinctive voices. With Roger Dean, she's written Improvisation: Hypermedia and the Arts since 1945 (Gordon & Breach) and acknowledges the growing role of improvisation in her own work (the way the term is used in jazz), for example improvising against her own scripted voice track as she did in Naraghi Echoes for The Listening Room. It's this sense of process, she thinks, that makes her academic writing quite different from the more common academic preoccupation with product.

Asked how she'd like listeners to use her CD, she says they should find their own way, select tracks or take it all in. It's a big disc, over seventy minutes long and ranging through brief poems to dramatic chamber pieces with herself on violin, Dean on synthesisers, sampler and percussion, opening with the ambitious Poet Without Language produced by Andrew McLennan. Perhaps the best way in, because it is one of those CDs you have to give yourself time and space to absorb, is to see it like a book of poetry and shuffle, browse, dip into, choose, focus. Hazel suggests you might like to read along to some of the tracks with a copy of her Abstractly Represented - Poems and Performance Texts 1982-90 (Butterfly Books, 1991).

In the meantime Firmware Design (phone 047-23-7211) in their New Media Catalogue October 1994 announce Poetry in Motion, an American CD-ROM featuring "verbal performances of 24 of the most exciting poets of our time including Charles Bukowski, Allen Ginsberg and Tom Waits. Poetry literally comes to life as you watch poets 'perform' their own works."

(The same catalogue lists a karaoke Macbeth! How long before our poets and sound poets make it to CD-ROM let alone CD?)

Hazel Smith, Poet Without Language, Rufus Records, RF003

Whether Music ...

Nicholas Gebhardt surveys recent CD releases

The weather in words and words in sounds of sounds.

Wallace Stevens

Drifting at the edges of audibility lie a plethora of new musics and sound experiments that open up the possibility of an expanded hearing, something unheard of. Often seething and crowded, sometimes suspended, immobile, crystallised in a single moment, they move through noise, incorporating the elemental as much as the artificial, in an attempt to produce a transformed image of sound, they wield sonority to the environment as a way of extracting melodic and rhythmic compounds from every surface, every fissure, every conversation, of marking out a place from which composition can take off.

In the last few months several local CD releases have brought about a meteorological transformation, through digital means, in the idea of a sound environment. Mark Simmons' Fire (Birdland, 1994), Rik Rue's ocean flows (Tall Poppies, 1993), The Necks' Aquatic

T H E W O R D I S

Slow the world down, shut out the noise, and listen up.
From the USA, 2 completely different kinds of commentators tell it like it is

ALLEN GINSBERG "Holy Soul Jelly Roll" R271693

From Rhino Records "Wordbeat" label, a comprehensive anthology of the greatest living Beat poet. Over 4 discs, in a beautifully packaged box, Ginsberg's warm & gentle voice guides the listener through a crash course in the free form poetry, and prose play that set him apart. Spanning the years 1949 - 1993, you get the complete "Howl", his epic "Kaddish", right up to his recent recordings with the cream of New York's downtown musicians.

ICE T "The Ice Opinion" 80000

Reading from his recent autobiography, the surprisingly mellow, and often profound thoughts of the man who dragged rap music from the gutter, and has developed a dynasty. Often inflammatory, always intriguing, and always interesting to the max, the reflecting side to the Ice Man. Available as a 3CD, or 2 cassette set, and available in all good record shops.
The Neck's collapse the expectations of generate a winding sonic contour that and committed pyromaniac, and conceding the temptation to imply of that form, in terms of a particular kind saxophonist Mark Simmonds is an agile Aquatic while still propelling the listener into a quartet (saxophone, bass, trumpet and Immediate apprehension of each improvised improvisation as an outpouring of sound, as it arrives. Which is not to say that this is easy-listening. In attempting to make each of its elements a unique event, On Second Thoughts refuses immediate recognition, committed as the Machine For Making Sense is to a refusal of meaning at any figurative level. On Second Thoughts leaps through each audible moment, releasing hearing from the drive towards a pure sound and dissolving a conception of music that reproduces itself as the identical space of all sonic production. Instead, Machine For Making Sense produce scattered sounds only to ignite those sounds as part of a complex reordering of the image of sound, an image which is no longer sublime and ethereal, but knotted, a jumble of gestures.

It is the work of Machine For Making Sense (of which Rue is also a member), that takes hold of this rather limited notion of an environment and sends it flying. On Second Thoughts is crowded and sparse and funny and full of holes. It is a series of tiny sound sketches that barely stay together but for the group's profound sense of the relation of tempo to texture, of rhythm to a history of possible sounds. Listened to on random shuffle on a CD player, On Second Thoughts is like taking public transport across the city: piled in, missed connections, endless waiting and then... Sounds and songs and accents struggle for survival in a confined space that is only ever the eternal moment of its sounding out, a time that disappears as fast as it arrives.

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A Vintage Crop

McKenzie Wark samples Australian non-fiction

While we’re all still waiting for the information super-whatsit, books are still the mainstay of Australia’s creative, intellectual culture. So what was 1994 like for books? Specifically, for books about creative and intellectual culture? It was, I think, a vintage year. Here’s some of the things that I read, that you may have read, or that you may want to read over the summer.

If the dominant trend in the 80s was high theory for its own sake, that of the 90s, so far at least is a much more down to earth style of writing that uses theory but puts it to work in a localised context. The best books of 1994, while tackling a diverse range of points of cultural frisson with an ever more diverse range of methods and writerly styles, all move beyond the importation and paraphrase of theory. They apply it, revise it, cook up their own, and in some cases export it right back again.

Volatile Bodies by feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz headed the Gloebank non-fiction best seller list for a while, and so it should. Grosz is on the leading edge of feminist explorations of the body. With lavish cover art by Linda Dement, it’s the ideal Christmas gift for the performance artist in the family.

It’s a taken a while, but finally there’s a collection of Eric Michaels’ extraordinary essays on the cultural economy of Aboriginal Australia and its encounter with contemporary media. It bears the cheeky title of Bad Aboriginal Art. Like the Grosz it’s a ‘co-production’ with an American academic press. These arrangements are increasingly common. The up side is books like this can actually be published in Australia. The down side is that perceptions of what the American market wants come to dominate the commissioning of Australian books.

Graeme Turner’s third book Making it National (Allen & Unwin) is still a quintessentially Australian book, concerned with the creative uses and self-interested abuses of nationalism in media and news culture. Turner stands aside from the fashionable indifference to the notion of the nation, and shows how it underwrites processes of domination and democracy. Written before the Keating policy statement, it was very prescient. There’s a great chapter on the rise and fall of Alan Bond.

Ian Hunter has been a quiet influence on many people’s thinking about the relationship of culture to government for years now. Rethinking the School (Allen & Unwin) appears on the surface to be a pretty specialised book, but it is also a sustained critique of the detached, outsider intellectual, in favour of an ethos of piecemeal engagement on specific cultural issues. As the intellectual underpinning of the cultural policy movement, this book is important and timely.

Most of the cultural policy people Hunter has influenced shy away from contemporary and emerging media issues. An exception is Stuart Cunningham and Toby Miller’s Contemporary Australian Television. Given the rapid changes in this central cultural institution in recent years, this survey of TV, globalisation and content issues is a useful primer. It’s published by the plucky UNSW Press, the only publisher really taking on Allen & Unwin’s dominance of publishing about Australian media and culture.

Toby Miller also published a more theoretical work called The Well Tempered Self (Johns Hopkins University Press). It’s about the state and market discourses that manage the care of the self, and as such it’s a good antidote to all that stuff about ‘identity’ that seems to assume that identities are some kind of natural inheritance. Miller shows how the state manages populations through teaching them to manage themselves.

A healthy sign for the future of critical thinking about culture is that two mainstream Australian subsidiaries were prepared to bet on its viability for paperback ‘trade’ publishing for the general public. Reed Books gave us Slaves of Chic by Joanna Finkelnest, and Penguin put out Adrian Martin’s Phantasm in its McPhee Gribble imprint. Both aim to give the general reader a handle or two on our craft. Here the dominant style is either trenchant or truculent, Mohamad’s method is much more subtle, minor key and ultimately more persuasive. His readings of key moments in the Mahabharata, presumably penned in slow medieval times, but the old questions about the body and the mind remain.

Goenawan Mohamad is hardly an ‘Australian’ writer, whatever that may be, but it is encouraging that this major Indonesian essayist and editor’s English publisher is the Melbourne based Hyland House. Sidekines is a collection of his essays from the now banned Tempo magazine. He could give Australian columnists - myself included - a lesson or two on our craft. Here the dominant style treats ‘free speech’ as an excuse for loose talk and slack reasoning. Mohamad’s method is much more subtle, minor key and ultimately more persuasive. His readings of key moments in the Mahabharata, presumably penned in slow medieval times, are extraordinarily moving.

Mohamad’s breadth of classical learning, contemporary nous and essayistic style make him a truly great writer.

Melbourne University Press perseveres with its Interpretations series of little introductory books on various cultural issues. This one is not always as well chosen. Two good ones this year are Sneja Gunew’s Framing Marginality, on multicultural literature, which also offers to introduce one to the currently high profile world of postcolonial theory. Postmodern Socialism seems at first sight to be one of the many odd books in the series, but Peter Bellars means it ironically, I think. These may be pomos times, but the old questions about social justice, equality and the right to work have been heightened rather than dissipated in their urgency. While most of the social theory stuff is too dry and self absorbed to be of any interest to the wider reader, this one makes the cut for its brevity, good sense and wit.

University of Queensland Press still takes an overly literary approach to Australian non-fiction publishing, but their Black Writers Series of necessity takes on writing with a very broad ambit in many styles. Eve Fisse’s style is either chreanthem or traumatic, depending on your point of view. Connell is an unpromising indictment of the systematic destruction of Aboriginal languages by invader culture, as well as being a perceptive critique of the erasure of the Aboriginal cultural resistance perpetuated in the conventions of mainstream language about Aboriginality. It is not the kind of book that makes you feel good, and reviewers tend to label it extreme, unbalanced and all that - thus ignoring its main virtue.

Also from UQP is my pick of the non-fiction anthologies for the year, Columbus’ Blindness. It’s a selection of some of the best entries to the Island magazine essay competition, edited by its guiding spirit, Cassandra Pybus. All but one of these essays I can unhesitatingly recommend. I may be biased about this book (cause I’m in it!) but it really is an excellent sampler of how engaging and moving non-fiction prose can be. The title essay in particular, by Delta Falconer, is a model of simplicity and suggestion.

It’s been out since the very start of the year but I must also mention Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader (Allen & Unwin). It’s a boring sounding title for what is really quite an interesting collection of readings of Australian cultural practices, texts and histories. Edited by John Frow and Meaghan Morris, it looks like it is meant to be a text book, but it deserves a better fate than that. Noel Sanders’ new classic essay on the Azaria Chamberlain dingo murder mystery story alone makes this book worthwhile. This reader is about as good as Graeme Turner’s rival one from Routledge, Culture, Nation, Text, and cheaper. Either are streets ahead of the one Cambridge put out called Australian Popular Culture that is basically a collection of glorified conference papers, edited by Ian Craven. Anyone wanting a quick sampling of creative and challenging contemporary thinking about Australian culture would be well advised to pick up the Turner or Frow & Morris collections.

McKenzie Wark’s book Virtual Geography: Living With Global Media Events was published in 1994 by Indiana University Press.
The Running Life

Keith Gallasch jogs through a draft of Neil Cameron's new book.

For much of his early life Neil Cameron ran every day, but at forty-eight and after falling through a floor, he has to take it gently. Nonetheless running is an integral part of the life and work of this coordinator and director of large scale community events. He uses it to centre his performers, something he finds necessary when working in cities where, he says, performers arrive for work right and anxious. His running exercises loosen them, provide rhythm, friendliness and, "dare I say it, the spiritual." Within a month his students will run three to four kilometres with no notice, having begun with just ten minutes a day.

As well as running he is committed to stamping. It's not the Suzuki Tadashi stamping taught by a small but growing number of Australians including Nigel Kellaway, Deborah Pollard, Alan Schacher, Deborah Leser) but it is a relative, nor it is mimicry of aboriginal stamping, though noticing, having begun with just ten minutes a day.

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The stamping instructions do, however, require a greater act of imagining (both the specifics of the act and activities like: "the students in no way try to imitate the animal but merely stamp its feeling or spirit!"). The writing suggests something less demandingly vigorous than the Suzuki Tadashi stamping and less specifically danced than Aboriginal stamping. It's here that the reader and teacher might yearn for photographs, drawings, video and, in a book replete with safety warnings, some concrete advice on the limits of the action. Neil is responsive to my queries, still thinking through his text before publication.

The energy released by running is vital to the realisation of his events, sometimes becoming part of the show. His staging is inspired by the Australian landscape in contrast to the difficulties presented by the climate of the Scotland he grew up in (if you're interested in his life, The Search for Meaning interview with Caroline Jones surveying Cameron's years as a lumberjack in Canada, zen monk in Japan and director in Melbourne and Darwin is worth acquiring from ABC Tapes). He found he was creating work where the music and visual arts components were increasingly taking over from narrative. He sometimes years for narrative, one of the reasons for mounting his Katherine George Macbeth. (These and others of his works are documented along with practical advice on working with communities in his Fire on the Water, Currency Press 1993).

Just as his running exercises promote a sense of group and trust (performers will recognise many of the activities in the book nicely integrated through running), Neil works not only with communities but through collaboration with artists currently visual artist Faridah Whyte, artist Sally Hart (on three dimensional figures covered with fireworks representing the underworld), music group Sirocco, choral director Chris James and vocal group Arramanda. In the Maleny Festival Neil will co-ordinate a performance event involving 350 members of the community, including 51 local artists for a New Year's Eve event. He finds the energy and around this small Queensland town and the range of Australian culture represented in its festival invigorating. No wonder he lives there now. The festival has purchased two hundred acres in nearby Woodford, using it this year for the first time and making it Australia's first purpose-built festival site with envisaged studios, a folk trust and performing areas.

Neil Cameron sounds settled in Maleny, sharing his knowledge and experience in two books in as many years, but he's still 'running' - with a community and a festival. Let's hope that he can find time to show us his somewhat-more-than-a-warm-up-exercise-book at work.

The Running and Stamping Book will be published in March 1995 by Currency Press.

Maleny Folk Festival, Woodford, Queensland, Dec 28-Jan 1. The 70 page brochure lists a Marrri Festival, cultural debate, a percussion festival, an enormous number of workshops (body, voice, song-writing, 'Japanese rhythms' with Nisa Motoyuki) and performances (Archie Roach & Ruby Hunter, Bradley Byguar, Bromwyn Calcutt, Danere Ispooner, John Williamson, Mic Comsavy, Riley Lee, Sensitive New Age Couples, Standup Poets, The Mills Sisters and more).

Enquiries: Queensland Folk Federation 074 760600.
Metro Moment

Joseph O'Connor discusses plans for Metro Arts with Fawnia Mountford

Metro Arts Centre opened in 1981. Built in 1889, it is one of Brisbane's last remaining warehouses. Its warren of rooms and corridors includes a cinema, theatre, art gallery and several workshops/presences. The sprawling 70's décor makes it feel like a time capsule. Regarded by the performance community as too artsy-crafty and by arts bureaucrats only as an important heritage building, the Metro Arts Theatre has languished for a decade without funding. In 1994 the Board of Metro Arts applied for a small one-off project grant from Arts Queensland to employ a part-time coordinator and gave the job to conceptual artist Joseph O'Connor. A graduate of Queensland College of the Arts, Joseph was from 1992 co-director of Boulder Lodge, a performance space concentrating on theatre, performance, music and installation art in Fortitude Valley.

FM The theatre community in Brisbane is relatively small. Do you think that mainstage theatre regards the fringe as a threat?
JO I don't think that experimental theatre impacts in any way on mainstage companies in Queensland.
FM Is this unique to Queensland?
JO Probably.
FM What impact did Arts Queensland's Theatre Summit in 1993 have on arts funding in this state? Are your ideas for Experimento connected with that?
JO After the Summit, the state government commissioned a range of theatre practitioners to collaborate on the Acting Up Report. The findings convinced me that I could implement an interesting enough theatre program here, we might actually be supported.
FM I will still take time and a lot of work to realise all the recommendations of that report. What do you think the report indicates for the future of Queensland theatre?
JO An indication of the crisis of legitimacy in the theatre, I think, is the fact that a panel of theatre practitioners chose to give the job of co-ordinating the Metro Arts program to someone who has no background in theatre.
FM But you've been out and doing things in Brisbane for as long as I have. In my experience, the Metro Arts building has always been full of people who know, love and perform. How will Experimento change this?
JO Well for ten years or more Metro has supported a number of amateur companies so I don't just come in with a new broom, hating everything I see. I need to look at the people who traditionally use this space and figure out really tragic stuff. My aim is to eventually shift Metro from a scripted forum to a more performance arts base.
FM You and I both operate on the outside, not necessarily on the margins but on the outer side of the mainstream theatre. While our activities might be well attended, there are still a hell of a lot of people in Brisbane who don't support theatre at all.
JO When you work in developmental forms you work to the smallest audience of all. This is an area constantly under attack, constantly needing to be defended. We need to take as much space for the experimental as possible.
FM I think we do well with the amount of infrastructure we have to work with. And by infrastructure, you can probably read 'money'.
JO While I have some problems with Arts Queensland, I think they have become incredibly supportive.
FM Especially given the fact that we've survived fifteen years of the arts policy of the National Party.
JO who put aside $10,000 a year to cover the 'rat bag element'. Compared to that we're doing well.
FM Sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between our professional and social life. Often, we're the practitioners and the audience. I think within the alters-youth culture there's an audience who are prepared to cross over between live music, theatre, performance and visual art.
FM Yes, this really encourages me. We do have a vibrant happening audience base here.
JO Some of the media reaction to Traplo-line at the Melbourne Fringe Festival seemed to confirm that there's a perception that interesting things are happening in Queensland. This is really good to hear.
FM Brisbane's Fringe Theatre profile is expanding. Events like the Shock of the New at La Boite are interesting but it's a one-off. That's the way experiment has always been seen here. I think some of the most exciting work is in women's performance groups like Roar Fish (three women working in multimedia on female archetypes), Kicking the Kettle who performed their power tool ballet Kissing Eve at Shock of the New, and The Herford Sisters, a young women's physical theatre group.
JO The whole community arts terrain has changed in Brisbane. There are now resources and organisations to support community and amateur practice. We need to position ourselves at Metro Arts Theatre to incorporate an idea of community that's more developmental and more experimental.
Fawnia Mountford's Traplo-line (a mythological space odyssey) was the first production in the Experimento season in September this year and toured to the 1994 Melbourne Fringe Festival in October.

Burroughs Bowles Duchamp Schwitters Cobain Rollins Vranich Smith & Dean Wishart Demey Warhol Weegee AustraLYSIS Sapphire Kozic Mozart Norte Coleman Gehman Lipman Van Sant Dada Machine for Making Sense Bach

A R I E L  B O O K S E L L E R S
B O O K S  S O U N D E D  R O M
4 2  O X F O R D  S T R E E T  P A D D I N G T O N  N S W  2 0 2 1
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On 22 September 1994 a new studio in the Centre of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney was named after theatre director Rex Cramphorn, co-ordinator of the Centre at the time of his death in 1991. Cramphorn played a major role in the development of contemporary Australian theatre. Kate Fitzpatrick and David Malouf spoke about Rex and the Chancellor, Dame Leonie Kramer, named the impressively equipped studio, transformed from a hydraulic science machine room into a laboratory theatre.

Kate Fitzpatrick:

For those of us who loved and worked with Rex this is a bitter-sweet occasion. To have the studio named after him is a great honour, something which I believe he deserved, and would have really pleased him - in his mild, self-effacing way.

However, I sense that someone who knew him wishes he was still with us, rather than being honoured posthumously.

The studio has been a jumble of the mundane, and the things I did for Rex - nothing has been the same since. I died several times, but was only killed once. I suffered attacks, a miscarriage, tuberculosis, and brain cancer. I was beaten up, I've haemorrhaged, removed my clothes, danced, sung, reduced my waist to 20 inches, performed in French and overdosed on drugs. I have played a stripper, a courtisane, a movie star, a couple of lonely wives, a princess, a queen, several outrageously spilt, brainless women, a wet nurse, a 17 year old virgin and a man - Don Juan. I have died, cut and grown my hair and even though I never learned the piano, on two separate occasions Rex made me play extremely difficult pieces with my back to the audience so they could see my hands.

Rex also introduced me to David Malouf.

Gay McKeeley, the Director here, said that the Centre for Performance Studies is celebrating Rex through the work it does. I am happy that this newly named studio will continue to remind future actors, directors and academics of Rex Cramphorn, long after we have left the stage.

David Malouf:

I first met Rex at the beginning of 1962 in Brisbane. He had just turned twenty one. I had just come back from Europe and a friend we shared, Judith Green, who is now Judith Rodriguez, had suggested I look Rex up. I was at that time putting together with three other poets - Judith and Don Maynard and Rodney Hall - a book called Four Poets. Rex was one of the figures in the book. I think three of the poets in the book at least, I'm not quite sure of the fourth, wrote poems that in one way or another concerned Rex. Judith's poem, "Boy with a green gown", is probably the best known of those poems. It was about a costume that Rex had worn as Paris in Giraudoux's The Trojan War Shall Not Take Place.

Rex and I found that we had a great deal in common and decided to put on a series of plays in Brisbane, in 1962, the first series which we produced. The University of Queensland. Some were short plays - there was a John Mortimer and two little Pinter sketches and an Ionesco - I think that was the first time any of those people were played in Brisbane- and the last of the Poyntales of New York by J.P. Donleavy. In Brisbane Rex, I remember, which was about a woman and a man sitting on a park bench, I appeared at the end - wearing a suit and an enormous black beard - as the woman's sixteen year old daughter. We then decided to put on a version of The Changeling, Rex had read the text, cutting out the comic scenes. We played it with Rex as De Flores and I think that was the first time that play too had ever been seen in Brisbane.

I mention these things mostly because they already introduced me to Rex's particular line of interests. One of them was Elizabethan and Jacobean plays which he, I think, had very idiosyncratic ways of doing and whatever anybody else did in Australian theatre. The other was a whole series of modern things, especially French. I can remember that I'd come back from England with a volume of the short plays of Edward Albee and we considered putting on The Sandbox and The American Dream but nobody would give us the rights. Rex, I remember, was particularly interested in things like Ionesco, Arrabal, and Gheiderode, a playwright I had completely forgotten until I found him in a footnote in the Patrick White Letters last week, thinking about things; there was no general French style and there was no commonness of interests. Rex was one of those people who came out of Brisbane, as other people did, already at twenty one, fixed in the kind of world which was going to be his for the rest of his life, and that was very much in his case the world of things French.

On the whole people tend to be influenced, it seems to me, by things French or the right. Rex always loved and which I know Rex also loved. Rex went on to translate and direct a number of French plays, Marivaux and Dumas fils and mostly, of course, Racine. I don't think there are better translations than the ones Rex did himself. He had a total act of physical and spiritual dedication which will how in a more solid, durable and original.

This dedication to Rex's to dream work and to the ritualistic made him vague. I think we all remember and have different ways of the vague, always saw it as a positive thing, as a dedication to non-intervention, a kind of passive attentiveness, a waiting on the moment that was a form of legal discipline. It didn't always look like discipline. It looked more to some like self-indulgence or drift. It came from the kind of controlled romanticism that resisted intervention, interpretation and from a belief that integrity of feeling would shine right through the text.

It was interesting, just a moment ago, talking to Robyn to have her point out how open, untrammelled Rex was as a director. His later dedication to Grotowski, the making of theatre as a total act of physical and spiritual dedication, was only a later version of something he'd always been practicing, an influence that was esteemed because it was already in him.

I think there are many of us who remember the first time we found them in terms of imagery still absolutely strongly in our heads. I think particularly in Peter Brook's The Tempest. One hopes that will be one memorial to him, but it is one that in time will vanish. This studio is another and the kind of work people will do here, one hopes, will be a continuation of the kind of work he did. He would have been pleased we didn't always be aware of the ideas we were also using. I'd be surprised if among those papers, as well as the translations - which the University is producing last - there won't be notes, longer pieces of writing too, that will show in a more solid way, what we remember by having talked to Rex, how one idea was so powerful, and how much they belong still to a kind of theatre that, for me anyway, is the theatre I most want to see.

Real Time thanks Kate Fitzpatrick and David Malouf for kindly agreeing to have their speeches reproduced here. Thanks too to Professor Gay McKeeley of the Department of Performance Studies, University of Sydney.
Confronting Tedium

M. Billson talks to Mr. Happy

Peter Happy, spokesperson for Melbourne-based performance troupe Tedium began in music but became disaffected by its limitations and decided to tackle theatre, performing monologues using movement and sound.

Tedium came of a marriage between Peter Happy's musical experiments and the feminist drama being explored by Mellownie Mari-Yajima and Lizzi Gay.

"They were doing this theatre and needed some sound for their pieces so I got involved. It was a great opportunity for me to actually watch a piece, see what it inspired in me, and then try to conjure that up musically and juxtapose it with the piece. That became Tedium."

Unlike most other performance groups, Tedium decided that they would take their particular kind of confrontational approach into that great populist icon of Australian culture, the rock pub.

"When people walk into a pub, they expect to see a band, people jumping around playing drums and guitars. I love playing to an unsuspecting audience."

I wondered where Happy felt his musical self-confrontation and the feminist drama of Mari-Yajima and Gay meet?

"We are perfectly aligned. It's also important for me as I break down my conditioning as a male to relate strongly to the conditioning that has occurred to them as females."

Are the three pieces on the CD titled Real Love central to a performance about breaking down those boundaries?

"It's about the way that love loses its subtext, where people are craving something and are trying so hard to get it that it can become violent, and all the care and affection gets lost."

How do you work?

"We pretty much push ourselves to experience the music as much as possible and whatever ideas come out become the basis of the performance."

I wondered if Happy had ever taken things so far even he had been surprised?

"I remember one performance. It was a send up, a statement on the idea of two people having sex but the two having a very different perception of what is occurring between them. There was Mellownie basically having a not very good time and not being honest with herself and there was me, basically in love and having such a brilliant time and I was doing that symbolically by rubbing my hand in my mouth and it got to the point where I was vomiting and it was quite sensual."

Where does he see Tedium fitting into the performing arts scene in Melbourne?

"We're basically autonomous and play like a band in a pub, so we don't really slot into the theatre scene. The whole atmosphere of a Tedium gig is tribal, cathartic, shamanic, all those clichés but the experience of truly letting go and overcoming fear is what I would like to see the audience do too. The problem is, ironically, we're so visual, people just become absorbed in watching us."

TEDIUM performed at the Adelaide Fringe Festival earlier this year, and next play a Gothic industrial club in Brisbane called Labyrinth December 16. Tedium's CD Electronik-Love-Songs for the mediocre at heart has been released by Shu-Manic Dogma GPO Box 2637 Melbourne 3001.
Contemporary Indigenous Arts Practice?

Kooemba Jdarra director Wesley Enoch battles definitions

There is no generic entity labelled Contemporary Indigenous Arts Practice. The word contemporary has been called into question; arts is regarded as a term defined through associations; practice is a sticky point; and Indigenous defies classic Anglo definition. Half-caste, migaloo, yellow skinned, doogay, mixed breed, invisible troublemaker, You’ve done something with your life. You don’t have to be Aboriginal anymore; politically correct, fair skinned, pale one, up-market Murri, Myall.

What is contemporary Aboriginal Arts? In the modern dilemma of urban Aboriginality there remain many questions of authenticity in terms of the creation and maintenance of traditionally based social structures devoid (through waves of psychological and physical attack) of the traditionally cultural means to create meaning. The destruction of dance, song, story, language etc., through the process of invasion and systematic genocide, has precipitated a new wandering amongst Aboriginal generations who have not experienced the first hand traditional heritage that we are expected to have in order to claim the mantle 'Indigenous'. Nor do we possess the cultural capital to fully analyse the dominant discourse in terms of appropriate change and acknowledgment of culturally specific developmental throughlines.

The character of contemporary Indigenous cultural meaning-making maintains a diversity reflected in traditional experiences. The diversification is exemplified by the sheer numbers of Indigenous languages spoken on the continent, the variance in geographic situations and the degrees of colonial resistance. The basic premise that Indigenous arts and culture are ways of explaining the world we inhabit has much credence when viewing the multiplicity of roles for stories originating from the 'Dreaming'. Questions of law, clan morals, geography, genealogy, history, survival information and basic social adhesion can be addressed through explanation of the origins of a region's topography, flora, or fauna or climate. The facility for change is also built into Indigenous traditional meaning-making structures. The Great Horse Gallery at Laura in Far North Queensland shows the first sightings of the horse rendered in what would be called traditional design; similarly a dance from Bathurst Island depicting the gunning turrets stationed on the islands during WW II shows interpretive traditional steps enacting a more modern experience; or the creation of explanatory myth-like structured stories for the coming of alcohol or money or AIDS or the Nissan four-wheel drive bespeaks a flexibility to accept and explain environmental changes through a facility of 'New Dreaming'. I argue that this 'New Dreaming' is legitimated (by Middle Australia) as Indigenous through its continuity of vocabulary and sense of inclusive expansion, in that the obvious based language, form and geographic context remain unchanged whereas content is the responsive element.

Lydia Miller, Performer/Director from Sydney via Cairo, discusses the use of contemporary. She argues: 'I believe that art is more about regionalism. It's certainly about the influences brought on urban society, or what we know as urban society which has come to mean the coastal areas as opposed to the more remote areas. But each have had different influences on them, so different styles have evolved geographically in which people cope in different ways. In terms of urban society, the arts are exposed contintually to new technologies. When we are talking about theatre and art, I think we are addressing the fact we are dealing with a number of multimedia forms through which we can facilitate ideas and the storytelling process. That's as old as history.' 

There is an inherent need for storytelling and the continuation of oral traditions of explaining the world that we, as Indigenous people, inhabit. This is not an exclusively Indigenous experience. In fact if history read more like an injection of technologies into Indigenous cultures, as opposed to discussions of denial of access coupled with an outlawing of cultural practices, I believe that the more invasive and cultural appropriation of technologies that we are starting to see now would have emerged earlier. Video and telecommunication technologies are now linking Indigenous communities with estranged family members in detention as a strategy to combat the high number of Indigenous deaths in custody. First Nation people in North America are starting to use hi-tech virtual reality to create environments depicting ancient stories of creation as teaching tools for their young people.

It is imperative to make-meaning through story is so intense that it has led to a two-sided manipulation of the media, which has provided the greatest access for Indigenous people to tell their stories. On the one hand, Middle Australia has used the media to maintain its dominance, while on the other, Indigenous Australia has distorted its image to fit into this self-deforming projection of negative stereotypes. Many young Murris I've worked with talk about an urban initiation based on breaking the law as a sense of giving yourself to a story; to be awarded public recognition; to get your face in the newspaper; hear your story on the radio or television. Denial of access to storytelling or meaning-making structures encourages actions such as rallies and marches, and inspries nights of civil war or rebellion (where it is fighting for the right to write history in the winner's image). The obvious need for Indigenous people to control the meanings is part of the reconstructive process from a culture of resistance to a culture of repair.

There should not be a sense of reclamation of traditional meaning-making without analysis, but in most cases for urban Murris this is impossible because of the amount of damage sustained in the last 206 years of resistance. I fear that if we try to control and appropriate we will interpret traditional cultures to be, we run the risk of denying the experiences we have had throughout the process of colonisation and the instigation of internal cultural analysis must be one of our first steps in any form of cultural restoration, the that with Middle Australia or with ourselves. Issues such as men's business and women's business, gender construction and its impact in areas such as domestic violence and homicide, the pressure to homogenise Indigenous culture (the appropriation of dances, language, songs and images from one clan to fill another's void), and the need for role model development should all be analysed. In many cases traditional values are appropriated as an excuse not to face opposition or to avoid exposure.

There is no sense in which this work can be seen as inauthentic. Our experience as Indigenous people cannot be devalued because of the colour of our skin, the choice of materials for our art making, our education backgrounds, geography etc.

There are many different performance interpretations of our Indigenous experience based on these factors, but none being more Indigenous than another. The role of contemporary Indigenous meaning-making in urban cultural and geographical endeavour is a continuation of ancient structures of storytelling with an ongoing review of local language, geography and geographic context as well as content. Kooemba Jdarra (which means 'Good Ground' or 'Sweet Land' in the Turrabul group of languages from South-East Queensland) is a company dedicated to these debates through live performance. Kooemba Jdarra came from a ground swell of support from Indigenous artists and communities for a company to explore that perspective in all Murri Mura environment. The Cherry Pickers, the company's inaugural production directed by Lydia Miller featuring several professional Queensland Indigenous performers, sets out to tell a specific experience of Indigenous survival. The text has been appropriated and interpreted to reflect a 1994 Indigenous perspective, to play the dual roles of celebration of story and exploration of meaning and historical roots for our Murri Mura community in South-East Queensland. The further appropriation of performance form joined with Kevin Gilbert's appropriation of English and conventional playwrighting format basically facilitates the storytelling and in no way undermines its credibility as an Indigenous story. The script is used as a vehicle to publicly discuss issues of traditional cultural appropriation, health and mortality, alcohol dependence and economic disempowerment. At the root of this is the acknowledgment that all culture must appropriate symbols, forms, language, stories, etc. to create meaning tempered by a specific protocol and respect for our community.

The Cherry Pickers is a process of experimenting with material and perspective; an ongoing dialogue between community and artist about actively shaking their culures, red culturalising from within not from without. The ability to generate and content on our cultural development is at the heart of contemporary Indigenous arts and at the core of Kooemba Jdarra.

The Cherry Pickers by Kevin Gilbert, Metro Theatre, Brisbane, Dec 2-17

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Placing the space
1995

Angharad Wynne-Jones anticipates the future of The Performance Space

Just about to jet out to London, Paris and Berlin for seven weeks, Angharad Wynne-Jones, director of Sydney's The Performance Space, is excited at the prospect of going home to the UK after being away for five years and is eager to talk about her 1995 program and the appointment of a project coordinator to the TPS. But she's frustrated that the same body that funded that position, the new Hybrid Arts Committee of the Australia Council's Performing Arts Board, didn't fund any of the proposed projects for that coordinator to realise. Now, the project coordinator, with Angharad, will have to create projects rather than coordinate existing ones.

The time is ripe for TPS to shift into becoming a producing venue, a role it has occasionally played in the past. "I feel very strongly that's a role we can take. This year we have some TPS productions, the first one in February in association with the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras - Club Bent which has already received 40 proposals for performances from Brisbane, Melbourne, all over. This is ideal for arts with small works that can't find a venue during the Mardi Gras Festival. It'll operate nine to midnight like a Festival Club. The other production is by the West Australian writer Maduroroot working from a Heiner Müller text in a production directed by Lydia Miller with Gerhardt Fischer as dramaturg. This will coincide in April with the True Colours exhibition in conjunction with Boomalli Aboriginal Artists' Co-operative.

"We're also asking artists and companies using the theatre for seasons to offer classes in the studio at the same time. People who do the workshops will see the shows and audiences might take up the workshops. This is a way of marketing our product, of improving our profile, thematically linking productions and workshops."

"The 1995 program is looking very strong. One of the hits of 1994 was Steps, a performance/dance show curated by Lisa Shelton. Steps 2 will feature Alan Shacher, Anna Sabel, Kate Champion, Matthew Bergin and Heidrun Lohr (doing a photographic installation) plus a video library so that you can come any time of the day and then stay on for the performance. Nikki Heyward is presenting her own show this year, Russell Dumas' Dance Exchange will appear in a new work and the performance group Enter'act, led by Pierre Thibaudau and Elisabeth Burke, are returning to TPS after a long absence and a struggle for funding. "They are now funded by Hybrid Arts - a relief because for a lot of artists here to be labelled either dance or drama was pretty irrelevant. It would be good if the NSW Ministry for the Arts developed a hybrid policy too."

The 1995 program also features Sally Susman's Orientalia with Peking Opera performers who live but rarely perform in Australia - they'll be appearing with local performers Nigel Kellaway, Katia Molina and Andrea Alone whom they've worked with before in Susman's intriguing workshop explorations of east-west performance relations. This time her focus is on encouraging these remarkably skilled artists to find a new context for their craft.

"Open Week this year will extend to two weeks to allow room for more training workshops. Some of the performances - often by new performers - have been so good in recent years that we've thought of touring them. The relationship between art spaces like IMA (Brisbane), FAC (Perth), EAF (Adelaide), ACCA (Melbourne) and TPS through the newly formed ACAAO (Australian Association of Contemporary Arts Organisations) is not only about funding, profile and resources but also the possibilities of touring performance and other works that won't catch the attention of Playing Australia. I feel we're just about to get this initiative going."

Outside Open Week and conferences, the TPS theatre functions mostly as a venue to hire. However, as a creator herself of large scale site specific performances, Angharad's impulse is for TPS to encourage site work, to hire out the theatre when it would normally be used 'in-house' and direct the revenue into small capital improvements for artists and performers to create site specific shows. "We need to signal far more clearly that this is a direct route for artists to go and that we're looking to support artists work in this area." TPS would assist with coordination through its project coordinator and publicity through their resident part-time publicist (a recently created and expanding position which Angharad says has been a real boon in improving the space's profile and helping younger artists in particular).

"It ties in with our looking for new accommodation. Our lease runs out end of 1995. We're not worried about not having a home - we're currently looking at a number of options though it's a long way off before we sign on the dotted line. There's certainly a push from the dance community for a dance centre. St Georges Hall in Newtown looked very attractive but it's already compromized: you can't put nails in the wall and a thrust stage has been added to the proscenium taking up valuable floor space. TPS could be involved in working with them to find a centre - perhaps we'd become part of a cultural centre. Who knows what will happen? We've got a great team running the space so I can get out and look at possible venues. As an artist I sometimes feel frustrated but I was always doing large scale logistical nightmares and The Performance Space is exactly that. I'm actually feeling very challenged though I do miss the solo shows, the inner dialogue, but the work here is totally absorbing."

"1994 was a busy year - incredibly busy, especially with the programming in of the new studio space. In some ways it operates as an intermediary space between the gallery and the theatre, and will continue with performers and performance artists using it as a process base space."

The arrival of the studio has amplified TPS' role as a crowded centre of unusual cultural activity with audiences on some nights occupying both studio (as with the recent Goethe Institut Sound Studio) and theatre and taking in site gallery as well.

1994 was a year without Enter'act, the Sydney Front and Open City performing at the space and there was a noticeable pervasiveness of dance. "It wasn't quite our usual performance profile but in some respects it opened up space for new work. A younger generation is emerging ready to fill up that space over the next couple of years. There's an increasingly lively performance scene. Large scale works on the way from performers like Deborah Pollard. And the dance we host, like Steps, Dance Collection, One Extra and Dance Exchange crosses the dance/performance line."

With the help of the British Council and their rigorous visitors' program, Angharad will look at UK performing spaces to get a perspective on where TPS might position itself in the future, what kind of models there are, what works and what doesn't, "not to extrapolate from the UK into the Australian situation but to get some distance. A couple of weeks in Berlin where there's a strong sound and performance scene will add to our picture."

For TPS watchers the big issues are the new home and how and when Angharad will realise her site specific aspirations. Perhaps the choice of new home will have ramifications for the latter, or will it be the other way round?
Changing Tracks

Chris Ryan interviews Don Mamouney on a flightpath

CR I am one of the people who still refer to Sidetrack Performance Group as Sidetrack, so while sitting under the flight path at Marrickville—PLANE PASSES OVER. Sorry. You'll have to wait. My entire being's vibrating—talking with Don Mamouney. Does the name change (though instigated two years ago) indicate a change of direction for the company?

DM Not really, because the name reflects the way we've been working for much longer than that, and most of us in the company have worked together since 1987-88, although we weren't all at Sidetrack then. There was what we called the new Sidetrack in 1990 when I got my old job as artistic director back. Since then we have been working pretty much as a collaborative/making group. We changed the name to signal we were going in new directions.

CR So this is to say that you've opened yourselves up to outside collaborations?

DM Guest directors, guest performers, guest collaborators. We're working with Derek Kreckler on sit.com at the moment and with Neil Kellaway and John Bayliss on Idol. Nigel did choreography on Heavenly. Willem Brugman worked on Drunken Boat. Next year we're working with Nigel again on a production called Fright!!!

CR Is part of the agenda to get the work out of the ADDITIONAL PLANE ...

Marrickville?

DM Well it is and isn't. It makes us more viable to be able to travel. This year we've been to Canada, to Adelaide, and March next year we're off to Perth. Some people in the company would like to do a lot more interstate and overseas touring. Personally I would like people to come here, but not all that many people see Marrickville as being a great centre for performance at this stage. Although with Contemporary Performance Week it seems to improve all the time.

CR Do you perceive a lack of outlets for contemporary performance in Sydney?

DM Well, there's only The Performance Space and us that are constantly working at it and certainly Open Week and Contemporary Performance Week make it possible.

CR Is this one of the reasons you have held Contemporary Performance Week for the past five years at Sidetrack?

DM In the beginning we wanted to make a contribution to bringing the diversity of contemporary performance into one place. Once it got started it became a strong and significant thing, not only in our year, but in other people's year. I do think it's important in Australia that there is a festival that gives contemporary works a chance to be shown together. Not only to support each other but to encourage greater experiment and risk taking. That's what festivals should do. The larger festivals seem to have forgotten this probably because they have to be popular to meet their budgets. It's a pity because they seem to be more about what's acceptable to a broad public than forums for change.

CR How would you describe such change and how has Sidetrack embraced it?

DM Mostly they're scared of it. They don't know what to say about it. I think they have to do is take the panic out of them. They must not feel at any time they don't know what's going on. If they feel insecure they become hostile or bored or both. Heaven doesn't have a particular narrative but you always know what's happening. Very few people come in and say I'm lost, whereas for works like Drunken Boat, Sweet Laughter. Or our outdoor work The Measure there is a tendency for people to say, "I've got no idea what this is about", "I can't get a hold on this" or "...for me it's offensive because it's locking me out."

CR ANOTHER PLANE ROARS OVERHEAD. A WRITY SMILE TO PASS THE TIME. And what about the language of the critics, especially within the mainstream. Have they embraced contemporary performance practices?

DM Mostly they're scared of it. They don't know what to say about it. I think they recognise there is something happening but don't really have the language to write about it, although some of them have been struggling to find that language. This is a great pity because the work going on at the moment, created by individual artists and small groups is as exciting as the work that was happening in the 70's with Australian playwrighting and production. If we had more perceptive critics they might see this, write about it, give access to a greater number of people to see this work. That's what happened in the 70's: not only was it playwrights, actors and directors developing Australian material, but critics also telling the public about the work. I don't think there is enough telling the public about it and because the economics too have changed, a company like Sidetrack can't afford to put a display advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald. That's very telling. The size of our audience is limited by such factors.

CR The work will continue but where from here?

DM sit.com is coming up in December, then early next year we're off to Perth, come back and work on Fright!!! and then on the development of Whispers in the Heart a show we did a few years ago which is basically about performance / performing culture. Some of our shows in repertoire will be shown as well.

CR One last - PLANE, STILLNESS - question. Do you think we are in a decline or a renaissance?

DM If you'd asked me a year ago I'd have probably said there was enough energy to bring about an absolute explosion of creativity. Today I'm a bit more pessimistic. There is a sense that performance has lost it's way a little recently. There is a sense of repetition, a sense of tiredness in the area of ideas. Creative Nation didn't help much with its emphasis on gloss and looking good in the eyes of the world. Let's just say we are sitting on an interesting plateau with just enough dissatisfaction around to create the very necessary sense that something is about to break.

Sidetrack are based at the Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville in Sydney. Their performance menu Heaven, March 1-11, and their outdoor ambient work The Measure, 2-4, 10, 11 March, will be presented at the 1995 Perth Festival.
Locked in ... Not so much turbulence in The Performance Space as in his body, Nigel Kellaway pushes that body to its limits. Kellaway is a tour de force in the theatre for ten days, fed by leading chef Gay Bilson, sleeping in an opulent bed, performing. Performances are scheduled to occur in the afternoons with brief breaks for a fog and a chat, and in toto in the evenings between eight and nine-thirty to a seated audience, one of whom has the great pleasure of sharing a Bilson meal (prepared on the premises) and appreciating the chef’s delights of being ogled, videotaped and monologuat at. The work proceeds through a series of striking movement images evolving ballet (especially in the arms and buttock, suggesting real presence and some pain (on pointe and suspended by one wrist but without the obligation of the Sebastian arrows) and performed with a steady stream of talk written by Kellaway himself, and directed by Nigel Kellaway, Auster, Muller etc.). The consistency of tone of delivery, arch style sing-song, and the artifice of the seemingly ironic content about age, authenticity and lust, suggest one voice, not quotation, and trigger a feeling of psychological-psychological trivia. By the end, suspense as self-doubt (fiction or not) escalates.

I say incarcerated in his body because the knowledge that this is a non-stop ten day performance is almost incidental (you watch for signs of exhaustion, you try to imagine the space as home, you see last night’s table guest and meal and Nigel’s ballet teacher on video monitor). The performance is completely true to the bigger issue ‘this is ‘this body’ that Kellaway finds himself alive in, even trapped in, a male body that dresses and grooms itself as a female, female of ballet and opera and past generations of cocquetterie middle class women. This male body, this female body, wants it for itself, especially after forty years of age (opening night was Nigel’s fortieth birthday we were told) where the skin, bones, flesh, and ageing, where lust is the issue, not sex. As for actual women, as opposed to the fantasy of immigrant, Gay andlesbian, or even a white woman’s ‘appearance’ I recall in a brief narrative about a prostitute who ‘sucked him off’ and whom he frames with a sneer. The claim by some that this was not a gay show rather yet another account of the ‘human condition’ (albeit and ashamed) by Kellaway’s going head on at issues like fakery and authenticity and his unconvincing denial of naturalism is) it is an issue of representation work done by artists like Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Stuart Brisley, Marina and Ulry, Stelarc and Mike Parr. In their experiential performance these themes are taken up and with some variation, tended to show signs of the ‘real’ condition (and/or duration) of human behaviour. In the case of Nigel’s life as he lives it in the theatre for ten days but rather, that these visualities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

In this piece Nigel’s performance work done by artists like Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Stuart Brisley, Marina and Ulry, Stelarc and Mike Parr. In their experiential performance these themes are taken up and with some variation, tended to show signs of the ‘real’ condition (and/or duration) of human behaviour. In the case of Nigel’s life as he lives it in the theatre for ten days but rather, that these visualities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

In Nigel’s promotional material for This Most Wicked Body, I picked up words like, ‘improvisation’ or ‘incarnation” which resonated with me of some of the work done by artists like Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Stuart Brisley, Marina and Ulry, Stelarc and Mike Parr. In their experiential performance these themes are taken up and with some variation, tended to show signs of the ‘real’ condition (and/or duration) of human behaviour. In the case of Nigel’s life as he lives it in the theatre for ten days but rather, that these visualities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

In his work The Sydney Front was instrumental in uncovering and challenging the often unacknowledged and unmonumented power/knowledge relations between actor and spectator in the theatre. This was most dramatically demonstrated in an event in Sydney Front piece: within a female performer stood alone on stage facing the audience. She stood quite still and in a manner a male would suggest that she take her clothes off. As in his earlier work with The Sydney Front, Nigel resists and frustrates spectacular desires. This time the focus is not on the spectator but the persona of Nigel Kellaway. Performing for 24 hours a day for ten days in This Most Wicked Body, Nigel collapses the distinction between representation and reality, performing and non-performing self. Spectatorial desire cannot derive from securing or knowing the ‘real’ or ‘true’ identity of the performer because this isn’t clear from the installation.

Training to Form?

At the recent Theatre Training and Theatre Practice: A Dialogue Conference held at the Victorian College of the Arts during the Melbourne Festival, Theatre historian and performance artist Linda Sproul gave a talk with slides about her work, which included challenge to the reading of images of the female form. For an upcoming piece in Perspective entitled White Walls, a project begun in the 19th century wing of the Art Gallery of NSW, she is researching the idea of the Performale Body and the Spaces. A search for the perfect spot coveted... In her last piece, Root, in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, a sculpture of a nude woman in a gold cro- bar making the pace more icy and gold light emanating from low above her head, genital ia exposed and her a not ion which differs greatly from the neck five or six metres by a suspension mechanism.

Sproul notes that, while seeking "expressions of female abandonment", she was not interested in heroics or acrobatics, hers a no more than the gesture of finding liberation through form or training. But on this point I must take umbrage: to speak of "the female gaze" is to consider the clean fall of the plinth on the other, to perform what must be a dream of the Kellaway repertoire. Perhaps the clean fall of the plinth on the other, to perform what must be a dream of the Kellaway repertoire. Perhaps the unacknowledged and unmonumented power/knowledge relations between actor and spectator in the theatre. This was most dramatically demonstrated in an event in Sydney Front piece: within a female performer stood alone on stage facing the audience. She stood quite still and in a manner a male would suggest that she take her clothes off. As in his earlier work with The Sydney Front, Nigel resists and frustrates spectacular desires. This time the focus is not on the spectator but the persona of Nigel Kellaway. Performing for 24 hours a day for ten days in This Most Wicked Body, Nigel collapses the distinction between representation and reality, performing and non-performing self. Spectatorial desire cannot derive from securing or knowing the ‘real’ or ‘true’ identity of the performer because this isn’t clear from the installation.

We still see “real” and “fake” as absolute opposites? Any theatre has “visual” elements, and as a composed space, has an essential installation.

After all, both sides are subject to form of colour-blindness. One can see blue, the other red, but they may be seeing the same thing. I guess the reason why people want to situate themselves within a border is that they are their own identity. Art might be extended or blurred, but it never disappears.

A person who has crossed a border, both culturally (Japan to Australia) and artistically (from theatre, to dance, to visual arts), I only see this phenomenon as an ongoing territorial movement. I tend to forget that any border is an historical, political, cultural, and social construction. There is no absolute reason to accept it.

Whatever label one may put on it, Kellaway, It’s Me! This Man, was a sophisticated, devoted, challenging work, which contributes further to discussion on notions of the “hybrid”.

Yoji Sone PS I wonder if Nigel is going to “act” at the words of deconstruction. What is said of “the Bakhtins, or Kellaway who killed himself by “karatasi”, as a final aesthetic act.

Knowing Nigel

After This Most Wicked Body I wonder if there is anything that I haven’t seen and don’t know about Nigel Kellaway. Live and replayed on video screen in The Performance Space theatre, I have seen Nigel dancing naked, looking seductive in a black, off the shoulder evening gown, eating meals created for him by Gay Bilson and showing his appreciation of the music composed and played by live David Montgomerie. I’ve seen his ashing, wakening, dressing, going to the bathroom, eating mussels for breakfast in the courtyard of The Performance Space, cleaning his teeth with his tongue, blowing his nose with a handie and looking for leftovers in discarded cigarette packets. He has confessed to a sexual encounter in the theatre and recounted this in explicit detail. There doesn’t seem to be much left to know about Nigel and his bodily habits, pleasures and desires.

At the same time, it is precisely this presumption of knowledge that this 240 hour theatre piece calls into question. What is pornographic or obscene in This Most Wicked Body? Partly is not the explicitness of Nigel’s life as he lives it in the theatre for ten days but rather, that these visualities can be taken as referring to a real person. That is, what is obscene in this (or perhaps all) theatre piece) is that the spectator may presume on the basis of a representation to know the truth about Nigel Kellaway.

I wonder if perhaps by the female gaze rather than the male.

Compare this with Maudie Davey’s theatre work - also a piece about subverting the feminine - where she uses the single, stilted-skelleted shrimp’s gripples and mudwounds challenge the frills of her garb. This is only about discourses in what is said and done, attitudes to meanings and by extension, to what is taught, or indeed taught.

From the composing of a kind of nostalgia for the impossible Other with arguments about what good happens in Russia or China or Indonesia, but not here, to the revelation by恐慌 Richard Murphett that great Russian teachers lament that they don’t “do” Pretor Brood’s work. Perhaps a basic question on which the conference turned: do tendencies towards multiculturalism lead to a loss of the unacknowledged, emancipations, aftertastes and layers of contiguou s tastes that are conce, yet perhaps an antithesis of the fixing of her smile (if the drooling female audience is anything to go by) almost continuous in every sense? I have no idea if perhaps by the female gaze rather than the male.

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Speaking Directly

Colin Hood spoke to Derek Kreckler about his new work with Sidetrack Performance Group, sit.com, and recent video work.

Derek Kreckler is not one for mincing words regarding the current state of the "non-mainstream" visual and performing arts yet his manner of 'speaking directly' filters through a number of linguistic, visual and performative systems.

Take his most recent video piece, Optimised (the title is carried through from a recent installation work at the Performance Space) to be screened on Artrage along with video works by twenty other performers as part of their Eye on ABC's Rage program. Sliced in for a two minute segment between standard music video content, Kreckler’s face looms in a macabre half-silhouette. Two brief utterances (I won’t say what they are - better watch and listen in February) are followed by a sinister smile that creeps gently into position. Finish - slip back into the mesmeric flow of pop, rap and grunge before the next video bite of the same piece.

In a recent letter to The Australian - in counterpart to the very public persona of the 'evil artist' he presents in the video version of Optimised - Kreckler speaks (more or less directly) of the problems faced by those producing "non-economically viable art". "It is most often because some of us deal with issues that are not in the literal domain, some of us choose to be concerned with the stuff under the carpet - you walk on it but you may never see it."

One moment he’s ‘speaking his mind’; the next performing a temporary occupation of the speaking positions of those who tend towards simplistic reduction in their criticism of the genres and values of contemporary art and performance.

Kreckler likes his words to be literal, like the word "excellence" which he stencilled on to a wall in a room bathed in a blue light. We strive for excellence as we struggle against the poverty of judgment or for the complexity of a narrative algorithm (of control, exchange and divergence) in a performative context. To interrogate how we talk of excellence (the struggle towards implicit reduction in their peaking position of those who tend to be concerned with) the pressing issues of the twenty first century, the performance and installation works are sometimes conceptually or nominally connected (as with the installation and video projects both bearing the title Optimised). An installation sculpture-like How to Discipline a Tree (consisting of one thousand compressed newspaper bricks) appears generically distinct in its solidity and stillness. Yet a single chair placed between the paper brick walls implicates a kind of dialogue between the solitary participant (whether dares or cares to sit there) and this monument to process and print. The installation continues Kreckler’s exploration of social and linguistic constructions of performance as social interaction in a manner where - to parody Marx, “All that is fluid and conversational solidifies into a wall of impenetrable reportage”.

In matters of collaborative performance, Kreckler’s directorial vision of the project to project, depending on the content of the work. Fill, performed in 1990, was a ‘choral’ sound performance consisting of 13 performers set in a sea of 28,000 beer cans. The chorus utter the word “everyone” rising from a silent mise to maximum pitch, with “words fill me” projected behind them in a staggered sequence. “In a piece like Fill”, remarks Kreckler, “I asked the performers to do something very specific and there wasn’t any real latitude for performer input”. For sit.com - a collaborative performance with four members of the Sidetrack performance group and ex-Sydney Theatre Company member Chris Ryan - Kreckler envisages a more open-ended directorial approach. “Basically I’ve conceived the piece and I’m editing their writing - bringing a text that they’ve written into a space where it can be workshopped and re-tailored into its final form.”

sit.com works through a number of permutations of interactive spaces (the nightclub for example), repeating, with variations, a reading of communities or communities “interrogated by technology”. The process of rehearsal and structuring proceeds, as Andrew Murphy remarked of an earlier performance by Kreckler, with performers “caught in the structures of repetativity that sampling and the other technologies demanded as a result of performing with them.”

Where technology (in the form of beam projectors) works both as a mask and an enhancement to the content of the work, sit.com presents its audience with a complex and flowing texture of words, light and musical rhythms.

sit.com will be performed from the 21-7 - Dec, Sidetrack Studio Theatre, Marrickville.

ARTRAGE is a contemporary visual arts project designed for national television broadcast via ABC’s RAGE music video program. Participating artists include Derek Kreckler, Dale Frank, Jacky Redgate, Jeff Gibson, Linda Dement, Harry Armanious and Kathy Tenin. Two artists’ videos (each being from 30 seconds to 2 minutes duration) will be broadcast each night, repeated on the hour. Intended broadcast dates are each weekend February 3 - March 5. A compilation video will be on sale in VHS format at $300.00 plus $10.00 postage. Orders should be placed by 29th December 1994. For further information, contact curator/or-ordinator Kim MacDonald Tel 043 791 515 Fax 043 791 1393.

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Watch this Artspace

Ben Curnow susses out the Tsoutas vision

Artspace is geared up to enter an exciting new phase of its history, with the recent opening of a new studio for artists, and its Director, Nick Tsoutas, beginning to make his presence felt in its programming. Tsoutas, who left a directorship at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane to take up the appointment in August, has lately announced a "change of direction" for Artspace, which involves a particular emphasis on process-oriented, multi-media, installation and conceptually based practices. However, this emphasis is not necessarily a matter of privileging specific mediums or art forms, but rather "reading across media", according to the new Director.

Tsoutas talks in comprehensive terms about a sense of temporality and process, which can be made to inform many facets of the contemporary art space. His philosophy is rooted in a fundamentally sympathetic understanding, as a practising artist, of the process element in artists' practices being the essence of the contemporary in art. He favours volatility and flux. "I want to look at ways by which you can rethink the actual exhibition space in terms of the studio", he says, "in terms of developing ideas, and investing in the temporality of ideas". As well as strengthening Artspace's commitment to performance and multi-media, the re-orientation will equally mean an emphasis upon critical discourse and debates, and ultimately upon publishing initiatives.

The long-awaited presence of the studio which is now ready at the Gunnera location, in itself represents a major shift in the identity of Artspace. The fact of having artists continually present and working in the studios "will certainly impact on and inform the way we think and what happens at Artspace", says Tsoutas, again insisting that the purpose of the studios should not be merely "product oriented". Artspace will have election control over four of the studios, which were developed and contested and renegotiated. Vital to such an aim is that Artspace must rethink and "reinvent itself", according to Tsoutas.

"One of the interesting aspects of any contemporary art space is that it should be constantly interrogating its own structures, its fundamentals, its positions and ideologies", he says. "Artspace now seems to be gridded into a certain condition of sameness — of practitioners, of motives, of exhibition-generative activities — and, in a sense, a degree of conformity".

While the organisation has struggled to pick up a sense of momentum (largely due, it must be said, to the patent deficiency of its funding), he sees the challenge as more basically one of positioning and a need to counteract inertia, while also confronting the pragmatic obstacles. "In looking at Artspace, I have had to evaluate my thoughts on where it fits into the overall artistic activity of Sydney, and to suggest that maybe it's time to shift the terrain... to look at a way of working which allows a more mobile or dynamic approach to a sense of action, a sense of function, that repositions artists as part of the debate. I am looking at a different working methodology for Artspace: one that responds more dynamically to issues of process, to issues of how work is constructed and what structures artists are dealing with.}

"I don't mind the fact Artspace has evolved an institutional status," he says in reference to its origins via the initiatives of a group of artists five years ago, "because it's still possible within the institutions to be both subversive and to reinvent the radical positions. In a sense, I think that part of the demand of the 90s is how do institutions become more radical, when everything seems to be co-opted? And I think that if there's a task that we have to understand, it's to invigorate the debates on radicality." He is emphatic that part of the role of spaces like Artspace must be to disrupt and challenge the various hegemonies and complacencies of mainstream contemporary art.

If Artspace is to represent the sense of urgency and intensive inquiry that contemporary art has the capacity to engender, Tsoutas believes, then it has to be proactive in making the issues involved more pressing, and more demanding of its audiences. "You've got to have the capacity to develop critical positions. Without critical positions we have nothing; we have silence. I'm not prepared to take things for granted anymore... connections need to be pressurised, to see if they hold — or does everything turn to air? I'm less interested in things which have neutral consequences. And I think one of the frightening things about the condition of some debates in art today is that there's a sense of standing still, of reinventing the old arguments without shifting the debates. If art spaces are complicit in that — if they acquiesce in that, and they don't ask questions — then they become fixed, and to be fixed is death, I think".

Artistic practices which are not necessarily defined by virtue of objects will be integral to the future programming at Artspace. Previously the founding director of The Performance Space, in the early 1980s, Tsoutas has a long-running interest in such art forms, but their foregrounding in this instance seems notably strategic. Tsoutas is wishing to force the issues concerning what developments can be taking place as we leave behind the 80s, "that commodified period which, in a sense, de-privileged the more volatile, unstable practices of art", as he describes it.

The intention is surely to throw some big questions about what constitutes art practice open to debate — and heated debate. Tsoutas believes that in the 1990s, "the whole enterprise of visual culture is being renegotiated. It's being thought through in very complex ways. Change is happening around us, and that's where I feel extremely confident that the Artspace entity is not a spent force. It's not just an alternative. My feeling is that what's dawning, and has been dawning on us progressively in contemporary experimental practice is an important, viable manifestation in its own right. It's part of what makes our culture visible today". The issues of where theory and criticism fit and fold back into current developments in art practice will receive special attention in the program as well. A continuing series of lectures and issue-based forums will begin early next year, with a forum discussing formalism, later followed by topics including technology and oppositionality.

Artspace's program up until May features shows by VNS Matrix, Hiroto and Mathew Jones, and an exhibition curated by Abby Mellick called "Touch", which were scheduled under the former directorship of Louise Perber. Then Nick Tsoutas will make his debut in the gallery with "Critical Spaces", a project involving Sydney's artist-run spaces, which looks at "the depth and terrain of what constitutes 'space' in terms of artist-run activities". Some pertinent and related components that can be confirmed as part of next year's program at Artspace will include a project by the leading postmodern choreographer, Russell Dumas, a visit by the internationally acclaimed American sound artist and poet, John Giorno, and a number of performance events in connection with "Sound in Space", a large-scale survey project.

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

JANUARY 12 - February 5: WHOSE CITY? power and privilege WHO'S GOT IT? isolation/Incarceration, questions of consciousness and constructions of reality dominate January's exhibition program: Aboriginal artists RAISE THE FLAG in True Colours curated by Hetti Perkins (Boommall, Aust.) and Eddie Chambers (NIVA, UK); Isolation and incarceration in the works of Chris Hillstead presenting Lands Edge and "Woe to the artist who confuses reality with the real". Brent Neylon utilises photography to reflect on the built environment. CARS and FREEWAYS in Built (up) Area whilst Melissa McDougal prefers collage paintings to explore personal and cultural identity in a contemporary URBAN context. James Angus presents Sculpture-LIGHT and Shopping. Cathy Blanchflower's Frequencies are paintings. FEBRUARY 16 - March 12: CELEBRATING the 25th Anniversary of International Women's Day in the Company of Women curated from the Cruthers Collection and Expose by Lucille Martin. The Festival of Perth interrogates heritage and contemporary practice in a series of FORUMS encompassing music, theatre, DANCE, hybrid arts and the nature of FESTIVALS; in MARCH Sidetrack Performance Group brings Heaven to Perth - and about time too - whilst artists from Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines Torque(sic) for ARX '94, with an international SYMPOSIUM March 24 - 26; APRIL 27 - May 21 sees work from contemporary Austrian artists. The Arts Association "Mozart"; 2 Dance Plus & Contemporary OPERA. Giles is that You?
Exploding Architecture

Colin Hood spoke to Perspectives artist Mathew Jones who is relaunching his installation Poof! for the vestibule of the Art Gallery of NSW.

CH The Art Gallery vestibule has become one of the privileged exhibition sites for Perspectives artists over the years. You did an earlier version of the work at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne last year. How do you plan to re-style the piece for Perspectives?

MJ At ACCA it actually occupied three rooms and so was shaped by the architecture of the building. With the Art Gallery of NSW it will be engineered quite differently. I'm looking forward to using this space very much. It's a much bigger space - an incredibly dramatic and theatrical space that really suits the piece.

CH In a recent review, the installation was described as reflecting on the "spectacularisation of gay and lesbian issues in the mainstream media". Do you agree with that assessment?

MJ In the mainstream media or - wherever. The title Poof! takes on a cartoon-like aspect, a sound describing a sudden appearance - or disappearance.

This was the inflection I wanted for the piece, to create an ambiguity around the word's meaning - either a proud announcement of gay identity or an exploding of a myth.

CH In an ABC interview you did concerning your work Trophies - in the True Stories exhibition at Artspace - you commented on the way codes and sub-cultural codes intersect and deflect from each other, and on the other hand, the way people from a particular sub-culture may understand a particular jargon while others - outside of it - may not. Does Poof! continue your critique of mainstream and sub-cultural media representations?

MJ Yes it does. What I've done - consistently I think - is to engage with images and words from publicity campaigns - for organisations like ACON or ACT-UP for example - and to express some kind of critical distance from them. This is why I like the ambiguity of the title Poof! It's like the way I'm always torn between my allegiance to gay politics and my dissatisfaction with it.

CH The American curator and writer Connie Butler has remarked - in a recent essay on installation work - that 'artists are now constructing things in and with space that encourage paradox'. Do you think your own work carries this effect? Does it bear some kind of generic affinity with more grunge-style installation, or is the effect of language more important?

MJ Because my work focuses on gay sub-culture and mainstream, I always try and frustrate some kind of identifying element that would tie my work to a particular style or debate. My body of work includes photographs, paintings, sculptures, installations - even tattoos. My work is contextual in the sense of responding to the physical nature of the space, the history of the space, what other work is being shown at the time - what people expect of me at a particular time.

CH The lead-up to the Mardi Gras is perhaps a context in which your work will be interpreted. How do you feel about that?

MJ I have no problem being a part of Mardi Gras - as long as what I do stands out in some way from the whole event. More and more, people are getting this warm, fuzzy 'tolerant' glow. I wrote a note for the catalogue to the effect that Poof! was to be the last word in queer art - an apogee. Meaning something like: “You want gay art? This is it. An enormous bloody great spectacle.”

Australian Perspectives 1995

Australian Perspectives for 1995 will present a diversity of artists and art practices ranging through performance, installation, kinetic work, conceptual art, interactive and video art, photography and video. Working on and around the theme of the hybrid, curator Judy Annear, previewing the show in a recent issue of Art Monthly, comments on the three main ideas which focus the show. "The first concerns the mixing of differing cultural forms and languages...the second idea is associated with the continuing collapse of conventional distinctions between high art and mass culture...the third is the recontextualisation of the individual, social, cultural and 'gendered' body."

John Bulan Bulan will come from Maningrida in the Northern Territory to show his series of works which illustrate the contact between his people and the Macassans which continued for many centuries. Guan Wei, originally from Beijing and resident in Australia since 1989, will show The Great War of the Eggplant which comments on the vagaries of cultural exchange.

Maria Kozic will present the series I Woman painted in 1994 for Perspectives. I Woman consists of 6 parts - there are six large paintings of dolls heads under plastic wrap, matched with six small works of the same head unwrapped, eyes closed. The series presents the commodification of the female in society through mass culture.

Sydney artist Linda Demer will present a new interactive CD-ROM Cyberflesh -Girlmonster, which consists of scanned bodies parts remade in new beings. Melbourne performance artist Linda Sproul will present her latest work - a hybrid made up of fragments looking at aspects of Australian history such as 19th century pastoralism and that century's obsession with ghosts and hauntings.

A number of artists will work on the Art Gallery itself, and these include Sydney artist David McDermott who is preparing a topographical insert for the program at the entrance of the building and Brook Andrew from Penrith who is devising a pattern and text piece for the rear of the Gallery overlooking Woolloomooloo.

Many of the participating artists will be giving talks about their works, and Pope Alice (aka Luke Roberts), described as "The World's Greatest Living Curator" will take two tours of the exhibition. A Forum, Elastic Bodies, will be held in the Domain Theatre at the Art Gallery on Saturday 4th March. Speakers will include the New York curator and writer, Thomas W. Sokolowski (who has been a regular correspondent on the arts program of Radio National over the years - and has recently curated an exhibition on AIDS for the New York Grey Gallery), Aboriginal artist and filmmaker Destiny Deacon and cultural theorist McKenzie Wark. The forum will be chaired by Lesley Stern.

An extensive overview of the Perspectives program will appear in Realtime 5.
If these walls could move

Martin Thomas

In our time, often under the rubric of post-modernism, has come the production of works that almost entirely forsake the phenomenal world for the world of art. I refer to a broad network of conceptualist practices that seek to critique the assumptions of spectatorship through enactment of gestures that are usually associated with Duchamp. Thus, the cubic interiors of galleries, frames within frames, empty vitrines, and endless borrowings from 'the history' of art (as if that history could ever be surmised in a chronicle) become the substance of art itself. This maintains an appearance of dialogue, but one that can only proceed in a formalised and one-sided fashion. For Duchamp is dead now, and art, contained within these literal and conceptual walls, is never known to answer back.

Hence my interest in the work of artists who have sought to grapple with the problems and limits of representation in very different ways — practitioners for whom the academic post-modernism described above is limited, who exhume the barriers of gallery walls. The public act of the situationists retains a heightened significance for many of these people: the streetscape, in its unpredictability, becomes a forum in the genuine sense; a shifting spectacle around which an interactive dialogue might be enacted. Art that is non-dialogic, that concerns itself entirely with its own lineage, operates in a theatre that is dangerously safe. It remains at home in an era when homelessness, in all its implications, has no certainty as a social norm.

It is safe for art to talk about art — its home ground. It is dangerous for art to talk about homelessness. For me, as someone with a home, to encode the experiences of homeless people [as I did with a tape recorder in 1991] raised ethical questions that were inherently insoluble. On the one hand, I was forced to problematise the process that translated human misery into a representation; on the other I was forced to ask by what presumption I could remain silent about these issues. I concluded that silence is more dangerous than dialogue, however flawed, and wandered the streets in wonder at walls both blocked and broken.

Differences between public and private have been re-written by homelessness: the streets function as eating places, bedrooms, living rooms, latrines. I don't photograph people without permission, but decided, on encountering a sleeper swathed in a cocoon of blankets, that I would take the image. The surrounding fabric had become his wall.

Perhaps art should never be too categorical in attempting to control the circumstances of its production. For that which is outside the process so often finds a way of flooding in. A project initiated by Anne Graham and produced in collaboration with another Australian, the photographer Pam Kleemann, used the New York streets as a heightened forum of unpredictability. Developing a long-standing interest in the history of textiles, Graham as performer and Kleemann as documenter created Sweat (1994), an ephemeral and peripatetic spectacle that unfolded mainly around the clothing districts of lower Manhattan.

Sweat consisted of travelling the streets with a hand-operated sewing machine attached to a shopping trolley. The Jewish tailor shops around Orchard Street and the clothing factories in Chinatown became favoured locations where Graham would arrive with her trolley, sit down on the sidewalk, and commence sewing white surgical gowns (_duplicates of those made in women's prisons around Sydney where she has worked). Before anything else, it was an event that fostered narrative, bringing her into dialogue with other textile workers — the tailors specialising in custom-made underwear or the street-based seamstress whose clients consisted of other homeless people who brought her baggy, second-hand clothes to be lined and double lined in order to meet the onslaught of winter. The dialogue could occur because Graham was often mistaken as a transient person. This opened access to home narratives. For Duchamp is course closed the possibility of others. The eccentricity of Sweat played on the irony that in this great city of spectacle, the first rule of the street is to keep your eyes averted.

It is Graham's use of a trolley that has particular resonance in a discussion concerned with the art of movement. Ironically, supermarket and shopping trolleys have become signature items in the iconography of American homelessness. They provide portable storage for possessions, and are often used by those who scour the trash cans in search of refundable cans or bottles. In this way they grimly parody the consumer ritual of parading the shopping circuit in pursuit of commodities.

An array of artists have explored the rich connotations of movement associated with hand-pushed carts and trolleys. The Australian Richard Goodwin, whose sculptural works include fantastic vehicles and machines, was influenced by the monomania of the crash helmeted "Trolley Man", a Sydney derelict who died last month. His peregrinations about the city with a curious little trailer, from which he never separated, made him one of the best remembered Sydney identities. The mystery of what was housed in his trolley has been answered now that it has joined the collection of the Powerhouse Museum. Apart from a few items of bric-a-brac, the trolley contained just the tools for its maintenance. It was a self-enclosed project.

For the American artist Krzysztof Wodiczko the scenario of homeless people using shopping trolleys inspired The Homeless Vehicle Project (1989) in New York and Philadelphia, where he designed a trolley which he gave to a homeless man. It was designed to allow its owner to collect cans and bottles, but it also was fed out like an ambulance stretcher to provide emergency shelter. The vehicle, according to Wodiczko, was not intended for mass production. It was simply a statement that such an invention had become socially necessary. "This allows the homeless to be seen not as objects without human status, but rather as users and operators of equipment whose form articulates the conditions of their existence."

Martin Thomas recorded Home Front Manhattan for ABC FM's The Listening Room while visiting New York in 1991.
M.O.M.A.'s Australian Video Art

Haley Smorgon talks with An Eccentric Orbit producer, artist Ross Harley

HS How did the exhibition An Eccentric Orbit eventuate? How did you become the producer of the show?

RH Basically through a trip that John Hanhardt made to Australia in the mid to late eighties. He was the curator for film and video at the Whitney Museum in New York and saw a lot of really interesting work in Australia and thought it would be great if some of it could be shown in America. As a result he has been encouraging a number of people to get a show together and helping to get it touring America. I didn’t want to do it personally but thought it would be a great idea, so I approached the Australian Film Commission. We came up with Peter Callas who is a very well known video maker in Australia and has an international reputation. He has curated quite a few shows of this kind, I became producer because of my contact with both John Hanhardt and the American Federation Of Arts which is a touring organisation. The show will tour America, Europe, Latin America, and possibly Australia. It’s designed for an American and European audience who have not seen this work before.

HS What were the criteria for choosing the artists?

RH Basically to put together three programs that would present a coherent view of the sort of work that is made in Australia. The image of Australia overseas is quite different from what we experience in a cultural sense. We did not want landscape video or the sort of work that might be expected to come from Australia. We wanted to do something that was distinctive of what has been happening here. Some works go back ten years while others have been recently completed.

HS Do you see the term “video art” as restrictive or misleading?

RH These days people make videos in different ways using digital video, using computers to make animation. It’s a combination of forms. You can’t talk about pure video. People are making laser discs or CD-ROMs or computer animations that do not use cameras at all but whose output is video. Does that make them video? We actually wanted to call it “New Media” but the Americans thought that “New Media” sounded like fax machines and beepers. The term “video art” is misleading but it sort of works. They need a category that their audience will understand. “Video art” is a term that has to incorporate all the developments happening in video and film technology. It is still an emerging form and that is why it is difficult.

HS Your video Immortelle which is part of An Eccentric Orbit comes under the heading of “The Diminished Paradise”. Ross Gibson has suggested that from an Aboriginal and Islander point of view paradise has been truly diminished. How does the theme “the Lost Paradise” refer to your work Immortelle?

RH Ross Gibson’s work on “the Diminished Paradise” deals with the way Australia has been imagined as this paradisal place where the closer we get to it the further it recedes from our view amidst the interior of a threatening, wild landscape. We have taken this view to its endpoint where this paradisal view of the world is no longer an issue - it has gone completely. Although my work does not necessarily illustrate this, it fits well with a number of other works which are about how we deal with our sense of place, taking into account the cultures of indigenous peoples, science fiction and cyberpunk.

HS With reference to your current exhibition, The Digital Garden, at the Contemporary Centre for Photography for EXPERIMENTA, what does the garden signify in this technological age?

RH The garden is a great place to think about ourselves, nature and the way in which we arrange nature. Classically, we do this through our technologies. The garden is a place where we can reflect on the cycles of growth, geometry, order and patterning, not to mention the naked beauty of the garden in its own right. People are interested in the experiment, in the interaction between the garden and technology. We look at it through the filter or the lens of our time, the time of TV, video, computers etc.

HS Why has the wilderness an illusory sacred quality?

RH The wilderness is a construction of the twentieth century. We had to construct it in order to save it. We’ve also had to create parks and gardens in order to maintain a certain view of nature. Whether my work is essentially about that I am not sure. My point is simple that there is no such thing as a natural environment. Why didn’t we have a concept of the wilderness in the seventeenth century?

HS Why is it important for the viewer to interact with the computer monitor to move selected images, to navigate their own path?

RH For me it has to do with the idea of trying to make connections visually through inner space so that there is a series of repeated images which are themselves based on some simple geometry. I am interested to see what happens when you start with a few elements and then you multiply them out in space and time. The touch screen is a data base of possibilities. There are various levels of interaction. I am interested in the relationships between images that have been grouped and patterned and constantly move in certain ways on very simple geometric principles.

HS What do the organic shapes and materials symbolise?

RH They are like electronic life forms. They are created very simply using video and computer feedback.

HS Viewing the Taj Mahal it appears as a travel video. Why the Taj Mahal? What is its significance?

RH You put your finger on it. All the gardens are well known and tourist sites. Taj Mahal, Versailles, Hyde Park, all have strong spatial geometry and a singular access which leads you along the perspective site line towards its ultimate point. The Taj Mahal ‘lakes’ lead you to the mausoleum which is also a place of love, whilst in contrast, with Versailles, you look away from the palace over the domain of Paris, France, the world, limited only by the horizon. The garden is organised to extend that view. These places are ordered visually. My piece on one hand is a representational space but on the other hand it’s also real space, you move through it, you don’t sit down in one seat and experience it.

HS Your image of the haystacks resembles a Monet painting, your flowers, Warhol. Was this deliberate?

RH Absolutely. These are all the different ways we view nature through representation so it’s quite important that there are art historical references. The image of forest greenery composed of moving rectangular intersecting panels, representing the substance of nature in solid planes of colour also make reference to the modernist works of Mondrian and Van Doesberg.

HS In Leo Marx’s book The Machine In The Garden he describes a garden as a “miniature middle landscape”. He goes on to say that it “is as attractive for what it excludes as for what it contains.” Marx views the garden as a ‘constructure’, a place of mediated nature, a place to resolve the dichotomy of nature and culture.

RH I agree. Leo Marx put his finger on a lot of things when he wrote The Machine In The Garden.

HS Do you see technology and the way it affects the natural world as positive or as alienating?

RH Both. People have an ambivalent relationship to technology and to nature. I do as well. We see the world through the eyes of our time but we should also keep ourselves open to new possibilities. I don’t believe that our lives are overrun by technology. It doesn’t overly concern me because I believe in chaos. We are saved by chaos in the end, the fallibility of all systems. Things don’t work the way they should which leads to the unpredictable. It’s not like Demolition Man or Jurassic Park.

An Eccentric Orbit - Video Art in Australia, organised by The American Federation of Arts, includes works by Destiny Deacon, Stephen Duke, Chris Caines, John Comomo, Peter Callas, The Brothers Gruchy, Jill Scott, John Gilles, Cathy Vogon, Michael Hill, Troy Innocent, Phillip Brooky, Ian Haig, Linda Dement, Bill Seaman, John McCormack, Michael Strum, Randelli, Faye Maxwell and Jane Parks

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Robert Mapplethorpe, 1986

Following on from the success of its Kahunum! Animation exhibition and screening (which featured visits from Ren and Stimpy animator John Kricfalusi, the architect of the experimental animation studio, animator Buchi Terasawa), The Museum of Contemporary Art continues its commitment to a diverse range of themes and media with two exhibition programs dedicated to photography.

Contemporary Sydney life is exposed - from December 21 through to February 13 - in Sydney Photographed (1980 - 1994). Weaving together a wide variety of images by 23 contemporary photographers, the exhibition includes traditional documentary photographs as well as manipulated and installational work. Sydney may not have been the original subject of these photographs. Nevertheless in contrast to photographs that are regularly used to identify Sydney in tourism brochures or in-flight magazines, they combine to present an image of Sydney as diverse, complex and idiosyncratic.

Photographers represented in the exhibition include Judith Ahern, Micky Allan, Emma Angelicolas, Ellen Comiskey, Christine Cornish, Brenda Croft, Peter Ellson, Gerrie Fokkema, Fiona Hall, Tom Hennes, Ken Heyes, Marney Jolly, Steven Lopujoki, Peter McKenzie, Ian Povest, Catherine Rogers, Bruce Sarle, Peter Solness, John Zallabah, William Yang and Anne Zallabah.

From February 23 to April 30, the MCA will present the most extensive exhibition of work by Robert Mapplethorpe to be seen in this country. Consisting of more than 200 works created by visiting guest curator Germano Celant - the exhibition features Mapplethorpe's early work and a range of his later images, including portraits, floral studies, still lifes and nudes. The work of Mapplethorpe, highly controversial when exhibited in the USA due to its somewhat confronting imagery, will be one of the most significant contemporary photographic movements ever mounted in Australia. A major publication will also accompany the exhibition.

The Virtual Reality exhibition, a lavish showcase of consumer culture, commodity sculpture and unlikely virtual reality, includes contemporary art from Australia, USA, Great Britain, France and Germany. Blurring the institutional framework that traditionally separates art appreciation from shopping, curator Mary Eagle has invited the commercial worlds of computer graphic, telecommunications, auto-engineering and computing to show off their wares and mingle with the 'art worlds' of Sylvie Fleury, Damien Hirst, Cindy Sherman, Susan Norrie, Thomas Ruff, Dale Frank, Matthias Gerber, Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley.

The show explores how changes in 'product placement' and consumer culture have altered our perceptions and practices of everyday life. As Eagle remarks, "People as they enact their lives already practise efficiently as artists: our world is constructed by human ingenuity. The ideal, romantic concept of 'reality' hardly fits our experience."

The style of the exhibition represents a departure from both the adversarial stance of avant-garde production and the State of the Art Blockbuster. The works reflect upon the living and working choices (of both artists and 'ordinary/consumers') as they traverse the supermarket, studio and - increasingly - the Internet. The pervasive consumer tendency exemplified in Duchamp, Warhol, Jeff Koons, Ashley Bickerton - and more critically in Marcel Broodthaers, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler and Richard Prince - moves in to replace the concept of engagement whereby the artist, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, establishes his or her position within relations of capitalist production. Hans Haacke's decision to withdraw his Dyereng for Benetton installation from the show - ever-opposed to the infiltration of commerce into art - is a fitting reminder of what remains (virtual or otherwise) of that 'other' political culture. Sylvie Fleury and Damien Hirst are two visiting artists who have pushed the genre of shopping and the shop display to the limit. The representations of little bags and perfumes, Fleury has tapped into the kind of consumer delirium which speaks more of excess and less than its desire for comfort and consolation. English artist Damien Hirst is probably more fascinated by the syndrome of death than by the head-spin of a dematerialised consumer 'paradise'. Plexiglass tanks containing halved cows and tiger sharks, an installation consisting of hundreds of expired 'use by date' drug samples, reveal the downsides or perhaps the ultimate goal of shopping for self-preservation.

As Jill Bennett remarks, "there is one obvious difference between the art museum and the shop: the museum does not deliver the goods. Unlike the usualaric shop window display, a work by Koons or Fleury promises to dispense nothing. Their shop goods are effectively pulled out of circulation, disrupting, short-circuiting the flow of consumerism."

Current geo-political aspects of interactivity are explored in a series of photographs by Australians Lawler and Richard Prince who have painstakingly documented a meeting place for Turkish residents on the site of the old Berlin Wall in Kreuzberg. The 'avant-grunge' element will also be shown. Dale Frank, whose recent exhibition at Damien Goodhope included a kombi van and outboard motor strapped to an orange couch, will be exhibiting paintings, 'objects' and a sound work.

Andy Warhol's career turned on the remark: 'I started out a commercial artist and I want to end up as a business artist.' Where the allure of commodified self-consciousness cuts through the red tape of consumerism and adversarial histrionics, creating a mish-mash of pseudo-realities, Virtual Reality may go some way to answering the question: "What will become of the commerce and art put together and what does the experience say about life today?"

Robert Mapplethorpe

Chris Burden L.A.P.D. Uniform 19934

Run in the New Year

continued from page 35

Robourg's Hamlet sweet-talking, Jacqueline McKenzie's Ophelia, Kristin Linklater's letter to personal, semi-emotional, beginning with an arrhythmic multi-cultural take 'a shy Irish man' with 'her six-year-old adopted two Korean daughters' after their visit to Hamlet, thinking '1140 for Niki's hand to buy a drink for the actor.' Better is Hamlet's revelation that after ten years Company B had confirmed Hamlet an approach to acting and production, that now the time is to consolidate this, to bring back great productions, and to do this through ensemble. Like Robin de Lannoy, with Annette's Company B the relationship of the audience is given priority. "There is an atmosphere that you feel the audience breathing in. A few years plan is stretched out to continue to develop several large scale concepts and written for our ensemble, significant works from the classical, Australian repertoire, while each year one or two works from our past repertoire. He is trouble for the "quick human' syndrome, blaming, for it is a lack of 'improving traditions on our stage."

This is a big picture message, that relies solely on words, is visionary and familiar - I want you to subscribe to our future." 1996 begins with a revival of the 1996 The Tempest (dir. Amanda). The Tempest "seems, even through drag, for the blessing of love, hope and freedom." Next is the English language premiere of Garrow's 'vividly discovered and remarkable' Splendid (dir. Jim Sharman), part masquerade, part comic. Splendid mixes comedy and Meat, poetry and song, hear and desire. Most exciting for the return of Stephen Sewell's The Silent Giant is Dencing presented at Adelaide's 'Lighthouse' in 1988 and now for the STC version, 'Shakespeare in his depth and emotional breadth. Sewell maximises the corruption of a good man through the pressure and isolation of public official of Norway's The Inconsiderable Pilgrim."

Finally a great production from Perth, with Rosalie Clout directing Graham PET'S Emma. A Translated Life with its 20 strong Baltic women's church replete with a LDS wedding banquet shared with the audience. 'It's about that life and experiences that turn us all extras. 'Nothing is more exciting for Australia to start a new life in a new world in the 50s, and find that the fays, the patriarchs, the stereotypes of life and motherhood have to be endured whenever you are' - denational multiculturalism? The tone of the poster/brochure is for the 'age' of American theatre, particular issues are not on the agenda. This is the only brochure where actors assume major significance. Eminence are rare on the marriage (though they can be found in many other spheres of theatre and performance practice so it's reassuring to see these names listed: Geoffrey Rush, Gillian Jones, Max Cullen, Kevin Smith, Chris Blundell, Richard Roxburgh, Keith Robinson, Ralph Cotton, David Wenham, Jacqueline McKenzie, Jane Koman and Kerry Walker. For the state of the city you're left with nothing brutal promised, plenty of transient aberrations about life, love, etc. The Company B repertories of productions, written Annette, is epic in scale, particular in emotional detail and yet simple in their form and clarity of expression - relaxed in the way theatre itself. Now.

I'm wishing to see what Tasmania's Zontogalo, Sydney's Griffith, Perth's Black Swan are offing. Adelaide wood in that Zontogalo is presenting a comedy from the classic repertoire, A Millington's Night Drain, dir. John Bolton, the progeny of a grump Tasmanian bug, Mistletoe, Meat and Fred Finser, dir. John Bowring, and a magical Modern American work, The Swear by Elizabeth Apted. Louise Pearson, the company new artistic director. The Swear was critically acclaimed in the STC production this year. The Perth Theatre Trust press release announced MI and The Unlikely Nicholls Productions & Adventure Festival Centre Trust - cockney barny boy discovers he's an ex-Lettingham walk-in and an English liar in support of part of Australians' nightmares, Roso's The Wronging! Me (Black Swan in association Treatmeinng Singapore): That Eve the Sky, the adaptation of Tim West's novel by Sydney's The Burning House Company (dir. Richard Neupert), Louis' Noeux's (Black Swan & Hose in the Wall), Summer of the Seventeenth Doll (STC productions), Dancing with Pearls (Black Swan & Detamer Theatre), Three Lives of Louise Cabrit (Theatre of Complicite, Arcadia STC productions). Perhaps we're not missing out on much it seems, but given their structure to go back the theatre is interesting to see how the program's solid, what critical superlatives, what public aberrations, which and out-of-body experiences are promoted.

In 1996, a look at the regional and non-mainstream companies, dance and opera hard sell.
Never Say Die

Cath Kenneally experiences 600,000 Hours (mortality) at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, Oct. 1-2

So, you read murder mysteries and you watch horror movies. Have you ever devoted two days straight to mortality? That’s what the teams who signed on for the above mentioned conference did. Two days of being talked to about death in the late 20th century.

How do we respond to it, conceptualise it, discuss it at this hour in history? And how to stage an event where the theme is, if you consider for more than a moment, the how to stage an event where the theme is, if it, discuss it at this hour in history? And the above mentioned conference did. Two days of being talked to about death in the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, Oct. 1-2

600,000 Hours (mortality)
Carh Kenneally experiences

Permission to Look

Artist Elizabeth Campbell has worked in an artists’ model for 17 years and for 12 of those, mostly unknown to the artists sketching her poses, she has been documenting the experience. She started with black and white photographs of her various draped modelling sites. Over the years these photographs have become coloured and more lush as she zooms in on the body that inhabits the site. chalk marks on velvet for feet and hands, folds, indentations left by the body on the cloth. In 1985 she made Modell Artist a short film of poses from still images. More recently, she has created a number of partly improvised performances on the model’s experience. Earlier this year she broke the silence of a life drawing class at the Sydney College by asking the students “How do I look?” In November she staged Permission to Look at Sydney’s First Draft. In the gallery are cases with paper and pencils, the model’s diary, her work in pastels - velvet, cloth, chalk, a printed “Con inflen” with the title Tom Broughton handed the rein of the informal talk back to the audience, and for the period one had asked, and are blame and payback excluded? He had slides of a rebirth operation underway in a 6,000 year old Aboriginal cemetery near Lake Victoria. With both the scientific/academic community and the late 20th century Aboriginal community at a point of crisis of confidence/identity, some valuable exchange of expertise and reconciliation is in train. Dr Michael Eather and Laure Nilsen blew in at the last moment before they were scheduled on the second day of the conference, illustrating some of the matters Pardoe had indicated. They are part of the‘Campfire’ group of Aboriginal artists and associates from Queensland, and spoke briefly about the EAF installation they were about to mount involving a real dead emu and a barbed-wire fascimile, fences and gaols and a campfire and a painting of Nilsen’s Uncle Tom Broughton. Their emphasis, too, was provisionally on passage and exchange - a spring gate had to be physically pushed open by visitors, and would spring back and close until the next attempt. The show was called ‘Welcome’, because this was the title Tom Broughton had ruminatively suggested after three days’ polite interrogation by Esther/Nilsen. This was an interesting interlude for the degree of palpable well-wishing emanating in waves from the audience, and for the change in the register of the prevailing discourse to that point. Laurie Nilsen told lachonic anecdotes and laughed, sat back in his chair, admitted to being tired (they’d just driven 36 hours with the emu strapped on the roof of the ute), and he and Esther handed the reins of the informal talk back and forth seemingly casually.

We saw some of ‘Batman II’ (Jane Goodall on fake apocalyptics and our fin de siecle the difference between ending and stopping). We saw an endless film-loop of Bruce and Brandon Lee mayhem in a curiously fond, our disconnected father-son romance/lego (Sagae Marcel). We heard from Jyanni Steffensen that the phallic lesbian vampire could administer punishment to desireful daughters just as well as any abusing daddy on Freud’s books (in which dads were, though, absolved?). Griselda Pollock’s moving video searched art and family history and the history of a race for clues about the meaning of generation and generations and came up with a new line on Freud- circumcision anxiety - the scar the memory of the father’s and God’s stayed but imminent vengeance at every new act of begetting that obliterates old-daddy.

I’m glad we didn’t get an opportunity to squabble and cavil. It was good practice for the ultimate profound silence (which descends in monasteries after the late bell, and which is likewise a rehearsal).

Cath Kenneally is an Adelaide writer and broadcaster. Penguin is to publish her collection of poems, Around Here.
Perhaps I want to be Gena Rowlands

Lesley Stern on film performance, audience engagement and Histrionic Cinema

"I'm not me. I used to be me. I'm not me anymore," says Myrtle Gordon, extemporising freely and playing for laughs. Or perhaps it's Gena Rowlands who speaks here—acting out for all she's worth and upstaging her own character. It's the Broadway opening night of a play called The Second Woman and she, the famous actress, has arrived late and gone on stage so drunk she can hardly stand. But we are not actually at the theatre—we are watching the final sequence of a film called Opening Night (John Cassavetes, 1978) which tells the story of Myrtle Gordon (Gena Rowlands) and the difficulty she experiences in playing the part of a woman unable to come to terms with ageing. It is a film which is pertinent to current interests: it theatricalises the body, particularly the female body, and dramatises the self—as performance. But to tell the truth I'm only writing this because I want to contemplate the incomparable Gena Rowlands, to watch this movie over and over again so I might come to know her many faces, her every quizzical gesture and gut-wrenching grimace, every goofy trick she plays, how it is she's so sublime. Perhaps I want to be Gena Rowlands. Well yes, but not entirely for part of me wants her to remain other, our there, up on the screen. I want to watch her again and again because of this: for all the harrowing intensity that frequently accretes to her persona, I emerge from her films exhilarated and invigorated—always it is as though I have been taken by surprise, have seen and experienced something new. In performing she enacts the declaration, "I like to act"—and this makes me believe that I too can be an actor. Yet it isn't simply a showing off of pleasure that is inspiring; it is as though the history of herself as a performing body, the skills that have been learnt in her previous stage and screen, that she has been assigned (and everyone attempts to persuade her that this is her life), if she plays the part well she will then be convinced by the audience as old and her career will be severely limited. If she plays the part badly then her career and identity are also likely to be ruined. The suspense of the film hinges on the question of how and if this conundrum can be resolved. Narratively it hinges on the question of whether Myrtle—given that she seems to be finding it harder and harder to stay in touch, is drinking excessively, prone to hysterical outbursts, haunted by a malvolent ghost and on occasion herself possessed—will make it to opening night at all. However, there are trajectories here other than narrative ones. One of the major questions is that of how to play. "I'm looking for a way," Myrtle tells Sarah, "to play this part where age doesn't make any difference." There are two pivotal 'events' in the film. Firstly what I refer to as the 'slapping scene' where there is a scene in The Second Woman where Virginia has to be hit across the face; Myrtle simply cannot play the scene and a great deal of drama is generated around her struggle to play and simultaneously resist. Secondly, Myrtle is haunted by a ghost, a young girl who is initially comforting but turns extremely nasty so that Myrtle eventually has to exercise her in an extremely violent encounter. Myrtle's problem is not that she exploits this tension to generate belief and knowledge (and love and despair). Likewise the film struggles to find a way of articulating this tension. The film itself and the filmic body are both subject to disintegration and marked by resilience. This tensile reciprocity characterises what I call histrionic cinema.

Whilst histrionic denotes something about film that is actively, I use the notion to refer to more than the register of acting. Rather, we might say that in the histrionic a particular relationship exists between the actively performance and the filmic; the film is conceived within the parameters of a dramaturgy that is not centred on the character but is now charged by an intense investment in acting. The cinematic codes tend to be ostentatious and their very amplification owes something to the theatrical imagination—not theatre in terms of staging or even representation, but in terms of an enactment, a fictionalised realisation through a world that is acted out, in the process of acting up. This suggests the creation and mobilisation of a world that is fraught with surplus value, a world in which objects, scenic terrains, the cinematic landscape itself, are charged as if by the supernatural, as if possessed.

Myrtle Gordon is faced with a conundrum: if she identifies with the character Virginia, with the role she has been assigned (and everyone attempts to persuade her that she is her life), if she plays the part well she will then be identified by her audience as old and her career will be severely limited. If she plays the part badly then her career and identity are also likely to be ruined. The suspense of the film hinges on the question of how and if this conundrum can be resolved. Narratively it hinges on the question of whether Myrtle—given that she seems to be finding it harder and harder to stay in touch, is drinking excessively, prone to hysterical outbursts, haunted by a malevolent ghost and on occasion herself possessed—will make it to opening night at all. However, there are trajectories here other than narrative ones. One of the major questions is that of how to play. "I'm looking for a way," Myrtle tells Sarah, "to play this part where age doesn't make any difference." There are two pivotal 'events' in the film. Firstly what I refer to as the 'slapping scene' where there is a scene in The Second Woman where Virginia has to be hit across the face; Myrtle simply cannot play the scene and a great deal of drama is generated around her struggle to play and simultaneously resist. Secondly, Myrtle is haunted by a ghost, a young girl who is initially comforting but turns extremely nasty so that Myrtle eventually has to exercise her in an extremely violent encounter. Myrtle's problem is not that she confuses on-stage and off-stage activities but that she condenses two moments: the girl being hit by a car in the street and herself being hit on stage. The difficulty she has in playing the slapping scene is not to be construed simply as a refusal of violence; more profoundly—and less coherently— it is a resistance to passivity and resignation. It is not the slap in and of itself that troubles and confuses her; in fact the condensation she performs (the film enacts this cinematically) poses the slap as a gesture that actualises the discursive violence she is experiencing. And her ensuing up, and eventual exorcism of the ghost is a way of transforming the scenario.

It is only after the rehearsals, improvisations and enactments—whether we are watching, in Myrtle's vaporous reasoning, a filmic drama queen going over the top, or simply a woman cracking up. I think both. At once. Myrtle refuses the terms of the transaction, the brutality of the representational act, but her refusal is not considered, not subject to planning and judgement, something in her refuses—to grow old gracefully, to submit to passivity and being without weapons—but her refusal is inchoate, non-discriminative, primarily somatic. It is however a process of improvisation, of working out how to play this part. And it absorbs us because of Gena Rowlands' acting, her fictionalisation, and the way this is articulated by and with the cinematic codes.

Her 'crack-up' is made manifest through a skilful deployment of energy, of bodily rhythms, of shifting vocal intensities. And these modalities are echoed by the camera's insistent unblinking attention, the long takes often in extreme close-up, hovering and hand-held, the juxtaposition of angles, and the sudden recourse to extremely distanced long shots. We know that she (Myrtle) is playing a part here, and we know that the identity between the actor (Gena Rowlands) and the character (Myrtle and Virginia) is precarious, yet the more we know "the more difficult it is to believe and the more it is worth managing to do so." (Jean-Louis Comolli).

What Myrtle does, in the end, after exorcising the ghost, is to turn the 'slapping scenario' into slapstick. She turns the dramaturgy into a comic of hyperbolic absurdity, of hyperbolic absurdity. As she goads Marty (played by Cassavetes), as she sends him up by making faces at the audience and playing up the filmic body, and gesticulating with hyperbolic abandon, so he rises to the bait, gets the giggles, and enters into the spirit of the moment. He becomes the one who is turning grey and becoming anxious about ageing—jumping up and down, the Marx Brother: "I am Superman! I am Superman!"

Somewhere between Gertrude Stein and the Marx Brothers:

Myrtle: Well, I am not me!
Marty: And I know that I am someone else.
Myrtle: Do you think I am too?
Marty: Yes!
Myrtle: OK it's definite then! We've been invaded. There's someone posing here as us. And you and me, there is definitely something wrong with your smile!

What I have referred to as the "I like to act" dynamic opens a space both of identification and contemplation. When Gena acts out the trope "I like to act," I believe for a moment or more that I too can be an actor; I don't primarily believe that I am her—Gena or Myrtle or Virginia (though I might get caught up in various regimes of fictionality)—but I know that I too can act differently, be somehow other.

John Cassavetes' films Gloria, Love Streams, Minnie and Moskowitz can sometimes be found in video hire shops or occasionally turn up on television. Love Streams is particularly worth seeking out for the performance by Rowlands. Ed.
Peter Macarthy previews the 1995 Mardi Gra Film Festival

Fronting up for its eleventh year - having undergone various nominal transmutations - the Mardi Gra Film Festival looks set to enter a field of film-making that has moved away from its critical niche position.

The Mardi Gra Film Festival is the longest running of its kind in Australia, established in 1984 and operated by the Sydney Intermedia Network. It is the only annual national survey of film and video art in Australia.

The festival is named after the Mardi Gras, the annual festival held in Sydney, which celebrates gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender cultures.

The festival is open to all film-makers, both Australian and international, and entries are invited from all disciplines of film and video art. The festival includes a screening fee for all entries and is open to all genders and sexual orientations.

Entries are due by Friday, 31 December 1994.

DECEMBER 1994

Works selected are paid a screening fee.

Entries are invited from all disciplines of film and video art, including animation, experimental, documentary, short films, and music videos.

The festival is open to all genders and sexual orientations and is a platform for artists to showcase their work to a diverse audience.

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DANCE COLLECTIVE

The Northern Territory’s Own Dance Collective.

1995 Workshop and Performance Programmes

- TRACKS Community Dance
- TRACKS Dance Theatre
- TRACKS Cross Cultural
- TRACKS Professional Dance
- TRACKS Professional Residencies

Dorethea Randall: ATSI Choreographer
Anja Tait: Musician
Karyn Sassella: Writer

Co-Directors: Sarah Calver
David McMicken

GPO Box 2429 Darwin NT 0801
Telephone (089) 815522
Fax (089) 413222

Exchanging Glances:
When a photographer commits to documenting the work of another artist over time there is the opportunity for two visions to coincide and collaborate. Photographer Leslie Solar’s 15 year collaboration with choreographer Russell Dumas and his company Dance Exchange will be featured almost life size at Stills Gallery, Sydney December and February.

Douglas Wright Dance Company in Forever
Virtual Dancing
Karen Pearlman previews the Green Mill Dance Festival

It's pretty hard yakka starting a festival - so much funding to raise, so many sensibilities to offend. A dance festival is particularly rough, dance being neither especially commercial, nor especially high up in the ranks of high art. All of the inclinations and the exclusions are fraught with meaning for the small and tightly knit dance community, and pretty insignificant to anyone else. But coming up in Melbourne in January 1995 is the Green Mill Dance Festival's third year, so the organisers should be congratulated on their tenacity.

The Green Mill survival strategy seems to be to mix the mainstream, the experimental, the academic and the general public with a generous dash of government funding priorities. The program offers performances: this year an intriguing collection of seasoned professionals each of whom has a personal signature. The sum of this shows should be a sharp, speedy look at the mid range of the Australian contemporary dance sensibility without digression to the extremes - neither formation on stage nor pointe shoes on anorexics are likely to be seen. There are also forums which cover the spectrum from academic through to technical to talk show. And there are classes and workshops for professionals and the general public.

Ostensibly the theme of Green Mill this year is "Is Technology the Future for Dance?" A chic but ambiguous theme, one which apparently was on the minds of many attendants at last year's festival.

General Manager Mark Warner says that in last year's feedback sessions many people voiced their concerns about technology and dance: aesthetics, politics and access. So the programming committee has put together an appealing series of events to address or circumvent issues of technology, dance and the future. Most of the blurs about the performances have managed to include the words "technology" or "computers" or at the very least "film" or "video", though actually only Hellen Sky and John McCormack (Company in Space) have an extensive history of working the high wire of hybrideity by mixing dance and computer technology. However, a company like Fieldworks, which, according to Mark Warner, uses little more than bodies in space and light, has been included because of their particular relationship to technology - they're having none of it. So it's up to audiences to draw their own conclusions about those tricky "aesthetics, politics and access" issues when they see the two companies side by side.

The forums cover computers, science, cyber strategies, virtuality and other techno terms in relation to dance. There is also an extensive range of film/video screenings or related discussions. And there are frequently scheduled personality interviews with the artists in the performance series and with the overseas guests. The schedule of forums seems designed on the same model as the Melbourne Writers Festival (not surprising since Mark Warner formerly worked on that very successful event). But Green Mill doesn't have any officially scheduled schmooze sessions, like book launches, which is a shame, because talking to each other is one of the most significant benefits the gathered dance artists can expect to get from a festival. Mark does say, however, that he hopes people attending the festival will find the opportunity to sit down and talk to overseas guests like Rhoda Grauer (U.S.) and Mayumi Nagatoshi (Japan), since one of the reasons they particularly have been invited is to help expand opportunities for Australian artists overseas.

Finally there are the workshops, a wildly diverse collection of experiences available to the professional from a dance video workshop to an American postmodern workshop with Bebe Miller, to Body Weather with Tanaka Min, to Hip Hop, to Feldenkrais. And, for the general public, free classes given by professionals are being pitched like easy listening radio - accessible and not too demanding. The idea here is to give people a physical experience they can then relate directly to the work they see performed. Admittedly, the fear-of-dance factor is an important one to address when wooing a more general audience to the form. But it gets my back up a bit that professional dance practitioners who are notoriously impoverished have to pay for everything while the only mildly interested are offered the experience for free. However, if you can afford it, it'll probably be great fun and highly stimulating to attend Green Mill. And since this is its year's attenders who will determine the theme of next year's festival, it might well worth making your voice heard. To receive a brochure on the 1995 Green Mill program, call 03-644-8141.

Karen Pearlman's latest collaborative venture with Richard James Allen into dance, video and baby technologies will be broadcast on January 8 at 6 pm on SBS's Imagine.

Decouplet
Be the first in The Capitol

Only Australian performances
Capitol Theatre 266 4600
Presented in association with The Capitol Theatre Association Française d'Action Artistique in association with Alliance Française de Sydney
"Ninety minutes of happiness"
Express

Druid Theatre Company
York Theatre Seymour Centre
January 19 to 28
Seymour Centre 364 9400
"A magnificent piece of total theatre"

Sydney Festival & Carnival
January 7-26, 1995

Winners of a Fringe First Award, Edinburgh in 1993 Roll-a-PeA
A musical and moving allegory performed in Welsh with English subtitles
Sydney Festival & Carnival
January 10 to 21
Seymour Centre 364 9400
"One of the highlights of a lifetime of Edinburgh Festivals" The Guardian

Douglas Wright Dance Company
Everest Theatre Seymour Centre
January 10 to 21
Seymour Centre 364 9400
"Powerful, sad, tender, witty, X-rated dance" Evening Post Wellington

Harbourside Brasserie
The joys of Women
From Frantance, the famous raw and earthy Italian women's choir
January 25 to 28
(dinner from 7pm)

Aboriginal songwriters.
January 25 at 8pm
(dinner from 7pm)

Sisters in Soul
Annamalai, Liz Dior and Toni Nation - sisters do it so well...
January 26 at 9pm
(dinner from 7pm)

and then there's LATE
A seductive mix of entertainment, surprise party pieces by Festival artists, aperitif brasserie, dance the night away on the Late floor.

The after show meeting place
for the artists and...it's open til LATE! Season ticket - $70

Decisions, decisions
Real Time previews the Sydney Festival

At its launch, Sydney Festival director Anthony Steel pulled no punches, promising that his next festival would be the one. Given that he had to pull this one together quickly and that the festival's financial state means the well-publicised discarding of local talent, it's not surprisingly he wanted to clear the air and leave the media, in particular, in no doubt about his intentions to create a convincing festival as opposed to its blurry, unshaped predecessor. This means, for example, that the concerts in the park will have to look after themselves instead of absorbing something like one eighth of the limited annual festival budget. It also means a greater focus on the city and, to continue a trend, the further down-grading of Carnival. The number of overseas 'foreign' acts hardly compensates for lack of local presence. This is not Steel's fault. The integration of the festival and Carnival was unarguably and unfairly from the word go and should be given up. He's also made the parameters of the festival clear - the blur between on-going activities (of the Australian Opera, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra etc.) and the festival has been erased and the line

Be the first in The Capitol

Mauro Gioia
The embodiment of the sultry Italian crooner brings to life the songs of Napoli
January 7 to 14 at 9pm
(dinner from 7pm)

The Joys of Women
From Frantance, the famous raw and earthy Italian women's choir
January 18 to 22 at 9pm
(dinner from 7pm)

Tiddas
& Kei Carmody, one of Australia's best known
January 25 at 8pm
(dinner from 7pm)

Aboriginal songwriters.
January 26 at 9pm
(dinner from 7pm)

Sisters in Soul
Annamalai, Liz Dior and Toni Nation - sisters do it so well...
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Sydney Festival & Carnival
January 7-26, 1995
Theatre’ much praised Australian Opera and Victorian State have written the possibility of opera in music. Director Renato Cucolo has brought doubts to have come already and innovative, much of the program from time to time, and Robyn Archer’s thinking.

Time round he got Melbourne’s "a

Also from Melbourne comes I.R.A.

Peter Handke’s ‘The Hour we knew nothing of each other prominent physical theatre by one of the most challenging of contemporary playwrights, German Peter Handke, author of Kaspar and The Ride Across Lake Constance. Director Michael Gow and a big, fast create some of the characters. Michael Billington in the Observer called it "people-watching raised to the level of art ... not avant-garde for the few but a democratic spectacle for the many." (Ah, critics. What did Billingtion make of the challenge of Handke’s influential and difficult early ‘undemocratic’ work?) Such a rare opportunity should not be missed in a town where we were once treated to Botho Strauss’ Big and Little Scenes and, more recently, Time and the Room (Gow directing) by the Sydney Theatre Company but little else from Europe unless you noticed David Richie’s championing of German playwrighting at Belvoir Street Downstairs and the Lookout.

Billboard’s Expressions Dance Company, directed by Maggie Sietsma, is the Festival’s Australian dance quota in a works choreographed by Magritte and Kahului with appropriately surreal imagery.

At the Harbourside Brasserie, a strong line in the joys ofเปลี่ยนแปลง the impressive Italian song from Frementle), Tidalpas performing with Kev Carmody, and mensuamada.

On the international front The Druid Theatre Company’s Black Pig’s Dyke promises more than the usual crazy festival tearaway night out, employing a traditional folk play structure, mumming, pitted against contemporary naturalism. It was featured at LiFT, London’s innovative international theatre festival in 1993. Poland’s Wierzalin pre sent Rolls-Royce a well known among the Australian operas, including the UK’s Stan Tracey Quartet, drummer Bill Cobham working with Australian pianist plus Sydney’s DAVE, Dug Tolley’s THAT, the catholics, Atmosphere, Bernie Maginn, Mike Nock and of course the feast of the program. You could take in a lot of jazz in two weeks and there are bound to be later bookers.

The weekend of 7-8 January could well find you at Centennial Park for a performance of entirely different nature, the Rising of the from Art Kite Pictures for the Sky. The kites are on display at the Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre. The kites will fly at Centennial Park with 60 Hamamasu kites flown by 100 Japanese kite flyers accompanied by Japanese ritual drummers “to help solicit the favours of the Wind God.” The ‘art kites’ have been painted by Rauschenberg, Keiter and many others. The Goethe Institute, who are bringing this event to Australia with the Durham based Kite Culture commission had Australian artists Alun Leach-Jones, Rosalie Gascoigne, Pansy Jordan and the Woodland Yaanda Group create new works to become part of the permanent collection and the weekend of the Festival. The perfect preparation for Perspecta commencing in February with its ‘hybrid’ theme.

As with all festivals the decisions about what to see are truly anxiety making, not just because of the expense but because of the inevitability that you won’t be able to fit in everything you’re tempted to see. This is a small festival, the decisions not quite so difficult. The Rising of the kites is part of the Festival of Perth Feb 17 - March 12, which is ... enormous. Decisions there are helpful and there are revealing, but the conservative big acts and the adventurously smaller shows many of them Australian. Most of that is Real Time.

In the meantime Sydney is on the edge of having a good festival at last unless it stays in the village festivus festival with Leo Schofield might have done well in Melbourne with his calculated crossing. Sydney Stereo were drawn to previous festivals there didn’t bother this time. Kosky promises much, already things are underway but very high profiling Australian content, certainly reassuring and reinvigorating a moribund Writer’s Week. That we want more after having so little for so long is to be expected. Sydney’s Festival of Autumn local talent was insistent. Let’s hope Steel wasn’t wounded by his Brisbane Billennial experience where his sense of adventure wasn’t welcome. It should be welcomed here.
KAOS Rules!
Diana Prichard gets a handle on Hobart's Kaos Cafe menu

Forget the theory. In our Tasmanian reality, Kaos is a cafe wedged between a piano warehouse and a car yard on Elizabeth Street, half-way between the city centre and North Hobart. Despite seeming in a bit of a limbo, neither part of the cafe flock down at historic Salamanca Place nor the clutch of restaurants 10 minutes walk up the road (distance is relative - 10 minutes away is a long time in this small island state), the owners like to think Kaos offers enough potential for customers to travel.

When I first came to Hobart from Sydney five years ago there was a handful of coffee shops (as distinct from cafes), open 9 to 5 weekdays and offering grilled cheese sandwiches and a nice cup of Bushells, but nowhere could you get a good latte with a creamy milk.

Although the winds of change might not exactly be blowing in Tasmania - logging still continues in ancient and irreplaceable old growth forests, politicians don't seem to be accountable to anybody and sodomy is illegal - there is certainly the whisper of a breeze. At the very least there is now a choice of places to go for a decent cup of coffee - cafes have sprung up in Hobart in the last few years like the screen markers near the site of a $40M super-ferry stranded on rocks - and one of these is Kaos.

Partners in Kaos, Emmanuel Gasparinatos and Andrea Noble, both ex-Sydneyiders and ABCers, opened the cafe in February 1993 with the purpose of providing a much needed late night stop offering coffee made from the king of the Beans, Lavazza, a wad of intertare newspapers, a range of national and international magazines and eclectic music.

The five-sided four-windowed venue is also regularly used as a performance space. Wednesday nights until recently featured Kickin' Jazz with DJ Damion spinning Acid Jazz tracks; Sunday afternoons heard the Surf Girls singing originals and k.d. lang covers before they went on to much bigger things as part of half pound of outstrach feathers and a hot spu: a wet and sullen evening saw a site specific installation and performance, Incorporol 3 (one of a series of 'The Insect Cage. Correctitude: between the wish and the thing lies the world'), by Edward Colless, David McDowell, Kevin Henderson, Matt Warren and Sally Rees; and not long ago Emmanuel held a dul and curry night, The Founding System, served up old school dub accompanied by some fine curries.

Even though Kaos might, by first appearances, have established itself in a popularity-challenged area, it has attracted a bevy of loyal customers including the softly spoken feminist activist, The Whispering Radical, who signs on black coffee and writes letters in a corner; a television gardening guru who orders kumara (sweet potato) soup and perks at the bar contemplating his fingernails, and a mountain climbing Scottish psychiatrist, resident of Hobart, who was sent a postcard to the cafe when trekking in the Himalayas, stating simply that he missed his "Erol" Grey tea.

Many customers return to Kaos for their favourite dishes including the popular pharaoh's breakfast (inspired by Emmanuel's late uncle Jimmy) which consists of fava beans cooked in lemon, oil and spices, and served with a tomato, onion and mint salad, boiled egg and bread, and blinis (yeast pancakes topped with smoked salmon, caviar and sour cream).

In a state which has become famous for its philanthropic dough, dams and apples, the Kaos staff defy the vocal minority and openly support gay rights. Kaos is listed on the "Gay Hotline" as a friendly place to go, and staff tips are dropped into the Andrew Shaw Memorial Fund tin, the proceeds of which go to AIDS research (Andrew was the first Tasmanian to die from AIDS). In appreciation of their continued support the Gay and Lesbian Council recently presented Kaos staff with a plaque expressing its gratitude.

There's not the sense of frenetic energy in Hobart that you might find in a larger city, but on the up side peak hour traffic lasts only five minutes, queues are short if existant, the crime rate is low (although the rare heinous crime is usually a truly bizarre one) and beaches are syringe-free with the only forbidden activities the access to the sea. No doubt in fact the natural beauty of the place keeps a lot of us here, and it's no surprise to learn many artists, writers and craftpeople have been attracted to the state for its stunning scenery, much of it inspiring their work.

Things are happening in Hobart, often quietly, without fanfare, in the air pockets beneath the flat and protected surface.

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**Sport**

**Tooth and Claw**
with Jack Rule

Which body part is dominating world sport today? It's small, it's mean, it's ruthless - and it leaves sports stars of all codes quevering with fear. It is the index finger. Not just any index finger, but one posed over the controls of a video recorder. Pressing freeze-frame, slow-motion, rewind, fast forward: bludgeoning those buttons, searching for incriminating evidence - anything to bring a sporting superstar down.

Look at goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar: devastating by video evidence seen around the world. He accepts a bundle of notes, he throws it onto the net, an expression flickers on his face for a moment. Arm-chair assassins worldwide went to work with their index fingers, freeze-framing that expression, scrutinising it for traces of greed and betrayal. And English cricket captain, Mike Atherton: rocked by slow motion replays of his hand reaching into his pocket for contraband - the filthy dirt allegedly used for bad tampering. CAN'T A MAN PUT HIS HAND IN HIS POCKET ANYMORE! In the video age, nothing goes unseen, no gesture is innocent.

Soon acting classes will be mandatory for high-profile sports stars. Rerest that hand, control those facial expressions. Conceal the guilt, project a façade. Do anything you can to thwart those predatory index fingers. In the pay of an Asian betting syndicate? No tell-tale signs on your face? You can rest assured, mentally counting the gold bullion pouring into your Swiss bank account, immune to the probing and probing index fingers itching to get at you - BECAUSE YOUR FACE IS AS IMPASSIVE AS BRYAN BROWN'S.

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**System-X**

System-X is an artist-run initiative, an information service on the internet. Our goal is to provide communications for people involved in the electronic arts. We are seeking expressions of interest from organisations and individuals who want to be our partners in a new venture in electronic art on the internet.

Since 1990 System-X has progressed in leaps and bounds, offering more on-line space and services, running several art events and conducting an online gallery. We have been entirely self-funded except for a small grant in 1993. Yet our cost scenario is around $200 p.a. for e-mail costs. We are now connected to the Internet full time and are rapidly accumulating a new array of artists and gathering interest in our activities from a large range of people. System-X is imperative that there exist artist-run projects to export our culture to the rest of the world.

Of the recent samples of ISEA 94 and SG/RAPH there is a growing interest in Australian art.

Our project offers a number of fruitful inputs and outlets for arts organisations.

* Accessibility to a vast amount of information on the arts and other topics.*
* Access to art-related e-mail lists and newsgroups.*
* Contact with national and international organisations with similar aims or roles.*
* The ability to publish, online, hypermedia catalogues, gallery information, forthcoming event rosters, publicity materials, calls for participation and the like.*
* The ability to cite the Internet in articles, papers, catalogues, applications.*

A typical cost scenario is around $200 p.a. for the connection to System-X plus a once-off capital expenditure of $70. If you are interested in participating in System-X, we are asking for a letter of support from yourselves to accompany and help our funding application.

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**Subscription**

First 15 subscribers for 1995 will receive FREE a Rufus Records CD or a set of the Anne Graham / Pam Kleeman SWheat postcards.

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Bruno Schuller's already marvellous summary almost unmentionable in its The Shell of Cuckoo's a couple of years will! may force you with a work that 'gives in' the mind. The third lines of Lucie Cuban, an edging John by Terence Rattigan's *October '62* you worked his Property for the Can, a monoly for young people about a recent stone age man, as Blackadder, now among all audiences. This will have you questioning how we live in the 90's i.e. its thoughtprovoking. Well, there you have it. MTG's visual仲mer on stage and TCT's transcendental relevancy for these are ideas for istraetegy and ultier advent-haged programing ideas in the Sydney Stories and the Triffid, not hints much to the substrate, established Australian playwrights, established woman director (two shows) to Gai Edwards, nothing sidestriking ethics such as a corp T.S. Elliot phase but plenty of stunts, pronunciations, heart break etc. Caro. Artist-director David Wilmot Under 's 's a 'direct, stimulating id... they some political, controversial new work.' not one of the M,01, but I'm sure it would loo lie to Br. Play production with integrity, artist director Mandy Moloty 'new season of which realises the company's match in the creation, interpretation and promotion of a national repertoire'. Success, endurance, poignancy across and relevance, the engagement and the experience of the words are the criteria that should drive the subscriber, 'by subscribing to all the plays can you appreciate the breadth of new writing in Australia and capitalised on the greatest savings.', Chris Wellswood would be the one that this for you being knocked about your spirit uplifted. Michael Gear's Sweet Poem is a 'readie: Going drawing, Daniel Aukus' Art is a play for times, a vision of our dreams and frightening (Rodnina Michto, run. S. at the time). The Passion by and by David Constable with Lemon Delicious Puting (dir. Kermy. Gear) was the calstigate and monumental stage that pride fully naty and the market, and the subtly... a fabulous evge to the 's well. (Q. W. ist's) a tender love story, a balancing table and a supernatural thrill. Lous Naun's The Inescapable (dir. Mandy Aukus) forms with political language, adventurous, not possible cataclysm and the preening one which offers to realise in. Alex Pacific Union (dir. Art Taylor) Beets brings an insight into the frantic months between Hitler's death and the atomic bombs... and the birth of Australian Tonight's play. (Ms. Audley Moloty) is set in the only 00:00:00:10 Japan. The 400:00:00. The Dinner (Ms. Moloty) stammers (objects by) a group of housewives to beind the strained pieces of a stave of the Virgin Mary which had stood in front of their cathedral at the time of the burning and also the story of a murderous revenge. Diana- Germaine Smith's Honey (dir. Amanda Taylor) leads us about the impact on a family where a mid-life crisis tosses to a younger woman, serious, funny and emotionally provoking works. These examples are not as the end of as the Playbox brochure gives enough information to make up your own mind. It is a treacherously red, not a quick kit, an age, not a well, but if you would like to - it's just a complement to Australian culture. Women direct (Dorothy, Dears, Dears, Wills) and write (Dorothy, Wills). Brighde Dours, Dours Brighde (dir. by and by David David) a pungent and moving entertainment designed to touch the heart of audiences, that's more like. Mills, The Last Letter shows (Ms. Johnson's 's, inquiring into death, 's a moving story. The School for Scandal when the greatest of comedies never written. Nora Èphrons Smashing (dir. kim-macle McCreery) is moving, powerful, electrifying, 'you win some, you lose some' and the power and heroism. Michael Richards Christmas at Turkey Beach is a funny, heart-warming and a celebration of Queensland life at the Beach. These are as strong as the copy girl, perhaps Britains don't have to be订阅ed with subscribing with further general and calls, and perhaps they'd object.' but at Britannia's La Biste the promise by artist director Sue Rube - a through produced face-driven party, many, orange and chartreuse brochure without words. If you like high voltage theatre: 'The electrophile player' in an informative and informal where the audience 'love the energy that spouts between gossip and regular audience.' there... a theatre when you don't have to be more. Like Playbox there is a contaminant but we call it cultcabulary, just like the last jingle. small circles, a little more. *Lost* (dir. Sue Rube) is a play to make us cry, laugh, and maybe think again. Timothy Dwy's striking talking Kate Dances (dir. John Jive) has become warm and wellheartedly funny. Sara Engh's Bold's The Velveteen Rabbit or Sheep in a Mothers Day* was commissioned by A. Rio Ball, director, Sue Rube, is intriguingly about Moirne Bernard. Fiona Edmonds and Margaret Potterspirited and well-written by with the Royal Court theatre's ideas and informal independence, original, unbelonging, unsaid... but you are a pretty, blood-curdlingly beating. the prologu Louisa knocked Miss Bone (dir. Sue Rube, originally about Sydney's Tate of My Heart*. It's a play to watch and a play to标语 about Miss Bone beauty (taking during the series of Sarah's) (John Sue directes Queensland's Philip's Long Lame Lonesome, Covent, of course Queensland. There are greatMany fantastic, music and cowpaly... two young married women. Ranging through a series of the most unique musical instruments, and a theatre is not in an unexpected and touching conclusion. Fortunately the electricity of the inside isn't sustained by the drivingly dead things but you probably feel pretty far from them on - pretty of warm and funny and short but you can use the electrophile player for the players and audience alone. Of course Harriet and Kate Dances will be a part of Britannia's La Biste. For more information call Britannia Bisti on 02-500 75825.